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Casta Painting and the Characterization of Colonial Mexican Identities

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in
Hispanic Studies

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CASTA PAINTING AND THE CHARACTERIZATION OF COLONIAL MEXICAN
IDENTITIES

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Natalia Caldas

Graduate Program in Hispanic Studies

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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Abstract

This thesis will examine the emergence of the *casta* painting genre in eighteenth century New Spain and elements of identity formation in the characterization of colonial subjects. Through the use of a database and close reading of paintings, a corpus of 370 paintings were studied and analyzed. A total of 1471 *casta* characters were extracted from said paintings and the relationship between actions performed, objects, and to each other was analyzed. In using this methodology results point to the significant historical division between the social communities and colonial society. By focusing on the study of particular characters fractures in imposed social roles in *casta* characters can be detected.

Keywords

Casta painting, casta system, *lumpiest de sangre*, colonial Mexico, New Spain, identity

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Introduction

Our world is inundated with numerous forms of globalization, from immigration to movement of commerce, to the transference of culture in art, music, food, fashion, film, and language. Our contemporary context is not new; cultural interrelations have been at work for centuries: the conquering of lands and destruction of kingdoms, the subsequent change of culture, and the eventual rise and fall of empires, has always been part of human history. The ‘discovery’ of the Americas is one such history and one that has developed a composite of cultural backgrounds still present in today’s Latin American society. For centuries, during the Spanish colonization of America, three very distinct cultures coexisted from which cultural artefacts and identities began to emerge.

Colonial Mexico saw the division between Spanish and *indio* (Amerindian), which were differentiated and politically recognized as the *republica de los españoles* and the *republica de los indios*. For the most part indigenous communities kept to themselves and sustained their major cultural practices. However, as early as 1501 the Crown permitted interracial union between the Spanish and Amerindian, to make up for the absence of European women. Nevertheless, these marriages were not promoted or condoned and were mostly in place to prevent further abuse of the natives (Burkholder and Johnston 214-15). The lack of European women resulted in large-scale miscegenation, producing a large population of *mestizos* that later took the form of *castas*, as the practice of interracial coupling continued. This new community was exposed to categorization and given invented nomenclatures to identify the ‘new’ social groups. These groups, in turn, were held in contempt and continuously suffered from the prejudice of the Spanish elite.

Out of this historical context there appeared a new painting genre, exclusive to the Americas and arising out of colonial Mexico and Peru. These paintings visualize different racial groups in a fictional colonial society, highlighting the importance of the Spanish characters. Although some series have been located in Peru, for the most part the production of this secular artistic genre concentrates in colonial Mexico and Puebla. This study seeks to focus on the characters

portrayed in the paintings and their relation to the formation of an imagined New Spain. Historical context is important to understand the formal purpose of these paintings, equally important is unravelling the use of these characters as identity forming cultural objects. This study focuses on the perception of the socially constructed race or *casta* in light of colonial Mexican perception.

While it is inherently important to familiarize oneself with the historical context when studying cultural objects, in this case *casta* painting, it is equally crucial to avoid the misleading tendency of associating these paintings as truthful portrayals of the colonial society. It is easy to fall into a pattern of systematically focusing on how artistic representations convey honest renditions of lived reality. However, at least in the case of the *casta* painting genre, little documentation exists that can corroborate the function of these paintings as mirrors of New Spanish reality. I intend to study these paintings with a fresh perspective, arguing for the allowance of the *casta* painting to be studied as an individual artefact illustrating a fictional colonial society in which characters are ideal models of a deteriorating Spanish elite community.

I will begin my study with a review of important colonial concepts at play during the eighteenth century. In this first chapter I will assess the tensions between the Spanish European subjects and the politics surrounding their socio-economic positions against that of the non-Spanish elite communities. I will then discuss imposed social organization and subject construction through the use of *sistema de castas* (*casta* system), *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity), and *calidad* (quality of character) in colonial Mexico. This will lead to the illustration of the *casta* painting genre and conventions and examples of their use. Additionally, I will discuss socio-political circumstances, which were important during the formation of the *casta* genre, such as the growing violence between the elite and *casta* groups and the arrival of the Bourbon reforms. And finally, the methodology employed in the search to understand the illustration of the *casta* painting characters will be described. This chapter will be a frame of reference and serve as background to understanding the historical context of the *casta* painting genre.

In the second chapter I will explore the roles of *criollo* and *español* subjects in documented history versus the representation of these characters in the paintings. I will demonstrate the

unstable and, at times, contradictory use of the moniker *criollo* and its confusion with the Spanish European (peninsular) subject. The analysis will bring to light *español* character portrayal as a passive figure associated with leisure activities, focusing on the performance and reception of actions as a means to understand the function of this elite character. This chapter will validate the fictitious nature of the *casta* painting and the inconsistency of describing this genre as historically honest artefacts. The *criollos*' erasure as identifiable subjects in the paintings is reversed with the conflation of the subject with the *español* character.

Finally, in the third chapter I will examine the *mestizo* character, the individual *casta* communities, and their respective depictions in *casta* paintings. I will juxtapose the historical representation of *casta* groups against their portrayal in the *casta* painting genre. Moreover, the comparative analysis of performed actions and associated objects, against the norms determined by previous researchers, establishes patterns of character representation. Ultimately, this analysis will stimulate a divergence from the 'established' function of the genre as pacifying social anxieties, in reference to the Spanish elites' strained relationship with the *castas*. The *casta* communities' interactions with performed activities and associated objects distinguish a group of characters that contend with their historically imposed social constraints.

The intention of this project is to view the *casta* paintings as a comprehensive collection and recognize and study the characters as a community. Although not all series are complete, patterns emerging in this study point to the genre's conventions in the depiction of characters. However, these portrayals are not to be considered as representative of the *casta* groups, nor of the historical *casta* system. The analysis uses a combination of digital methodology and close reading of paintings, both of which support and are complimentary to each other. Ultimately the study of these paintings contradicts previous research identifying Spanish and *casta* groups as enclosed in defined social roles and not recognizing the Spanish elite as authorial subjects.

Chapter 1

1 Understanding the *casta* system and society in colonial Mexico

This chapter will explore the historical context of New Spain and the cultural circumstances that propels the emergence of the *casta* genre. Underlying issues arising out of the ‘discovery’ of the Americas and subsequent repercussions leading to eighteenth century New Spain and the contemporary period in which *casta* paintings arose will also be highlighted. It will begin by describing the tensions and boundaries between Spanish subjects arriving to New Spain and their descendants. Moreover, it will examine the role of *sistema de castas* (*casta* system), *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity), and *calidad* (character quality) in the functioning of colonial society. From there, the characterization of the *casta* painting genre, illustrating the norms and practices, and historical factors in play at the moment of the genre’s inception will be described. The chapter will then discuss previous research on *casta* painting and describe how the methodology helps to bring a different research perspective on the subject.

1.1 Spanish conquest of the Americas

After the conquest, boundaries and social divisions were necessary for the take over and domination of the Americas - a measure to keep the civilized Europeans apart from the ‘savage’ natives. This marginalizing tactic led to the political and economical limitations of all those who were not of European blood. In early American history the offspring of Spanish and Amerindian parents were either absorbed by indigenous or European culture, the latter group gaining the advantage of the ‘Spanish’ legitimization. With this title came rights and privileges that were increasingly more difficult to obtain with a growing mixed raced populace. Around 1530, the progeny of Indian and Spanish parents became recognized as “*mestizo*”, so as to differentiate them from the Spanish subjects (Carrera, *Imagining* 36). Several elements transformed the New Spanish society including the dramatic drop of indigenous population due to epidemics, the arrival of Europeans seeking wealth, the increase of African importation to meet labour demands, and an imbalance of female to male ratio (Klor de Alva 59). As a result, a new intermediary class emerged, occupied by *mestizos*. In reaction to changes in population dynamics, strategies to resist the reshaping of colonial society were implemented by the colonial

authority. Advantageous positions are only cherished because of their exclusivity and an intermediary class was developed to hold interracial groups in a subordinate condition. As the *mestizo* class grew, so too did the claims to be categorized as ‘Spanish’ by subjects with Spanish parental lineage – a title that would incur additional privileges associated with the elite group. This community was a solution to the disappearance of Indian labour and to give the elite Spanish the exclusivity they needed to maintain power. Like the *mestizos*, *criollos* (American Spanish) were also marginalized by the Spanish to retain all societal control in the hands of Europe.

After the conquest, *conquistadores* and their children received rights and privileges as payment for their participation in procuring the New World for the Spanish monarchy. These rewards included *encomiendas* that would last for three generations as repayment for their forefathers’ service to the Crown. An *encomienda* was an allotment of a specified number of Indians in a particular area, from whom tribute would be extracted. However the *encomendero* (the individual responsible for the *encomienda*) would also be responsible for their protection and instruction in the Christian faith. In the 1590s, as the inheritances of the *conquistadores*’ descendants was to be suspended, petitions requesting an extension to the previous rights were sought by those people born and raised in the colony - in the *criollos*’ eyes, they were the rightful sovereign. Interestingly, it is through these petitions that a *criollo* consciousness began to form, “[i]t was an identity, however, that found expression in terms of anguish, nostalgia and resentment” (Brading 293). Although a small number of contemporary authors came to the defence of the *criollos* and their ability to self-govern and maintain their entitlements, the majority of intellectuals and writers vehemently opposed the idea. The Franciscan Bernardino de Sahagún (1499-1590) relates that, “those who are born here [are] very similar to the character of the Indians, in aspect they appear Spaniards and in their condition they are not...[they are] intolerable to govern and most difficult to save” (qtd. in Brading 298). Sahagún was one of the earliest missionaries in the Americas and lived there for most of his life, dedicating his life to his religious duties and the study of Aztec archaeology. In his 1612 *Convivencia de las dos monarquias*, the Dominican friar Juan de la Puente, similarly depicts the *criollos*. He states that, “the heavens of the America induce inconstancy, lasciviousness and lies: vices characteristic of the Indians and which the constellations make characteristic of the Spaniards who are born and

bred there” (qtd. in Brading 298.). These statements refer to an acceptance that those born in New Spain, regardless of blood relation to Europeans, were inevitably inferior. The association of *criollos* with the rest of the *castas* in New Spain and the subsequent creation of hierarchical classes was important in the systemization of imperial control.

1.2 *Sistema de castas* (the caste system), *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity), and *calidad* (quality of character) in New Spain

The *sistema de casta* (caste or *casta* system) that arose in colonial Mexico recognized the mixed offspring from unions between the three main ethnic groups in the Americas: *español* (European), *indio* (Amerindian), and *negro* (African). Through time, the process of mestizaje became more complicated as did the nomenclatures for said groups. The *casta* name defined occupation, dress, and tributes, among other regulations pertaining to the individual group. However, as miscegenation continued contradictions in labelling these offspring developed. For example, an *indio* and *barcina* could produce either a *chino*, a *jibaro*, or a *zambaigo* child. Labels could not be easily standardized, as there was no way to codify the appearance of a *mestizo* subject. In the end, the ability to prove ancestral lineage was based on baptismal records. In these official papers, parents’ names and *casta* association would be stated and the individual could claim their *casta*. However, this documentation was not always accepted and the ability to prove one’s *casta* community generally fell to identifying *limpieza de sangre* and the demonstration of *calidad*.

Limpieza de sangre, the purity of blood, refers to a well-established Spanish concept focusing on the purity of an ancestral lineage to determine if a person is an “Old Christian”. Originating in fifteenth century Spain, a preoccupation for authenticity of Old Christian lineage by proving no connection with Muslim or Jewish blood became rampant and necessary for privileges associated with the Christian ‘group of honour’. *Limpieza de sangre*, however, did not simply apply to a genealogical relationship with either Islamic or Jewish religion in the New World, but also with any other genealogical combination, i.e. African, Indigenous, *mestizo* etc. The level of ‘blood contamination’ indicated a subject’s *casta* level and thereby their social restrictions and economic status. However, José Gumilla (?1687-1750), a Spanish Jesuit, claimed that through a

specific process of miscegenation, with each offspring, the bloodline would become white once again (Katzew, *Casta Painting* 47). He attests that it would take four generations to complete the process, outlined as follows:

- I. From European and indian, a mestiza is born (two fourths of each part).
- II. From European and mestiza, a *cuarterona* is born (one fourth Indian).
- III. From European and *cuarterona*, an *ochavona* is born (one eighth Indian).
- IV. From European and *ochavona*, a *puchuela* is born (entirely white). (48-9)

A similar process could be undertaken with *negros* with a result of a white child after the fourth union with a Spanish.

Limpieza de sangre, not only aided in the systemization of the colony's population, but also controlled the European perception of New Spain. By implementing a taxonomic and controlled process to return to a clean bloodline, the negative view of mestizaje was subdued. Ilona Katzew's *Una visión del México del siglo de las luces: La codificación de Joaquín Antonio de Basarás* includes a copy of Basarás' first-hand account of Spanish society in New Spain and its view on the question of *limpieza de sangre* and miscegenation. Basarás, born in Bilbao and a merchant in various parts of New Spain, would have considered himself a respectable member of the higher social classes, as his merits in trade and family's service in public office both point to an advantageous upbringing (Katzew, *La codificación* 9-10). In his text, Basarás identifies and discusses briefly the subject of *casta* paintings and interracial unions and the offspring produced, naming nineteen different mixtures. In two particular unions he determines that the offspring's union with another race would result in a third race. Basarás describes that, "De torna atrás y español, torna atrás tente en el aire, y éste se mantiene en este ser aunque se mezcle con español; pero si se mezcla con su misma nación, desciende a lo mismo negro"¹ (127) and "De india y lobo, tente en el aire, y éste se mantiene también en el mismo ser aunque vuelva a mezclarse con indio; pero si se mezcla con su misma nación, vuelve al primer producto negro"² (129). In the former example, he explains that if the offspring of the two previous unions were to unite with

¹ "From Return backwards and Spanish, Return backwards head in the air, and this subject will remain the same unless they mix with Spanish; but if he mixes with his own group, he will descend to Black" (All passages in this thesis I have translated)

² "From Indian and Wolf, Head in the air, and he will remain the same even if they mix with Indian; but if he mixes with one of his own group, he will return to Black "

one of their own *casta* then there was no possibility to return to Spanish blood and the offspring would be Black. Basarás, therefore, viewed a contaminating effect of African blood in the *casta* system. He finally states in the section on *castas*:

Estas, entre la inmensa especie de gentes de Nueva España, son las principales casta o generaciones que hay en ella, originadas de la introducción de negros por el navío de asiento de los ingleses en dicho reino, el cual, a haberse libertado de la mezcla de aquella nación, fuera ya en el presente tiempo todo de españoles sin adulterio alguno, mediante a que siendo el indio nación limpia, sale, unida con español, a serlo perfectamente al tercer grado, como manifiestan las laminas que siguen.³ (128)

Both Basarás' enumeration of the different *casta* unions and commentary on *casta* paintings, although limited, demonstrate that although the unions were numerous, there still remained a possibility to get back to a *limpieza de sangre*.

The procurement of rights and benefits was an important concern for the New Spanish population, as the authentication of one's affiliation with a *casta* group determined the advantages, or disadvantages, in the socio-economic sphere. However, the main method of establishing one's connection to a particular lineage was through providing legal documentation. Baptismal records, as a result, were sought after as verification of one's *casta*, as they provided information on the parentage of an individual. Nevertheless, the records themselves, although important, could be manipulated easily and, in reality, their importance was often eclipsed by a person's *calidad*. *Calidad* refers to an individual's association to a *casta* based on appearance, circumstance, and inherent character. Assumptions of a subject's affiliation with a particular *casta* was nuanced, a characteristic that was made visible by painters in their varying interpretation of these subjects in *casta* paintings. The absence of a controlled system to correlate and aid in identifying a person's physiognomy with particular *casta* community made it difficult to regulate a subject's membership in one *casta* over another, *calidad*, in turn, was a more practiced process. Therefore, the construct of a person's appearance and associations with wealth

³ "These are the vast types of people that exist in New Spain, they are the main castes and generations, from the introduction of the Blacks through the ships of the English kingdom, which liberated itself from mixing from that nation. In the present time, all the Spanish are without adultery, the Indian through its clean nation, comes, in unions with Spanish, to a third grade, like those shown in the following plates". This inscription follows a list of *casta* unions and is followed by illustrations depicting said unions.

determined their social group, rather than birth documents that could and would be contended. An important example of the ambiguity that existed in New Spanish society is the case of painters.

Although socio-economic positions of *castas* determined rights and privileges, the example of painters demonstrates the nuances of the practice in New Spain. Taking as an example the revised ordinances of the colonial Mexican artistic guilds at the end of the seventeenth century, *indio* inclusion was only permitted for painting “lesser painting genres of landscapes, flowers, fruits, animals, and birds” but training and apprenticeship was prohibited (Deans-Smith, “Dishonor” 60). An *español*, on the other hand, could obtain membership to a guild with the possibility of becoming a master painter. Although guild regulations were passed, they were often undermined by workshops subcontracting certain artistic pieces to untrained and unexamined *indio* painters. Workshops housed various apprentices working under a main master painter who would be involved in initial design and final touch-ups, while the rest would be taken over by the apprentices. Many of the popular master painters in the eighteenth century belonged to varying socio-economic groups, including Juan Rodríguez Juárez⁴, José de Ibarra⁵, and Miguel Cabrera⁶ (47). These particular painters, regardless of their obscure familial circumstance, considered and asserted themselves as Spaniards. Despite documentation of artists as belonging to varying *casta* groups, their involvement within artistic circles demonstrate their endeavour to be “passed as Spanish” and its subsequent success (47). In turn, those painters able to pass into the Spanish social circle were central in the push for regulations meant to keep the arts as a strictly European practiced and run industry, yet they were contradicted with the integration of non-Spanish artists. Interestingly the majority of those painters involved in the pressure for reform were of ambiguous lineage (47). Taking Miguel Cabrera’s as an example again, he was of unknown racial background yet he was one of the most prominent painters, considered himself a Spaniard, and an adamant supporter of reform. The appearance of control, in the policies and regulations of artists, was superficial and only a means to prevent an over-saturation of painters in the artistic guild, thus creating a sense of desire and economic benefits to those belonging to the elite group. As a painter, their association spoke for their connection with

⁴ Juan Rodríguez Juárez (1675-1728)

⁵ José de Ibarra (1685-1756)

⁶ Miguel Cabrera (?1695-1768)

the *español* class rather than an obscure parental lineage. The final resolve and reforms were set in the founding of the Royal Academy of San Carlos in 1785 to help police newly set regulations and standards.

The problems plaguing colonial Mexico are absorbed in the American *casta* painting genre. The *casta* painting is representative of prevalent issues in New Spain, the end of the Habsburg rule and introduction of Bourbon monarchy, the increasingly strenuous relationship between *peninsulares* and *criollos* and between the Spanish authority and *castas*, and finally issues of legitimacy between subjects to maintain legal advantages owing to parental lineage. Paradoxically, although the paintings seemingly depict solutions or calm anxieties caused by the aforementioned concerns, viewing the collective corpus of paintings demonstrates the dilemmas of New Spain rather than the placation of the elite groups.

1.3 The *casta* painting genre

Through an ordered taxonomical visual paradigm, *casta* paintings depict interracial unions and their respective progenies. Arising in the early eighteenth century, the genre became an important secular art genre that stayed throughout the century in colonial Mexico. Each series depicts the process of mestizaje of *españoles* (Spanish), *indios* (Amerindians), and *negros* (Africans) in a set of up to sixteen scenes. The series are broken into three main thematic sections: unions between *español* and *indio*, *español* and *negro*, and *indio* and *negro*. Although the terminology is reductive by identifying *indios* and *negros* as encompassing all those from a particular geographical origin instead of acknowledging their rich cultural differences, it is representative of the colonial worldview in the eighteenth century.

In the majority of the series, each scene contains an embedded title and numeration that adheres to a determined progression of racial hierarchy, placing the *español* at the top, with each step down the scale representing the dilution of Spanish blood and African blood representing the most ‘contamination’ (Olson 311). Although less frequent, there are singular paintings that are divided into scenes that demonstrate the same process of mestizaje. The paintings themselves depict the family in different settings, domestic spheres, kitchens, markets, shops, in which the characters are carrying out activities, like playing music, painting, eating, cooking, and posing.

The characters themselves are dressed in varying degrees of luxury or poverty, although this is dependent on the artistic interpretation by the artist. The series deliver an image of luxury and prosperity as, at times, the poorest classes are depicted as affluent. Although the main function of these paintings is contentious, the idealized images encourage the colonial and European audience to view New Spain as a prosperous part of the monarchy.

The title embedded in the frame serves as an important feature for this genre, which not only allows the viewer to identify each character, but also provides a visual register in the hierarchical *sistema de castas*. An example of this characteristic is Miguel Cabrera's "4. De español y negra, mulata." (4. From Spanish and Black, Mulatto) (fig. 1), in which a Spanish father gives his mulatto child a fruit, while the Black mother carries a basket of fruit, both fruits which are produce of America. In this particular title the number "4" indicates the position of the painting in the series and the rest of the title indicates the socio-economic level of each character through its association with the *sistema de castas*. Although the title identifies each character as belonging to a *casta* group, without these titles it is difficult to recognize and impose the subject to certain social levels, as there is no consistency in the representation of each character. In the Cabrera example, the fruit is featured with labels in the painting, for example "Texocotes", a species of hawthorn originating from Mexico, and "Chayotes", a type of squash also originating from Mexico, in the mother's basket. The inclusion of fruits and vegetables supports the idea of richness and unusual curiosities of the New World and demonstrates to the European community the exceptionality of the Spanish empire. The use of written language in paintings allows for the explicit identification of *castas*, but it also establishes the audience as literate and, therefore, of the elite classes.

The popularity of *casta* paintings in the market is recognized by the different methods that painters used to generate and disseminate artworks. In this case, the large number of anonymous painters and varying prices and qualities in the production of the genre demonstrates its success. It is important to note, that many of the series are considered anonymous today due to a lack of documentation, the disappearance of works from series, and the strong possibility of inscription erasure in the paintings. The possibility of tracing the production is present in the use of models, which was a common practice in the dissemination of artistic genres and which became a norm

in the production of the *casta* painting. Originally a practice in Europe, it was also important in the New World with the transference of religious didacticism through artworks. The use of models was popular not only to train new artists in America, but also to propagate the correct religious principles in an aesthetically pleasing manner, both of which were essential in the conquest of the land and its people. Interestingly, *casta* painting was not a genre that initiated in Europe nor were European models used, rather a new American genre and model took hold of the market and was circulated. For example, a series attributed to Juan Rodríguez Juárez and a series by José de Ibarra contain the same basic conventions for depicting families. The first, *De Castizo, y Española produce Español* (From Castizo and Spaniard, produce a Spaniard) (fig. 2), attributed to Juárez, c. 1715, depicts a *castizo* man smoking, the Spanish son crying and holding on to his father's cape, and the Spanish mother caressing the boy's head. This scene is similarly depicted in José de Ibarra's *De castizo y española, español* (From Castizo and Spaniard, Spaniard) (fig. 3), c. 1725, which paints the *castizo* man smoking, the woman caressing the Spanish son's head, while the son looks to his father. All characters from both paintings have similar dress, the *castizo* man wears a brown cape with a light brown hat, the woman, a material patterned headdress, necklace and with a red skirt and shawl, and the boy wears a blue outfit. In these frames the *castizo* man smokes and looks disdainfully at his son and the mother tries to soothe the boy. The settings of the family for both paintings are difficult to distinguish; the series by Juárez visualizes a wall behind the characters, although it is not clear whether they are inside or outside. In turn, the Ibarra scene is clearer, showing a space that indicates an interior that leads to an exterior, with the family waiting inside. Borrowing or copying one another's work was a common practice within artistic circles, especially in a close network of painters, as is the case in colonial Mexico. This network is well explained in Ilona Katzew's *Casta Painting* (31) and would be of interest to study more closely. The popularity of the genre can be seen not only in the manner in which it was produced, but also in the audience that it held.

Although documentation on the patrons and residence of the artworks is scarce, the information available suggests standard practices. Christa Olson states that "the majority of extant *casta* series were found in European private collections and museums, [and] scholars agree that their largest market must have been Spanish administrators or visitors" (312). Furthermore, Deans-Smith's work on patrons, collections and commissions, provides a list of persons that lived in

New Spain, most dating in the latter half of the eighteenth-century, that contributed to the *casta* painting market: the Duque de Linares, viceroy of New Spain who commissioned a series from Juan Rodríguez Juárez; the auxiliary Bishop of Puebla Juan Francisco de Loaiza may have commissioned a series from Luis Berrueco; Francisco Antonio de Lorenzana, Archbishop of Mexico, obtained a series by José Joaquín Magón; Viceroy Bucareli not only owned his own set, but also shipped a series to his niece, the Condesa de Gerena; Lieutenant Colonel don Antonio Rafael de Aguilera y Orense commissioned a set from Ignacio Maria Barreda y Ordoñez; Blas Clavijero, a Spanish royal tax collector; Don Domingo Antonio López, *Administrador Principal de Correos*; Don Domingo Arangoiti, an *oidor* of the Real Audiencia de Mexico; Don Manuel Antonio de Loaria, a merchant; and Viceroy Amat y Juniet in Perú (“Creating”, 182-83). Although there is little information on those that commissioned the paintings, the few that have been documented were either representative of the Spanish ruling groups, that is, nobles and middle to high-class authoritative standing, and government officials. Taking into account the information on patrons, the process of production, and the conventions of the artworks, the three demonstrate the consumption of these painting by the upper classes.

1.4 Historical Background

Several elements provoked fear and anxiety for the *español* and *criollo* upper classes, including rebellions and general threats against the system of authority. A couple of incidents that added to mounting tension occurred at the end of the seventeenth century. A year of agricultural misfortune lead to the 1692 riot where thousands of people rushed the Plaza Mayor in Mexico city, threatening the stability of the viceroy’s rule, as grain prices rose. Records of this riot are confined to a Spanish perspective, which, in turn, attributes the hostile event to the *indios* (Cope, *The Limits* 125). However, as the price of maize was at the highest of the century, the participants of the riot would have likely included every one of lower economic levels, not just the Amerindians. Adding to the sense of apprehension, by the seventeenth-century, numerous black slaves had escaped and formed communities that were rumoured to attack *españoles* and *indios* along the roads. However, at the beginning of the eighteenth century the introduction of strict reform policies by the Bourbon monarchy strove to solidify Spanish control.

With the introduction of Bourbon reforms at the beginning of the century, several policies were passed to both restore a crumbling Spanish empire and regulate social order in colonial Mexico. In general, it sought to restructure colonial administration, dilute elitist power, and improve the economy benefitting Spain and the *peninsulares* (John Lynch, *Bourbon Spain* 329-74; Carrera, *Imagining Identity* 33-4). In the second half of the eighteenth century the plan to revitalize the colonial economy and Spain's status as a world power took hold in varying regulatory changes. At the head of the reorganization were Juan de Villalba, responsible for the militia; José de Galvéz, responsible for administrative changes; and José Patiño and José Campillo, who revived the economy by applying mercantilist policies. Although a success by the end of the century, the new strategies incurred much anger and resentment among the American population, above all, the *criollos*.

The reform changes caused general *criollo* discontent as their marginalization spanned across all sectors. The arrival of Juan de Villalba in 1766 caused the City Council to mount a protest to the Crown for his lack of respect to the nobility of colonial Mexico. The newly arrived militia from Europe believed that no nobility existed in the colony and, therefore, there should be no separation of nobles and commoners in the candidates for the new American militia to be armed (Brading 467). For the *criollos*, however, this was of great offense as previous ordinances had always recognized them as the elite class and descendants of all the Spanish great houses. José de Galvéz's restructure of the entire governing body by expelling the *criollos* from office heightened colonial Mexican anxiety. In 1687 the seats in the *Audiencia* began to be sold, generally falling into the power of the wealthy Spanish Americans. Thus, much of the judicial power fell on the *criollos*, who, in turn, were expelled by Galvéz's reforms. In addition to the administration, trade practices and the clergy went through numerous reforms (MacLachlan and Rodriguez 268-83), which focused on the advantages for Spain rather than the colony. Another notable movement to control colonial society was through the physical segregation within city limits through a division of the illustrious *Español* elite and *castas* in communities under the supervision of Spanish authority (Carrera 34-5).

The idea of separating and subverting those of mixed race lineage was essential in maintaining the rights and privileges to an exclusive few. This marginalization included the persecution of

criollos by the Spanish elite. As the number of *criollos* grew, so too did the tension between their treatment by the Spanish European populace. With the many administrative changes brought by the Bourbon reforms, the *peninsulares* would take positions of power away from *criollos* thus creating further tension in an already strained relationship. Although there was shared lineage, the preoccupations of those born in America differed from those arriving from Spain. The importance of historical context aids in understanding the secular artistic object that is *casta* painting.

1.5 Literature Review

There are several important works that study the *casta* painting, its society and function, all of which build and expand the understanding and context of the *casta* painting genre. In Blanchard's "Les tableaux du Mestissage au Mexique", he proposes that the Spanish created *casta* painting as a visual register in order to distinguish themselves from mixed bloods (59). Teresa Castelló Yturbide, continues with the idea of the paintings as visual registers, however as visual aid for parishioners to establish race (74). However, in both cases the insufficient evidence of the paintings' exhibitions makes it difficult to substantiate their use. Specifically for Yturbide's argument, no *casta* series has been located or documented to have belonged to a church. In addition, the nomenclatures of the characters are not consistent and, therefore, their use as aids is not a viable deduction. Francisco de las Barras de Aragón, on the other hand, puts the creation of paintings as motivated by Enlightenment period (155), while Isidro Moreno Navarro's study, demonstrates that paintings do not accurately show reality and are, therefore, works born out of taxonomic interest of the Spanish Enlightenment (145-7). María Concepción García Saíz, a prominent *casta* painting researcher and curator, notes that the paintings were used as an exotic souvenir for European audiences (*Las castas* 20). However, because some paintings did not leave Mexico, she insists that they were a snapshot of colonial life and would appeal to a foreign clientele. Meanwhile, Elena Isabel Estrada de Gerlero connects the paintings as part of questionnaires sent out by the Spanish monarchy, as they began to document and collect the different curiosities found in the empire ("Las pinturas" 83). Most notable is Ilona Katzew's seminal work *Casta Painting*, which creates a fundamental resource and provides contextual information on the paintings and its history. She overturns previous beliefs that the *casta* painting originated from the Enlightenment period, by demonstrating that the idea of the *casta*

painting precedes the Enlightenment by more than two decades (8). Although the Enlightenment might have begun two decades after the first *casta* paintings, ideas of taxonomy of unknown curiosity could have still been surfacing during this time and therefore, just as readily linked to the idea of *castas* as part of this frame of thinking. Additionally, she challenges the notion of defining one single function for the paintings, instead insisting that they exist as part of a larger colonial discourse, one that takes into account the varying political realities of the colony (8). Although, like Katzew states, pinpointing a single function for the paintings is impossible to determine without concrete documentation (8), one of the main inherent aspects of *casta* paintings is the agency of control and its association with the higher classes, which will be explored throughout this study.

1.6 Methodology

A methodology that combines technological practices and traditional close reading was necessary to maintain and contain the large amount of information accumulated on *casta* paintings and to make it more feasible to notice patterns not easily distinguished without the help of statistical analysis. For this project several steps were taken to obtain, organize, and analyze the information in the *casta* database that I have used for my research. In this section I will outline the stages of the project and the way in which I have decided to approach the study of the *casta* genre. In this section I will begin by discussing the procurement of metadata for each individual painting an already existing database was used in addition to traditional methods. The acquirement of already stored metadata was complemented with a close study of each painting. Additionally, a schema was implemented to model the data for the database. Following this step, the technical and practical creation of the database was executed which involved traditional investigative methods and included the input of all the data following norms of the database. After the database was completed a statistical analysis was performed in relation to research questions. I will finally address some limitations of using this methodology for the study of *casta* painting.

The database used multiple sources for its construction, including data already stored in the Baroque Art database (baroqueart.cultureplex.ca) and data manually collected and entered from catalogues into the *casta* project database. The Baroque Art database houses a large collection of

metadata on baroque artworks and their artists, including a substantial amount of documented *casta* paintings. The information on artworks was retrieved and manually inputted over the several years of the Hispanic Baroque Project (www.hispanicbaroque.ca) and were then uploaded onto a public website allowing the dataset to be downloaded, cleaned, and input into a database system used for this study. This project used SylvaDB (sylvadb.com), a graph database management system that allows datasets to be manually added or imported and modeled. The paintings used in this study come from various catalogue collections: Saíz's *Las castas mexicanas*, Katzew's *Casta Painting*, the magazine *Artes de Mexico*'s edition of *La pintura de castas*, Gerlero's article "Las pinturas de castas, imágenes de una sociedad variopinta", and the online catalogue for Museo de América in Madrid, Spain. The above-mentioned catalogues were consulted not only for the metadata, but also for the individual study of each painting. One of the most important parts of the study includes the close reading of each painting that was input into the *casta* database. A large portion of the dataset that was imported into SylvaDB included metadata for each artwork, such as the title, date, size, reference, location, and painter.

The examination of the catalogues allowed for the data to be modeled into a schema, which serves as the framework of how the information is organized in SylvaDB. Studying the paintings allowed for a general overview of patterns that would lend to the construction of the schema. A schema was used in the process of conceptualizing the metadata into a structure that represents how the database is organized. It reveals the central points of the *casta* painting that is to be studied and determines the connections between them. In figure 4, the schema shown demonstrates the relationships between objects identified by arrows. The graph database contains various nodes: "painting", "creator", "family", "character", "setting", "object", and "action". The central piece is the painting itself, which contains the attributes: title of the painting, year of creation, location (original and current), inscription, size, and references. The "creator" is attached to the painting, a node that only contains the name of the painter, as the focus of the study is the artwork and more emphasis is put on that node. The painting attaches to the node "family", identified by the family type that is included and extracted from the title of the paintings. The "family", therefore, refers to the family unit that is depicted in each painting or frame and of which I have maintained the original label. The node "character", which also attaches to "painting" and "family", relates to the subjects that are depicted and include the

attributes title, *casta*, male/female/unspecified gender, parent/progeny/servant, and position in the painting. Inclusively the title and *casta* that describe the individual characters, like the node “family”, are extracted from the titles. Additionally, the node “character” is also associated with the nodes “actions” and “objects”. The “actions” that are performed by the characters were extracted from the paintings and, although there are many, a limited number were accounted so that the ontology⁷ would not become exhaustive and hinder the study. In total there are 34 performed actions⁸, of which most are similar to each other and have been consolidated so as to ensure more conciseness. For example, the action *posing* refers to a character that does not have an active role, such as sitting on a chair, standing and looking towards an imagined audience, or just standing in the frame with no particular occupation. Something like *labour-produce/food related* or *labour-goods/services* refers to characters that are contributing to a laborious activity such as carrying large amounts of grains or game to selling textiles or fixing shoes. The action *crying/upset/pleading* refers to those characters that are in anguish, whether they are trying to stop a fight or a child crying for a toy. *Pulque* or *tobacco activity* refers to characters that are performing an activity associated with the traditional *pulque* drink originating from Mexico or rolling or smoking tobacco. Most activities can be generally divided into two major groups: laborious and leisure activities. However, there are certain actions that do not follow the norm, but are equally as important, for example *violence*. There are two main manifestations of violence, *hitting/fighting* and *fighting-non-physical*, the difference lying in whether there is physical and violent contact between two characters or if one is just yelling or threatening the other, the latter falling under *fighting-non-physical*. Actions, as well, are not one-directional, the characters not only perform the actions, but they also receive them. For example, a parent is *holding* a child and at the same time the child is *held* by the parent, thereby *holding* goes both

⁷ Ontology: “An ontology is an explicit specification of a conceptualization. The term is borrowed from philosophy, where an ontology is a systematic account of Existence. For knowledge-based systems, what ‘exists’ is exactly that which can be represented. When the knowledge of a domain is represented in a declarative formalism, the set of objects that can be represented is called the universe of discourse. This set of objects, and the describable relationships among them, are reflected in the representational vocabulary with which a knowledge-based program represents knowledge.” (Gruber 1-2)

⁸ The actions include: holding/caressing child, tobacco activity, pulque activity, posing, breastfeeding, playing music, hunting, crying/upset/pleading, cooking, grooming, labour-produce/food related, labour-goods/services, holding an animal(s), playing, marketplace activity, sewing, hitting/fighting, dancing/clapping, picking up a person, domestic activity, carrying food, feeding, holding parent, purchasing, serving, riding an animal, writing/painting, farming, surveillance, giving object, fighting-non-physical, eating/drinking, selling goods, buying, drunk/passed out drunk

from parent to child and from child to parent. The “objects” that are associated with the characters have also been extracted through the study of the paintings and through patterns that emerge in the relationships between characters within the paintings. There are a total of 24 objects⁹, ranging from leisure items like tobacco and toys to occupational necessities, such as textiles and sewing. These, however, are one directional, as characters are only associated to the object and not vice versa. Although there are a wide variety of objects that can be attached to each character, it is both the relationship between “object” and “action” that make the study interesting and the database necessary. Through this I am able to extract answers to questions like: what labour activities and associated objects does a certain *casta* associate itself with? What action and object are most paired with in relation with *casta x*? Thereby allowing me to uncover the systemization of identity through actions in *casta* paintings. Finally, the paintings are also associated to the node “setting”, which allows the general landscape of the image to be extracted. They have been divided into two main spheres, indoors and outdoors, each containing six different spaces¹⁰. Although the spaces might seem to overlap in their general definitions there are certain conventions that I have associated with each setting. For example, *outdoor-unspecified* and *unspecified* may seem very general terms and quite similar, however, they are not. A setting that belongs with *outdoor-unspecified* is a landscape that has no real defining qualities, but there is a difference in tones between the sky and the ground. On the other hand, there are some painting that have a singular monotone background colour that gives no indication to whether the character is inside or outside, therefore the setting would be associated with *unspecified*. The difference between the *countryside* and *natural landscape* is the former depicts more pastoral scenes, the latter, however, is typically associated with ‘barbarous Amerindians’ and depicts dense forests and waterfalls.

As previously stated, the majority of information associated with the painting metadata was retrieved from the Baroque Art database data set. However, most of the research still utilizes

⁹ Objects: wig, jewellery, whip, kitchen utensils, bow and arrow, sewing equipment, instrument, brazier, black beauty mark, tobacco/snuffbox, shoes, holding an animal, holding item for sale, weapon (unidentified), fan, cards, food items (no specified destination), toy, gun, sword/knife, pottery/ceramics, material/textile goods, writing utensils/book, checkers

¹⁰ Setting: (outdoor) -marketplace, cityscape, countryside, natural landscape (wilderness), outdoor-unspecified, domestic sphere (outside); (indoor) kitchen, shop, public house, living room, domestic sphere, unspecified

traditional measures of recovering the books used in the database, looking through the catalogues, and manually inputting the rest of the information on relationships between the paintings and their characters/families/objects/actions. I first took the paintings already input into the database, cross-referenced them in the catalogue, and input the remaining data. Although the majority of the paintings were already in the Baroque Art database, I took out all the paintings that were not from New Spain and added some from catalogues that were not included in the data set that I had found in my personal research.

The challenges faced centered on the inclusion of composite paintings in a database that was already created and could not be changed. The problem arose in having multiple families associated to one painting, however, in the original way of input there would be no way to associate the family structures with their given hierarchical number. The importance of maintaining a relationship between family and number impacts the authenticity of the study. To fix this problem an attribute was added in the link (edge) between “painting” and “family”. This way every family that was numbered in the paintings could now be easily associated and quantified. Although not the best way to fix the entire problem, this allowed for a patch to be implemented until a solution to importing a corrected dataset can be implemented once the program has been updated.

Once the database was completed the statistical analysis needed to be executed. For this, with the help of a colleague, queries were made to the database extracting essential information and visualizing results using python scripts. My particular focus and questions guided the different queries made and ranged from general calculations quantifying relationships between individual *castas* and actions to more topic-specific relationships such as the relationship between male and female Spanish characters and objects associated to specific occupations. The next two chapters will include the results obtained from the *casta* database and their subsequent study.

Although I have accumulated a substantial database representing the majority of located *casta* paintings, there are limitations that need to be acknowledged. Although the database contains the majority, if not all, located *casta* paintings, the general analysis and patterns cannot be representative of the entire painting genre. Table 1 presents a table containing the final totals of

each node and the information that was analyzed during this study. In this database I have included 72 different series, that is to say that the paintings belong to 72 different collections of paintings. However, there might only be one or two per series and at most 16 paintings. Although there are numerous variations of *casta* paintings, the study cannot be representative of the entire genre as there are an unaccounted number of missing or destroyed paintings. This exercise is meant to introduce new methodologies and approaches to *casta* painting research. This study is a comprehensive study, not only of the *casta* genre, but also of patterns arising that are more clearly deciphered through the use of a database system.

Chapter 2

2 Identifying the *español* in *casta* paintings – looking for the *criollo*

The first chapter of this study describes the use of the *sistema de castas* as inspiration for the construction of the *casta* painting genre and the endeavour of portraying colonial Mexican society. In this chapter I will focus on the specific case of the *español* character that is visible in all series, the absence of the *criollo* character, the relationships between *españoles* and actions performed, and messages of stability or degeneracy expressed through these depictions. The creole is the offspring of two European parents in a colonized region, however in this particular study I will focus on the *criollo* of New Spain. Although of European blood, the *criollo* was often passed over as inferior to the rest of the elite Spanish born colonial subjects even if *limpieza de sangre* constituted their elite placement in society. Contemporary belief viewed inferiority in those born and raised in America, which generated a condition closely resembling the socially primitive native population, as previously explored in the first chapter. Furthermore, there exists ambiguity in the term *criollo*. Although, according to the definition, creoles are full-blooded Spanish, the early years of the conquest saw an increase of miscegenation and, therefore, the likelihood of *mestizo* blood in these individuals is highly likely. However, the conflict of the terminology and the treatment of creoles complicate the study of the *español* character in the *casta* painting genre.

Prior to the eighteenth century the term *español* encompassed Spanish Europeans, Spanish Americans, even those *mestizos* born who had the social advantage of an elite position. However, the broad definition shifted with American descendants being recognized as *criollos* with connotations of a *mestizo* background and were held in a negative light by the Europeans. In Solange Alberro's *Del gachupín al criollo*, the Bourbon reforms' restriction of the *criollos'* participation in administrative and political roles caused the natural search for an American identity (38-39). Uncertainty remains on the position of the *criollo* subject in the colony and whether they truly belong in the *casta* group or with the Spanish class. Some taxonomical charts indicate that *criollo* belongs to the *español* group, in which both titles are used synonymously, while others classify *criollo* as a *casta*. In one of the seminal catalogues published, *Las castas*

mexicanas: Un género pictórico americano by María Concepción García Saíz, a comprehensive taxonomic chart (table 2) indicates that at the top of the *casta* system exists the “*Criollo/Creole*” (24). In Saíz’s chart the *criollo* is a caste and there is no mention of *español*, demonstrating a social division between these two elite subjects. Her chart seeks to provide colonial caste names in relation to their original progenitors, avoiding any “blood analysis”, with the desire for its use as reference in the study of *casta* society (22). In the example of anthropologist Nicolás León, the *casta* chart is not hierarchical; rather, it is a frame of reference of all existing nomenclatures. Although it does not include *criollo*, it does include: ‘Español’, ‘Gente blanca’, and ‘Requinterón de mestizo o español’, most of which do not exist in *casta* paintings and all of which could refer to the elite European class. This particular chart is divided into two rows, the first lists the names of *castas* and the second identifies the union that produces those in the first row. Moreover, León’s study places emphasis on blood analysis, studying family unions and offspring through bloodline percentages. The varying designation of the *criollo* attests to the changeability of the subject in both real-world colonial context and the imagined *casta* painting. The uncertainty around the use of *criollo* nomenclature and exclusive depiction of *español* characters may relate to the idea of law versus cultural society. For Mörner, in *Race Mixture*, ambiguity between race and social class is clarified by determining two scales of classification, legal condition or social status (60):

A. *Legal condition*

1. “Spaniards”
2. Indians
3. Mestizos
4. Free Negroes, mulattoes, zamboes
5. Slaves

B. *Social status*

1. Peninsular Spaniards
2. Criollos
3. Mestizos
4. Mulattos, zamboes, free Negroes
5. Slaves
6. Indians (if not caciques, etc.)

The above illustration relates to Mörner’s belief that classifying by legality and society closely represents the exclusive use of Spanish denomination throughout the *casta* genre. However, although *español* is a legal name and creoles, to a certain extent, could be considered cultural entities, it does not take into account that *criollos* were still a part of colonial policy. The *criollo*, biologically Spanish, is still considered secondary to the Spanish European, however, still remaining at the top of social levels. In truth, the relationship between these two subjects and the

erasure of the *criollo* in the paintings speaks to a cultural and power tension between two elite groups.

In this chapter I propose to investigate the depiction of the Spanish subject in *casta* paintings and its consequent implications within society in colonial Mexico. In total, the number of paintings that contain a character identified as *criollo* is one. Through the conflation of the *español* and *criollo* characters in *casta* paintings tension between reality of the *casta* system and *casta* genre emerge. The depictions of these characters connect the relationship between the preservation of power by the Spanish to the convergence of the peninsular and creole identities in the paintings' *español* character. The importance of the Spanish character centers on the establishment of order and rule for the European spectator and to reiterate and legitimize their power over *castas*. Highlighting several aspects of the *español* character through database analysis, historical context, and critical examination and juxtaposition of the *criollo* and *español* will reveal some answers about the elusive character. Some questions that will guide my study are: how is the *criollo* physically missing in *casta* paintings? And, why is he/she not necessary in the composition of these mixed family representations? Furthermore, is their absence related to social history or another manner of idealizing the culture?

2.1 Analysis

In this section I will juxtapose the consistencies and contentions arising out of paintings', the analysis in conjunction with social trends in colonial Mexico. This initial analysis examines and establishes the importance of the *español* character by their aggregate total in the paintings studied. At first glance, the Spanish character saturates the collections, ranging from a leisurely figure to a well-dressed vendor, appearing in all series. For example, in figure 5 the *español* is seen in the domestic sphere lounging in a chair, passively observing his wife and children playing. In turn, in figure 6 the *español* gestures towards one side of the painting, seemingly pointing towards the path to take, the *india* woman follows, eyes cast down submissively, and a young boy carries an infant *mestizo* child. Interestingly, in these paintings the *peninsulares* customarily take positions of political, economic, and social control, wherein rich attire and non-laborious activities complement this status. Viewing the distribution of characters by *castas* in figure 7 it is the *español* character that takes primacy, followed by the *indio* character. However,

comparing the number of *español* characters against the number of total *casta* characters, disregarding taxonomical divisions, the latter is dominant. Figure 8 indicates that the Spanish, combining adults and children, represents 18.1% of characters, while 81.9%, the majority, is the combined *casta* characters. Although the collective *casta* community is representative of a higher percentage of characters, it is the *español* who hold the majority of characters by social community, thus demonstrating their authority in the imagined colonial Mexican society. Moreover, the overwhelming amount of combined *casta* subjects corresponds to the tensions of the elites outnumbered by a marginalized community. Although the *sistema de castas* was meant to appease the small population in control of New Spain and, therefore, depict *casta* subjects that are submissive and obedient in their given roles, in truth what materializes in these paintings are fictionalized figures that conceal the ambivalent nature of the *casta* community.

The numerous *casta* groups versus the single *español* power assert the superiority of the latter. The comparison of these two acutely different groups of characters is, often times, not as distinct as in the policies that determine *casta* roles. Although in general the *español* character is better dressed, included in all series, and occupying leisure activities, often times other *castas* are depicted in a similar way. However, the idyllic vision is contradicted by the harsh realities of colonial *casta* life, as “[t]hey were also the most common inhabitants of jails, the most likely to be forced into military service, and the only groups that experienced the harshest corporal punishments like brandings and whippings”, their lives were of poverty and extreme deprivation (Burkholder and Johnson 196, 199). As a result, the Spanish sense of prestige is reduced in comparison with those images that starkly contrast *castas*. However, there also appear large inconsistencies in the representation of the *castas* themselves. The physical portrayal of *casta* groups varies from series to series, which speaks to the lack of consensus on the use of *casta* names, as well as physiognomy and general occupation, in particular of those in which a lot of intermixing has occurred. For example, Barreda’s portrayal of *castas* in a single canvas (fig. 9) offers the viewer a panorama of all the groups of people in the New World. However, if the titles labeling each character disappeared there are not many identifying features that would differentiate most characters from one another through physiognomy. The primary manner of distinguishing from one another is the material wealth and occupations that each character

embodies. This demonstrates the potential for social ascension if the right clothes and occupation can pass, for example, an *albino* for an *español*.

The *español* character performs two main actions in the *casta* genre: *posing* and *holding/caressing child*. In figure 10 the distribution of actions performed by *español* divided by gender is presented. As can be observed, other activities that are performed are: *eating/drinking*, *giving object*, *holding parent*, *playing*, *playing music*, *tobacco activity*, and *writing/painting*. Although *posing* and *holding/caressing child* are representative of a large number of *español* characters, the other actions performed can be considered leisure activities. Nevertheless, the highest number of *español* characters performs *posing*, which is used to describe various positions. A character that looks as if it is *posing* will be represented as having no real occupation, inasmuch as characters that sit or look outwards, towards the implied audience (see figure 5 and 8). If the number of *posing español* characters is split by gender, close to 80 males belong to the *posing* class compared to the 25 females for the same action. In truth, the majority of *español* characters are gendered male, which points to the exclusively male dominant power structure that is also associated with genealogical endowment to their offspring. Gender difference in colonial New Spain speaks to the acutely patriarchal system that engulfed the society. Established gender roles - men holding all political, economic, and social power translates well into the paintings. However, the depicted gender difference erases the importance of women and their complex role in society. Women, especially those of the elite class, managed properties and mines, took over their husbands' duties when away, and dominated the markets, as both consumer and merchant, thus breaking the strict gender norms (Burkholder and Johnson 227-8). Marriage records, for example, often qualify grooms with terms such as *español* or *indio*, but don't provide the background of the bride. In *Geneological Fictions*, by María Elena Martínez, reveals gender roles in colonial society:

Similarly, baptismal records include more information about the father (and godfather) than about the mother or child. The gendered asymmetry in parish registers was the result of the Castilian tradition of determining the socio-political status of family members according to that of the head of the household, normally the father. A patrilineal logic reigned, that is, not just in the discourse of nobility (which established noble status through paternal bloodline) but in processes of establishing vecindad ("citizenship" or

membership in the local community) and *naturaleza* (“nativeness” or membership in the kingdom). (*Genealogical Fictions* 143)

Although in the *casta* genre *español* female characters participate in various occupations, agency is placed on the male, thus blurring the true impact of Spanish women in colonial society. Furthermore, the general trend of depicting women in passive actions, such as *holding/caressing child* and *posing* continues on for most *casta* groups. The Spanish characters’ engagements in *posing*, the dominant action, conveys a sense of importance and elevated position for these subjects in the representation of New Spanish society. The thought of labour in colonial society would have been associated with poorer communities that work for the elites, who, in turn, reap the rewards. As a result, the majority of *español* characters’ association with upper society conflates with the leisure of posing for paintings, lounging in domestic settings, among other scenes.

The second most important action that Spanish characters perform in these paintings is *holding/caressing child*. Again, there is a large imbalance between men and women, as there are about 30 male characters versus 10 female characters who perform the same action. Interpreting this action can range from a parent holding an infant to a parent placing their hand on the head of the child (fig. 11). Although the total amount of Spanish characters related to *posing* is over double the amount of *holding/caressing child*, the latter is still an important action to study. The stark gender division of this action not only suppresses the role of the woman, but it also establishes male authority over the children. In turn, the association of Spanish characters, in particular male, related to *holding/caressing child* can be explained by the strong association of males as paternal and dominating the ancestral lineage. The relationship between father and child depicted in the painting solidifies and exemplifies the idea of parentage and demonstrates the concept of *limpieza de sangre* that was popular among society at the time.

There are some disparities in the associated action that are received by the *español* characters (fig. 10). On the one hand the top two received actions concord with actions given, on the other hand, the third received action conflicts with the two previous, *holding/caressing child* and *holding parent*. The majority of received actions fall into the *holding/caressing child* category indicating that the *español* character is a child being held. Consequently, the second most often

sighted received action is *holding parent*, which attributes the *español* parent to receiving the action. While both of these imply a somewhat loving relationship between the characters in the paintings, the third most often received action is *hitting/fighting*. Nevertheless, the number of characters participating in this action is about half of the amount in the *holding/caressing child* grouping. The idea that *español* characters are depicted in violent relationships speaks to viewing mixed race relationships as turbulent, thus challenging the genre's acceptance of the miscegenation depicted.

In a number of paintings a violent division in the family speaks to the conflict of miscegenation and the possible decadence of these intermarriages. The didacticism of these frames goes hand in hand with emphasizing the performance of *castas* and *españoles*. Although 9.2% (fig. 13) of paintings depict characters performing *violent* actions, it is the most impactful and expressive portrayals. Violence can be expressed in a variety of ways, from physical contact, crying or pleading, to scolding or threatening gestures. The 2009 article “Fragmented Borders, Fallen Men, Bestial Women: Violence in the Casta Paintings of the Eighteenth-century New Spain”, by Evelina Guzauskyte, uses 24 paintings with instances of violence and discusses their function in the general idealized vision of the *casta* genre. She infers that in the paintings where women are consistently depicted as the violent instigators, the scenes serve to contrast the peaceful family structures, and although no particular *casta* is consistently portrayed negatively, racial and gender prejudices are illustrated. Additionally, she states that these “paintings emphasize the self-destructive marriages between individuals whose precise racial heritage is difficult to determine” (192). In comparison with my study, the definition of violence, the number of paintings found, and the methodology of the study differ. Contrary to Guzauskyte's research, I have located thirty-four paintings containing violent performances between characters characterized by physical actions rather than a general environment of chaos¹¹ (178), in addition to the use of close-reading and database analysis in my methodology.

¹¹ Guzauskyte's study takes both physical and non-physical violence into consideration, however, she also takes “[s]pace, bodily and facial features, occupational tools, clothing, animals and fruits are all used to represent degenerate characters within a chaotic environment” (178). She establishes paintings that depict characters in deep poverty with tattered clothing and establishes them as much violent scenes just as those that contain a physical fight between two characters.

As mentioned previously, violence is depicted by physical actions rather than environment (i.e. tattered clothing and general state of poverty are not considered violent). The majority of these paintings are dated from 1750 onward, with only a couple originating in the first half of the century. Out of the paintings extracted as violent, they are divided by the three different ways in which violence could be expressed: *Hitting/fighting*, *Crying/upset/pleading*, *Fighting-non-violent* (fig. 14). In figure 15, the painting *De Indio y Loba produce Sambaigo* (From Indian and Lobo woman, Zambaigo) by an unknown artist, depicts the *Indio* father holding a rope in one hand, while the other grabs violently at the arm of the young *zambaigo* child. The *loba* mother rebukes the father with one hand looking at him directly, the *indio* father also returning the scold of his wife. The child holds an object in his hand and looks up with distress towards his mother. In this painting the violence takes over the scene, the father grabbing the child, the mother chastising, and the father in the course of disciplining his son. In contrast, the painting by Andrés de Islas, *No. 4. De español y negra, nace mulata* (From Spaniard and Black, Mulatta is Born) (fig. 16), the scene is much more violent with the *Negro* woman brandishing a kitchen utensil in one hand, while the other clutches the *español's* white hair. The *español*, in turn, tries to prevent the attack by grasping at the *negro* woman's arm that holds his hair and blocking her from coming nearer. In between them the young *mulata* girl cries, pleads, and holds on to her mother's skirts. The didacticism of the *casta* genre is particularly jarring in this instance, as not only the title labeling each character appears, but also a large legend entitled *Frutas de el paiz* (Fruits of the country), appearing at the top of the painting enumerating all the vegetation native to America. Both the violent depiction of domesticity in conflict and the teaching agency in the titles as written references demonstrate the educational charge of the painting. There are varying degrees of violence present in these paintings, however, what was the representation of each *casta*, of their performance and their reception of these acts, and how does the *español* character fit into these scenes?

Although, the majority of violence is performed or received by different *castas* the violence between *español* men and *negro* women is consistent and worth noting. A heat-map generated (fig. 17) presents instances of violence between *castas*; interestingly violence between *español* and *negro* characters surpasses all unstable relationships. Within the thirty-four paintings depicting violence, there is a consistency in the representation of Spanish characters involved in

aggressive actions. The heat-map reveals a pattern not only of the use of *español* figures in these paintings, but also of a strong relationship between *español* men and *negro* women. Overall, the number of violent instances between *español* and *negro* totals 20, far higher than any other. This does not mean that there are twenty paintings that depict violence, but rather, that there is a reciprocal performance and reaction to violence between these two groups. There are seven paintings that portray these violent scenes, four (fig. 18-21) of which are modeled after Andrés de Islas' 1774 *No. 4. De español y negra, nace mulata* (From Spanish and Black woman, a Mulatta is born) (fig. 16) described previously. Similar to that painting, they appear in a disrupted domestic sphere, the *español* men all wear white suits with either white or dark hair, one hand protecting from the oncoming blow and the other impeding her from getting nearer. The *negro* woman, always on the right of the scene, holds a kitchen utensil and the *mulato* girl is pleading at her mother or between both parents. The parents share a look of rage, while the dependent young child cries and pleads for her parents to stop. The use of this model points to the acceptance of the practice of representing naturally conflictive relationships between *español* and *negro* individuals at the end of the eighteenth century. The two paintings that do not form part of this circle of models are by José Joaquín Magón and an anonymous painter, *4. De español y negra, sale mulato* (fig. 22) and *7. De español y negra, nace mulata* (fig. 23), respectively. Although these canvases depict a less physically explicit anger, it can be perceived as the setting to the eventual violent climax. In Magón's painting, the *mulato* child is crying while the *negro* mother brandishes a spoon at the child, the father comforting the boy. In the scene by the anonymous artist, the *negro* mother and *español* father argue with each other, while the *mulato* daughter looks out towards the audience, a hand gesturing to the fighting couple as if presenting the degeneracy of the union to the spectators. In 1774, the same year as Islas' painting, a Spanish merchant from Cádiz, Pedro Alonso O'Crouley brings to light his concern on the permanent corruption of a bloodline if African blood was included in the lineage (Carrera 13). He states that no matter the extent of mixture with African blood, "even the most effective chemistry cannot purify" the bloodline (13). Therefore the depiction of a family in dissolution is faithful to a public acknowledgement of a loss in the dissipation of the Spanish bloodline in the family structure combining *español* and *negro*. These paintings convey the degeneracy of the *negro* characters and self-destructive intermarriages.

The relationship between character and action, however, can be further explored with the setting in which they perform. When considering settings there is a main division between the inner and outer spheres. The private domestic sphere denotes the familial space and the core of the New Spanish subjects. In turn, the public cityscape represents the urban wealth of the colony for its Crown. In figure 24, a greater importance is given to *español* characters that occupy the *domestic sphere*, followed by *outdoor-unspecified*, *cityscape*, and *countryside*. The connection between character and setting imposes a sense of illusion of *español* intermarriages. By putting the family in a domestic sphere, an environment of acceptance is created; it is most associated with the *español* character and further legitimizes the Spanish families and their offspring. As the colony is a further representation of the riches and grandeur of the Spanish monarchy, it is discernable that the depiction of the *español* in both the domestic sphere and the cityscape are equally important to propagate a sense of unity, Spanish dominance, and sovereignty.

In this analysis I have tried to focus on some important aspects and patterns in the paintings. As a result, I have extrapolated several interesting features that are both easily identifiable to the viewer and other characteristics that are only perceived after statistical analysis. These paintings were commissioned by those in power and used to represent an idealized version of New Spain. However, it is also equally important to notice that although the Spanish occupies a position of hierarchical power, they are a minority in contrast to the number of *casta* characters. Even though the Spanish group overtakes the *casta* groups when divided, the collective *castas* by far surpass the *español*. The *casta* community strips away the sense of authoritative power from the Spanish and from the restricted and constructed vision of the colony. The physical relationship between child and parent conveys dominance and highlights the extent of patrimony. Thus the pattern ties the idea of ancestry and birthright with the depiction of the *español* group of characters in a domestic sphere. It is important to associate the idea of civilized family units within this setting. It is up to the Spanish European to continue the bloodline and to continue raising the good citizens of the New World. This analysis, however, becomes more compelling when the paintings are viewed against the backdrop of changing social conditions of the Spanish in colonial Mexico.

2.2 Casta Painting and Society

The *casta* painting genre materialized at a crucial moment of self-discovery in the search for a colonial identity. Embedded in the paintings, titles identify each character in connection to the idea of the *casta* system in New Spanish society, ranging from standardized to arbitrary nomenclatures. However, and most importantly, there is barely a creole character, a subject integral in the functioning of Mexican colonial society. The paintings provide an anchor in which the tension between the Spanish and creole identities are portrayed. With the expansion of the *criollo* and *casta* population, concern over the continued governance by the Spanish crown began to show through, particularly in the reforms passed by the Bourbon monarchy. However, prior to the reforms, the settlement of the Europeans shortly after the conquest sparked an identity and power struggle that continued on for centuries.

According to Katzew the early *casta* painting “respond[s] to the discourse of creole pride” (93). Although true to some extent, as the paintings would promote the fecundity and wealth of the colony, it was not a view shared by all. In both Katzew’s *Casta Painting* and Morales’ “Los cuadros de castas de la Nueva España” the reference to the disavowal of *casta* paintings by a creole is presented. Andrés Arze y Miranda, in his correspondence with Juan José Eguiara y Eguren (1696-1763), a professor at the University of Mexico compiling the text *Biblioteca Mexicana* to refute Manuel Martí’s vision of the culture and scholars of America, reveals his distaste for the *casta* painting depictions of colonial society (Katzew, *Casta Painting* 94; Morales 678). In Arze y Miranda’s notes, he states that the *casta* paintings were depictions that did not benefit the *criollos*, but, rather, harmed their honour through the portrayal of the mixtures of *español* or *gachupin* with *indio* or *criollo* (Morales 680). His rejection of these paintings revolves around “the image he believed these words fostered: a society in which ‘pure’ Spaniards and creoles got lost in the entanglement of race mixing, resulting in their intellectual abilities being discredited abroad” (Katzew 94). Arze y Miranda’s view on these paintings coincide with an idealization of the Spanish lineage and the subsequent dismissal of the creole subject. Although the genre could have been seen as a reflection on creole pride, it paradoxically erased the *criollo* as subject and cultural entity in colonial Mexico.

To a certain extent identity issues and power struggles would be placated by the representations of the Spanish character as having no derivative identity within the artworks and, through this, the representation of colonial society. By derivative identity I refer to the Spanish character not identifiable by any other name no matter the union. That is to say that although a child is born in America and would therefore be a creole, the child in turn is named *español*. Only one *casta* painting, ca. 1750 by an unknown artist in Puebla, contains a family of all *español* characters (fig. 27). This panel is divided into sixteen scenes, each containing an enumerated title below each family. An inscription at the bottom of the painting describes the painting's purpose: "Expresio de las Castas de Gentes de que se compone este Reyno de Mexico; los motivos por que resulio la diversidad; y los nombres con que se distinguen todas las calidades: Hecha en la Puebla de los Angeles"¹². Although modeled after Berrueco's interpretation of *castas*, this panel contains a family in which the entire family used the label *español(a)*, located on the upper right corner of the painting. In this scene the father stands facing the mother, with one hand grasping his overcoat at his chest and the other on his hip. The *español* mother faces him as well, with one hand over her bodice and the other holding a piece of cloth. In the middle, pulling at his father's overcoat stands the young *español*, who looks up and seemingly tries to get the attention of his father. The description already states that the depictions are representative of the colonial Mexican people. This union between an *español* couple that produces a child identified as *español*, contradicts the idea of the *criollo* or of the Spanish progeny born in America. By not using the label of creole in this painting, it establishes a merging of the European Spanish with the *criollo* character. The absence of division establishes the idealization of the Spanish character as not independent from creoles and that blood triumphs in the understanding of the character. This way, the label of a subject is based on blood, rather than a cultural understanding of these different groups of people.

The exception to the rule exists in the *casta* composite by Ignacio María Barreda created in 1777 for Colonel Antonio Rafael de Aguilera y Orense (fig. 9). The panel is divided into 17 sections, beginning with the union of *español* and *india* and ending with a group of *mecos* (Amerindians). The inscription at the bottom again describes the purpose of the painting, the commissioner, the

¹² "Depiction of *castas* of people that make up the Kingdom of Mexico; the reasons for which they are diverse; and the names that distinguish their qualities; Made in Puebla de los Angeles"

painter, and the date of creation, a rare existence. Furthermore, the scenes are divided by miscegenation: *español* and *indio*, *español* and *negro*, *negro* and *indio*, and *indio* and previously mixed characters. At the end of each movement there is an attempt to get back to the *casta* at the beginning of the unit, modeling the notion of *limpieza de sangre*. The third scene in the panel depicts *De Castizo, y Española, Español Criollo* (From Castizo and Spaniard, Spanish Creole) (fig. 26), the only painting found in this study that explicitly designates a character as *criollo*. In this scene the *castizo* father faces the mother, one hand on his hat and the other gesturing towards her, while the *española* mother holds the infant child, the *español criollo*. This is the first and only time that a documented painting has included the title of *criollo*. As a result, although the rest of the conventions are strictly adhered to, the use of this label differentiates the panel from the rest. Following the idea of *limpieza de sangre*, this painting records a sense of diversion from the full-blooded Spanish and the *peninsulares* born in America.

Although in theory an individual's lineage directly influences socio-economic position, reality proves to be a different matter. As Cope states, "all elites were Spaniards, but not all Spaniards were members of the elite" (24). This phrase is important in understanding the instability of the Spaniard in colonial Mexican society. Although many subjects can claim and prove their association to the *español* class, only a select few had the privilege of wealth and association that ultimately made them elite. Despite that a large number of *casta* subjects were biologically Spanish, their inferior *calidad* would not allow them to enter into the elite circles. As instability of social status in colonial Mexico plays between an ease of moving between social circles and the manipulation and changeability of one's genealogical background, the attempt to erase an entire community that singularly identifies with both above mentioned conditions is understandable. If the *sistema de castas* promotes taxonomical order, then the *criollos'* blurred identifiers that contend with any defined restrictions and understandable. Their ambiguous cultural relations and blood lineage put them into a liminal group that is hard to define, hard to place, and most difficult to depict truthfully.

2.3 Discussion

Most critics do not differentiate the use of Spanish characters and absence of *criollos* in the *casta* paintings, perhaps as the genre according to past researchers strives to illustrate *limpieza de*

sangre in the *casta* system. The tension between the *peninsulares* and American Spanish was palpable in the politics and widespread belief that those born in the Americas were inferior. In truth no critic has presented a strong case for the lack of *criollos* in the paintings. Although there are a few mentions in different studies of this subject, they mostly concentrate on the role of the *criollo* in New Spanish society. Some of the main topics discussed are: *criollo* identity and colonial pride, their role in society, occupation, attire, social aspirations, and ease of moving between social spheres. Cope, in *The Limits of Racial Domination*, concentrates on the idea that the *sistema de castas* was produced partly for the creoles as a way to order racial groups and let the Spanish naturally rise to the top (123). A small amount of people at the time were able to trace their lineage through multiple generations, thus the manner of identifying *castas* was spread to more than just genealogical association, but also to phenotype and other superficial characteristics. *The Forging of the Cosmic Race*, by MacLachlan and Rodriguez, explores *criollos* and the decline of the physical European presence (215-16). The creoles, in turn, occupied the largest segment of the population and, although they were identified as Spaniards born in America, in truth a large number were *mestizos*.

The absence of the *criollo* in *casta* paintings is highlighted by the use of *limpieza de sangre* as inspiration for the framework of the series. For this reason, those that were identified ‘Spanish’ in the paintings would have belonged to a series of predetermined unions that would lead the offspring to *español*. In turn, those that had blood of other castes would have instinctively been considered *mestizos* or, in any case, a *casta*. The nuances of identity between Spanish or *criollo* were only present in the real colonial Mexico, not the idealized version that appeared in the paintings. So, why is there no *criollo* identifier? There could be combination of factors at play.

Firstly, as part of the authoritative Spanish class, the ability to trace parental lineage back to multiple generations of ‘pureblooded’ antecedents was required. As seen previously, following the correct path of ‘blood mending’, a term used in Katzew to explain a returning to European blood, would lead to *español* offspring. Therefore, it can be argued that the absence of a *criollo* community in the *casta* painting genre correlates with the practice of *limpieza de sangre* in the framework of the *casta* genre. For example, there are a number of paintings that depict mixed Spanish families, of which the offspring would naturally be Spanish American, or *criollo*,

however in the paintings they appear as *español* (fig. 27). In the painting, the intermarriage between *español* and *castiza* produces an *español* child, thus following the formula dictated by the *limpieza de sangre* system. However, as noted in the introduction the nomenclature of a Spanish born in America could also be named *criollo*. Yet, in this example the label identifies the child as *español*. Not only that, but as seen in figure 25 even a family with only *español* members, the child produced is still an *español* although born in America. Although both *criollo* and *español* are interchangeable in a sense, in another way these labels confuse two differing ideological conceptions of the two subjects depending on the audience viewing the painting. As the families are representative of the subjects of New Spain, the child could have actually been deemed a *criollo*, as it is an *español* born in a colony. Therefore the normalization of excluding a creole character from the *casta* painting genre is solidified by the artists' or patrons' transparent attempt to equate the creole with the Spanish character in these paintings. This supports the idea that the exclusion of the *criollo* directly correlates with the process of *limpieza de sangre*, in which following the path back to untainted blood will always result in an *español* offspring. All the same, the idea of a system to achieve a better-organized and moral society fails to fully function. In truth, by not embracing the *criollo* subject the *casta* painting, which strives to depict social law and order, only drives the creole community to erect a more explicit and stable American culture.

Secondly, positions of power were already at a point of instability, especially in the seventeenth century. With the rejection of the *criollo* inheritance petition, revoking the creole's ability to hold political power, and the Bourbon reforms, their position was in constant conflict with the *peninsulares*. The general environment surrounding the *casta* paintings was inhabited by tensions of power and general social instability. Consequently, as a way to impede the uncertainty of authority, the *peninsular* and creole subjects are fused into the singular Spanish character. This way there are no contentions between the *español* and *criollo* and it is the *limpieza de sangre* that impacts the *casta* or social community.

Finally, the paintings were idealized visions of the society depicting *casta* groups that wore luxurious clothing and were associated with activities not normally carried out by those in their determined communities. Things like their occupation, dress, and familial relationships were not

loyal to New Spanish reality, but rather glorification of the subjects. For instance, in the paintings the Spanish are often depicted as living a leisure lifestyle (as previously seen in the chapter), however, in reality they held a wide variety of work. An important point to note is that, “[c]olonial elites were heterogeneous and often interlocking mixes of ranchers, planters, miners, merchants, high-ranking churchmen, and bureaucrats constantly renewed through intermarriage and the incorporation of successive generations of newly successful entrepreneurs and royal appointees sent from the Old World” (Burkholder and Johnson 184). This puts further pressure on the reality of the elites in New Spain who did not occupy one enclosed social space. Contrary to what is portrayed in the paintings where the Spanish characters are often participating in domestic and leisure activities, dancing, writing, eating, etc. There are a few instances where the Spanish characters carry out merchant or shop keeping activities, both of which were in accordance with the reality of the Spanish subjects. As a result, the division within the ruling class destabilized Spanish authority; consequently the creation of clear divisions and roles for each *casta* was necessary to maintain a sense of political control within a changing social environment. Therefore the purpose of the *sistema de castas*, as a structural tool could be deemed as functioning and, therefore, the absence of the *criollo* is necessary in the established norm of *casta* paintings.

Chapter 3

3 “La historia de mi nación”: transgression of class and issues with the hybrid populace in New Spain in *casta* painting

The previous two chapters discuss the context of *casta* paintings and examine the use of the *español* character in the genre. The missing *criollo* demonstrates the need to placate the complex and transgressive communities that existed and threatened the elite classes in colonial Mexican society. The *criollo* subject infused into the *español* character eliminates the tension in an ongoing power struggle and, paradoxically, gives room for the creoles to seek a collective American identity. However, does the portrayal of the *casta* community problematize the sense of security inherent in the rigid classification of race? Or do *casta* depictions break the elitist generated mould in which *mestizo* communities are held? And have these paintings reconciled the social movement between supposed closed social structures? These issues will be discussed through a review of the varying colonial understandings of race and social communities and an analysis of the paintings that will illuminate the function and conventions of the *casta* painting genre.

3.1 Complex issues in colonial Mexican society regarding *casta* groups

The social organization of colonial Mexican communities using racial identities extends from fundamental ideologies present in the cultural communities. Lineage (*linaje*), *casta*, or race (*raza*), all take pivotal roles in the New Spanish perception and understanding that went into the construction of ‘racial’ identities. The terminology originates from its use in natural world: *casta* and *raza* are used interchangeably in reference to animals, plants, or humans, while *casta*, if used as a noun, links to lineage and legitimacy (Martínez 29). According to the *casta* system, ethnic and racial, economic, and biological associations divided the *casta* communities. Central to the socially constructed designation are the three groups occupying America: European, Amerindian, and African. Miscegenation, however, blurred boundaries previously imposed to the three main ‘racial’ groups. Although *linaje*, *casta*, and *raza* differ in concept, they were essential in the codification of *casta* groups. Magali Carrera states that, “as visualizations of race, *Casta* paintings stabilize the ambiguity and complexity of physical race by locating the meanings of

race in the confluence, interactions, and mediations between and among physical, social, and economic spaces” (45). The concept of *casta* and *raza* were upheld to be homogenous aspects of colonial Mexican division – to be of a *casta* meant to pertain to a socially constructed *raza*. The dichotomy of the saved versus the heathen is a basis from which a version of classification arose. Emerging mixed-race American population fell into this division, in which new subjects were easily reconstructed. No longer did physiognomy rule in distinguishing between classes, but material possession and social networks, or *calidad*. Through these new pliable attributes, those of lower classes (of lower blood lineage) were able to climb to the higher elite circles. Whereas *linaje* refers to the association of status through the affiliation of ancestral, blood, lineage; the idea of genealogy, as previously described in defining *limpieza de sangre*, was important in the concept of inherent moral and intellectual abilities. However, *raza* and *casta* became difficult to differentiate, and the introduction of *calidad* further complicated rigid socially constructed ideas of ‘racial’ communities.

There existed two main groups the dominant and subservient in New Spain: those that were Old Christian, *gente decente*, legitimate, wealthy, law abiding versus Pagan or New Christian, *plebe*, illegitimate, poor, criminals (Cope 19). Identification was an important concept, normally imparted by an individual’s wealth, position, occupation, and gender. However the *casta system* sought to classify and standardize subtleties in the complex social system in colonial Mexico, nuances that were difficult to interpret in the *casta* painting genre. Although by the eighteenth century the idea of *raza* was identified by wealth and material possession rather than biology (Burkholder and Johnson 83), biology was still at the heart of this concept.

The first interracial unions between Spanish and Indian peoples resulted in the use of *mestizo* as designator of the offspring from these unions. However, in the 1500s *mestizos* had a determined role and were easily identifiable as illegitimate children from Spanish and Indian unions (120). They were absorbed into either Spanish or Indian communities, with the former resulting in more advantages than the latter. It was the association with the father that dictated the outcome of the child’s future. However, as more Spanish women emigrated to America and the population of mixed offspring rose, the *mestizo* began to be synonymous with the negative connotation of illegitimacy, and in turn, the father no longer participated in the child’s life, thereby

relinquishing duty and recognition (121). Competition with an increase of Spanish elite population immigrating to America resulted in the subversion of the *mestizo*. Although an attempt to subvert *mestizo* groups continued to materialize in the centuries after the conquest, the *casta* community, although destabilized in their position, had an ease in upward social mobility.

Social movement of *casta* communities, especially those of the upper *castas*, enabled the lower 'racial' groups to possibly attain similar upward progress. Although the *sistema de castas* appears as a closed and strict classificatory framework, the continuous miscegenation inadvertently opened to a free flowing network of *razas* to pass as one another if certain norms were attained. Although *raza* associates with the idea of blood, of parentage, complexity arises as an individual can 'change' *raza* by their *calidad*. The word *calidad* is not only associated with *raza*, but has a strong association with structure and social order, the latter focuses more on the idea of lineage, while *casta* focuses more on the idea of organization. According to Carrera, in *Imagining Identity in New Spain*, *calidad* appeared in numerous eighteenth century documents of which divided this concept in two debates: physiognomy and lineage or *limpieza de sangre* (8-9). Physiognomy, on the one hand, focused on superficial and exterior features of the body. Carrera states that, "physiognomics did not reference specific persons but analyzed exterior human features and extrapolated the content of inner moral and ethical character" (9). The second concept that contributed to Carrera's concept of *calidad* arises from blood lineage and *raza* permeating the long-established *limpieza de sangre*. The inherent concepts of *calidad* constitute for subtleties in the generation of social and 'racial' identities, of which both upper and lower *casta* groups could take advantage.

According to the *sistema de castas* each *casta* upheld social, occupational, and political roles. In terms of profession the majority of creoles and Spaniards were merchants and shopkeepers; mestizos were artisans; mulattos were servants (Burkholder and Johnson 87). However, by the 18th century *mestizos* were not only the fastest growing group, but they also extended to all levels of society and were difficult to identify (Maclachlan and Rodriguez 216) and generally they formed the bulk of the secondary elite. The African population, were generally overseers of natives, held positions of power, and identified themselves with the dominant class and looked down on the Indians (219). The Amerindians, in turn, occupied various positions in colonial

Mexico. The unions between these groups formed multiple *casta* groups that became increasingly difficult to identify, discerned clearly in the arbitrary denominations and fractures in norms of said groups. Increased *mestizaje* nomenclatures were used with no discretion to the supposed criterion of blood relation. The standard use of denominations centralizes on subjects that have not gone through considerable miscegenation.

Conflicting views in understanding female roles in colonial Mexico oscillate between elite women not having any freedom, all women yielding under the power of patriarchy, to *casta* women as very much part of a mobile lifestyle both domestically and publicly. The only consensus that exists is the difficulty to place these women and the existence of varying experiences dependent on different situations. Although elite women held positions of power, they did not have as much economic and domestic freedom (Burkholder and Johnson 183). However, in *Forging a Cosmic Race*, these women are associated with more varied activities than poorer classes, which allowed them to be live in the public and domestic sphere. Because of economic constraints, women from poorer classes participated in the job market by running stores, selling prepared food, being domestic servants, among other economic activities, all of which can be seen in the *casta* painting genre. Occupations in New Spain allowed women to assist in financially supporting the household, as the wage of their respective husbands did not equal the cost of living (MacLachlan and Rodriguez 245; Buckholder and Johnston 227-31). Although still living in a strongly patriarchal society, laws were more forgiving than any other Western society, by allowing them to inherit, “divorce”, and run a business (MacLachlan and Rodriguez 238-9).

Notions of race, social organization, and flexible *casta* designations seep into the portrayal of the characters in *casta* paintings. The collections follow conventions of the genre, but are not consistent with its representation delineated by the social *casta* system outlined by historical and previous *casta* painting researchers. The canvases as a collective bring forward patterns that are difficult to discern when only looking at one or two series, but jointly portray an imagined society that depicts an amenable community.

3.2 Analysis

The previous chapter explored the representation of the dominant class in colonial Mexico, however, this chapter will focus on the analysis of non-elite characters, their portrayal, and deciphering important social patterns. To recapitulate, the total of the *casta* characters represented in the *casta* paintings totals 82%, with 18% composing of elite Spanish community (fig. 8). Through this analysis, I will focus on several central questions: out of this large *casta* group, what character communities are most represented? What families do they belong to? And, how are they portrayed? Understandably the representation of certain individuals supersedes that of any other. This connects to how the series were consistent in representing and naming characters at the ‘top’ of the taxonomical structure, such as those that were not mixed or those that were only mixed a small amount. For example, *indio* and *mestizo* characters tend to be more represented than a *barcino* or *chino cambujo* (fig. 7). The majority of the analysis is representative of characters that were known and named in colonial Mexico, rather than subjects that have more obscure and non-standardized names.

Through determining the families with the most aggregate total of characters, a pattern of the most ‘important’ families was able to be determined. Figure 28 reveals the *casta* families that contain the majority of characters, at this moment the characters are not divided, but it can be assumed that for the most part the family sum is divisible three ways. The most represented families, in descending order, are:

- From Spanish and Indio, Mestizo;
- From Spanish and Mestizo, Castizo;
- From Spanish and Castizo, Spanish;
- From Spanish and Black, Mulatto;
- From Spanish and Mulatto, Morisco;
- From Spanish and Morisco, Albino.

The following families contain at minimum 60 characters, all of which are representative of a ‘higher’ status family, that is to say, a family that contains an *español* parent. However, two families that do not contain a Spanish member are: From Negro and India, Lobo and From Mestizo and India, Coyote. The last two families mentioned contain about 50 characters and are the highest representations of mixed families with no *español* character. These paintings model

the most ‘often’ identifiable family structures and colonial subjects. The progeny out of Spanish and of ‘full’ blooded groups (Indio and Negro) intermarriages are the most recognized in colonial Mexico. For example, families that contain any of the three main racial groups in America and their offspring are more often portrayed than the families containing second or third mixed characters. It is important to note that even in visual and scientific attempts to categorize the colonial Mexican community, there exists a difficulty to correctly illustrate characters that have been involved in extensive *mestizaje*. The importance given to the depiction of *español* characters not only demonstrates the intentional focus on the perception of these characters, but also illustrates the importance of the Spanish subject in colonial life. The quantity of character associated to particular families exemplifies authority of one set of interracial union over another; however, hierarchical enumeration is also an important factor to note.

One of the most evident ways in which *castas* have been hierarchically classified is through the enumeration included in the title. Figure 29 shows that the majority of painting include a number. Some family structures are uniformly placed within a close range of numbers, for example *español* and *indio* unions are exclusively placed in the top numerical positions. However, there are also families that are placed within a wider range of numbers, for example *español* and *negro* unions that have a number range of 3 to 15. Interestingly the latter demonstrates that families that contain *español* character do not all necessarily belong to the top echelons of the *casta* system. To help answer questions on the association of family and *casta* ranking, an analysis taking families and their association to a number was completed. In this study, if a number is associated to a painting, the number of paintings per hierarchical number were extracted and placed in a spreadsheet to better visualize the patterns (table 3). Although many families contain numbers, the majority had 2 to 3 paintings associated canvases. I decided, instead, to look at all families with a number associated to them that comprised of more than 15 paintings. Families associated with Spanish characters run between 19-37 paintings, while paintings with no *español* only contained 16 paintings. Interestingly it is the *español* and *negro* unions and non-*español* families that have the greatest versatility in numerical positions. For example, *De mestizo e india, Coyote* (From Mestizo and Indian, Coyote) has the number range 4, 9 and 15. Similarly, *De negro e india, lobo* (From Black and Indio, Lobo) has a number range of 5, 8, 9, 10, and 14. The range of numbers for *español* families range within a smaller set of

surrounding numbers, for example from 6-9 or 4-7. The contradicting qualities of the consistent versus inconsistent enumerations convey the ease in losing the controllability and authoritative qualities of the *casta* system.

According to the hierarchical characteristic of the *casta* system, family structures that belong to a poor group retain an image demonstrating poverty. For the most part the paintings adhere to a defined social structure with most individuals associated with an occupation and societal role, whether they are mothers tending to their children, husbands entertaining families, or parents participating in an occupational activity. In the case of the family *De negro e india, lobo* (From Black and Indian, Wolf), the paintings range from 4 to 15 in the level of prosperity in colonial Mexico. The *negro* is portrayed in varying ways: in fine clothes and in a position of power, purchasing goods, having food with his family, or sleepily looking at his wife as his son tries to get him up. In one of the paintings, *9 De Negro, e India, produce Loba* (From Black and Indian woman, Loba) by Paéz (fig. 30), the negro man brandishes his whip at the India woman who is holding the *lobo* girl and the mother rebukes him with her index finger, offsetting his action. Not only is he the head of the domestic sphere, but also in this case, there is a sense of authority over the Indian *casta* group. The relationship between African and Indians in the colony was tense, as the former considered themselves above the indigenous population and were regularly placed in authority over the *indio* group (MacLachlan and Rodriguez 219). The women in these paintings, on the other hand, are generally holding their children or working, engaging in domestic labour, or working within the goods and services industry. The only uniformity in the depiction of *negra* and *indio* unions, are the scenes modeled after Islas (fig. 31) that depict a *negra* that cooks with her corset open and her *indio* husband in tattered clothes being served food, while the child stands to side with a plate of food in his hands. All but one painting, present the family in an occupational activity. The canvas that depicts a scene with no trade associated to its characters is by Torres, in which the family is united in the center, with buildings in the setting, walking and talking together (fig. 32). There is a stark difference, in the depiction of the *negro* walking along well dressed in European style clothing, while the *india* wife holds her children dressed in indigenous clothing and poses barefoot. The portrayal of the family is intimate, however social division discerns between the father and mother and children comprise through garments.

Similarly, in the case of the family containing *mestizo* and *indio* parents and a *coyote* child, there is a diversity in the portrayal of these characters.

The canvases depicting *mestizo* and *indio* unions, for the most part, fall either under the number 4 or 15. However, a single canvas exists within this family type enumerated 9, which is the original model for all the paintings that belong to 15. This division brings attention to inconsistencies in the genre, the family either falls at the beginning of the system or at the end of the series, as the collected series end at 16. A close reading of this group of paintings reveals that for the most part parents are associated with labour activities, whether they are standing by a table of food as street vendors (fig. 33), selling shoes, buttons or lace (fig. 34), or as a family sitting and eating in a farm setting and associated with agricultural activities (fig. 35). The two family groups that do not consist an *español* figure demonstrate a variety of positions within a supposed rigid hierarchical structure, which, in turn, exhibits the arbitrariness of the *casta* system.

Although the centralized distribution of characters within particular family types conveys the *casta* painting genre's focus on the *español* character, diversity in portrayal and contradiction of the *casta* community exist in their individual depictions. Character occupation and object association allow the genre to be studied as a collection of paintings that collectively illustrate patterns of visualizing these communities. I will explore and juxtapose the portrayal of *negro*, *indio*, *mestizo*, and *mulato* characters and their association with occupations and objects against each other and against the *español*. These particular subjects are the most represented in the *casta* painting genre, next to *español*. In the previous examination of *español* characters, it was established that the majority were male adults. Therefore, most of the individual *casta* groups that will be analyzed are considered the counterpart or the partner of the aforementioned *español* males (fig. 36). The figure divided by gender displays the imbalance of male to female characters in non-*español* groups. As the depicted families are concentrated within the *español* family structures, importance is linked to the father's ability to relay patrimony to their offspring, moreover their restraint from mixing with individuals with a lot of interracial background, all give way to a concentration of *casta* characters that have the least blood contamination.

For this analysis it is important to take into account the representation of the *español* character. As discussed in the first chapter the Spanish subject performs actions of non-laborious activities, concentrating on *posing* (fig. 10). Additionally, when viewing the objects associated with these characters there is an inclination towards objects of material wealth (fig. 37). Although males dominate the overall *español* depiction, it is the females that have a stronger relationship with objects. In figure 40 females are connected to symbols of material wealth, such as *jewellery* and the *black beauty mark*, while the men are associated with *wig*, *sword/knife*, *tobacco/snuffbox*, *writing utensils/books*. The majority of *español* characters, through the actions performed and objects identified, can be connected to high social standing. In the end, their representation aligns with demonstrations of control, authority, and elitism.

In the case of the *indio* characters there are several patterns that emerge in their depiction. Due to the high amount of *español* and *indio* families, the elevated number of female *indio* responds to the high representation of adult male *español*. Activities associated with this character are divided as passive and non-passive. In this sense, passive refers to activities like posing, sitting, or that which is not non-passive, referring to trade, commerce, and physical labour. Passive activities that are associated with the *indio* character are: *holding/caressing child* and *posing* (fig. 38). However, equally important are the non-passive activities: *labour – goods/services* and *labour – produce/food related*. The patterns that emerge from these images not only demonstrate that mostly women are represented in the *indio* category, but also, that a division exists between characters associated with leisure activities or labour activities. There is a high representation of *indio* characters associated with *jewellery* and *food items (with no specified destination)* (fig. 39). Characters that are related to *food items* are representative of the number that are associated with *labour-produce/food related*. Additionally, the majority of *indio* women wear jewellery, however, the ownership of jewels was an established privilege for the elite classes, not the working classes (Carrera 118-9). In these paintings the circulation of jewellery extends from the upper to lower classes pointing to the endeavour of portraying even the poorest of classes with wealth and prosperity, evidence of the success in the colony. Division of characters as posing versus working relates to their association with particular family types. For example, *indios* that are associated with *español* families regularly perform activities of leisure, compared to *indio* characters that are associated with ‘lower’ groups and occupations. In this way, the *indio*

subjects, for the most part, retain a certain consistency in their depiction: if they are associated with *español* characters they are portrayed as part of the elite society than the alternative marginalized impoverished society. However, it also demonstrates the versatility of the *indio*, enabled by the network relationships, their ability to move into the upper social groups, which reflects their prosperity in the painting genre. Figure 40 demonstrates how an *indio* character, painted by the same artist and within the same series, can greatly contradict each other. Miguel Cabrera's *1. De español y de india, mestizo* (From Spaniard and Amerindian, Mestizo) and *15. De mestizo y de india, coyote* (From Mestizo and Amerindian, Coyote) depicts that even the portrayal of the same *indio* subject, by the same artist, and within the same series can contradict greatly. In the first painting, the *indio* woman is dressed in an ensemble that contains both European and Indigenous inspirations. She is also wearing jewellery and stands posing with a hand on her small *mestizo* girl. However, *15. De mestizo y de india, mestizo* portrays the *india* woman facing her partner, dressed in an indigenous fashion, with a tattered cloth holding her child against her back. These two acutely different portrayals are representative of the contradictions that exist in the depictions of the *casta* communities.

Similar patterns emerge in the case of the *negro* character. These characters have a closer balance of female and male representation, however, there is a greater imbalance in associated activities and objects, indicating strict gender roles. For the most part *negro* women are associated with *cooking*, while men are portrayed in a *posing* positioning, indicating a more upper-class depiction (fig. 41). Although there are various manifestations of this scene, a particular scene is striking, *De español y negra, produce mulato* (From Spanish and Black woman, Mulatto is produced) by anonymous (fig. 42), depicts a Spanish father rolling up a cigarette, the mulatto child holding and blowing on a brazier, and the mulatto wife cooking. For the most part, the settings of this particular series are indiscernible; a brown colour sets the scene, with no other feature distinguishing location. However, the *negro* woman can be seen against a counter, with a pot and kitchen utensil in hand. This scene is depicted numerous times across the century, as the kitchen setting appears in the majority of the *español* and *negro* unions. Additionally, *negro* women are mostly associated with *kitchen utensil*, tying in with their domestic culinary work (fig. 43). These women are also associated with jewellery and food items. Men, on the other hand, are depicted with whips, designating their position of authority.

The Forging of the Cosmic Race discusses occupations held by the *negro* community. Although associated with work in plantations and fisheries, they were equally employed as overseers and servants for the upper classes (219). Therefore *whip* correlates with a sense of command and authority related to their occupation. Unlike the *negro* character, the *mestizo* subject performs actions that relate to a social position exemplifying the *español*.

The representation of *mestizo* women supersedes that of their male counterpart, similar to *indio* characters. Moreover, the distribution of actions for this character is similar to that of *español* characters, which concentrates on *posing* and *holding/caressing child* (fig. 44). The objects, as well, represent a more non-active community, as the women are associated with jewellery and the black beauty mark or ‘chiqueador’ (fig. 45). The beauty mark was a fashion for women in Europe, a black circular piece of material used to cover blemishes, cure a headache, or a general sign of beauty (Katzew, *Casta Painting* 71). Overall the *mestizo* characters are not easily associated with labour activities, however, as previous research has indicated, *mestizo* subjects often occupied various roles in colonial society. In the case of the *mestizo* characters, the same patterns seen in *español* characters appear. *Mestizo* subjects rarely perform an action of labour, instead focusing on *posing* and *holding/caressing child*. The majority of the characters are women, as a response to the numerous male *español* subjects. Similar to the *indio*, seen above, the most depicted relationships are between Spanish males and a *casta* not comprised of extensive interracial unions. Similarly, the *mulato* character, although part of the *casta* community appears to have qualities alike to the *español* and *mestizo* figures.

In the case of *mulato* characters, the distribution of men and women is relatively the same. Although both men and women equally perform *posing*, women are the focus for the activities *holding/caressing child* and *labour – goods/services* (fig. 46). Contrasting actions associated with *indio*, *negro*, and *mestizo*, the *mulato* characters have a greater variety of actions *holding/caressing children*, *labour – goods/services*, *labour-food/produce*, *cooking*, *carrying food*, *crying*, *dancing*, *tobacco activity*. Although none of the aforementioned activities are highlighted in the paintings, the group seems to undertake these activities, not equally, but more recurrently than other characters. Similarly, there is more variety in the objects that are associated with these subjects (fig. 47). Women are mostly associated with *jewellery*, *black*

beauty mark, and *item for sale* and men with objects such as the *brazier* and *whip*. This wide variety of activities demonstrates a diverse classification of this character. The *mulata* women not only have material wealth, but also are associated with the transaction of economic activity. While there is not a strong presence of *mulato* men they do bear resemblance to the *negro* male characters in their portrayal holding whips.

A pattern emerges with *indio*, *negro*, *indio*, and *mulato* characters that demonstrate a need to classify and order through genre conventions, yet there also exists a push towards breaking certain practices. The majority of *indio* and *negro* characters follow conventions, division in labour and leisure for the most part. However, the *mestizo* and *mulato* characters demonstrate a variety of occupations and associations that cast them in a light that speaks to an ease of movement and ambiguous identity, with a closer resemblance to the *español* figure.

3.3 Discussion

Tensions in negative or positive perception of *casta* communities are evident in the varying ways in which *casta* painting characters are depicted. According to *casta* research linearity exists in the painting genre. The hierarchical caste structure depicts elites wearing the finest garments associated with leisure activities and those at the lowest levels in ragged clothing and working as street vendors or farm hands. In turn, the sense of vertical classification can be best depicted using composite *casta* paintings and/or enumerated *casta* paintings. Figure 9 demonstrates the downward organization of colonial subjects, with each step down the characters becoming increasingly destitute. However, classification in the collective series is arbitrary and becomes more varied by the end of the 18th century. The highest collections of characters depicted in the distribution of characters by families (fig. 30), are representative of paintings that, for the most part, originate in the latter half of the 1700s. As the identity formation and nationalistic fervour began to take hold the paintings exhibit a disarray of hierarchical associations and conflicting character archetypes. A family structure could belong to different levels of the *casta* system and were depicted in a variety of ways; such is the case with *negro* and *indio* families or *español* and *negro* unions.

Analyzing the most represented *castas* allows patterns to be extracted that would not be feasible or illustrative of *casta* groups that contain a small number of characters per group. These small character communities cannot convey norms in the genre. However, in larger groups it is clear in the representations of *indios*, *negros*, *mestizo*, and *mulatos*. These images, interestingly, confirm the ambiguity of the characters when looked at as a whole, and patterns of occupation and object association stand out as more characters are studied. However, as individual series the concept of linear progression from wealth to poverty, in varying degrees, is upheld.

An important role of *casta* painting is the didacticism of the exotic Americas that these curious objects paint. Ideas of physiognomy and imposition of identity by the elite classes takes over. Both painter and patron were responsible for the depiction of the progenies of *mestizaje*. However, what happens with the portrayal of the rest of the *casta* community? How are the *mestizo* classes represented? How does classification function and what does it accomplish in the paintings? And how have these paintings reconciled the issue of moving from one class to another and the use of physiognomy to identify class roles?

According to Edward Long, the caste system had three general purposes: “first, to guarantee that each race occupy a social niche assigned by nature; second, to offer the possibility of improving one’s blood through the right pattern of mixing; third, to inhibit the mixture of Indians and Blacks, which was deemed the more dangerous to the Spanish social order” (qtd. in Katzew, *Casta Painting* 49). Although *casta* communities, on an individual basis, follow certain patterns of behaviour, that is to say that certain *castas* display concentrations in particular occupations, the genres promotion to hinder intermarriages does not occur. At the beginning of the American colonization miscegenation was only permitted so as to prevent excessive abuse of the indigenous and African population, but the negative attitude towards these marriages was active. However, through the years these unions were abundant and it was the cause of the large non-elite community. The *casta* paintings, in turn, consistently depict these unions with nothing “impeding” the marriages between the three main groups and their subsequent *mestizo* children.

Most researchers focus on the historical perception of the individual *casta* communities and impose these social limitations as illustrative of the characters in the painting genre. The

paintings, in turn, depict imagined sets of communities that do not merge with chronicled *casta* groups. Although it may seem that by emphasizing division in *castas* the paintings reassure Spanish elites who fear their demise in New Spanish society, the reverse holds true. Even though Spanish dominance and control is distinctly conveyed, character analysis provides an alternate view, one that demonstrates that instead of pacifying anxiety, it confirms their alarm. The portrayal and affiliation of *español* characters with *casta* groups does not support the strong division and prejudice intended by authority classes. The comparison of elite and *casta* characters points to a more unstable demonstration of colonial Mexican society. Spanish characters are portrayed in a similar manner as those belonging to *mestizo* or *mulato casta* communities. Understanding *mestizo* in this study means that it is both defined as the offspring of Spanish and Amerindian parents and the term for the collective community of offspring out of interracial parentage. As an individual series, these paintings can pacify tensions between Spanish and the *mestizo* groups. However, this study demonstrates that the strict classificatory aspiration of the genre falls short, as *casta* communities as a collective break divisions set by Spanish characters. That is to say, *mestizos* are portrayed and convey comparable social roles in the imagined Mexican society.

Conclusion

Issues of race, identity, and the characterization of *casta* communities in *casta* paintings bring forward issues of marginalization and manifest itself in the presentation of idealized characters not present in everyday colonial society. The extent of trauma caused by colonization, the forceful relocation of multiple cultural communities, and seizure of power by the Spanish Crown rendered the colonial Americas a central scene for battling social identity processes. The impression of the Spanish *limpieza de sangre* and eventual use of *sistema de castas* are two compelling circumstances of Europeanization. These concepts were features of control geared towards the non-civilized indigenous groups of America and Africa and the movement towards their complete subjugation. The relationship between *limpieza de sangre* and *sistema de castas* focuses on the marginalization of a large group of people for the cultural advancement and elitism central to the colonization of America. These two cultural practices, although varied in practice, were central in the development of colonial Mexican identity. Blood lineage and racial distinction, combined with socio-economic division and occupational politics restrained the possibilities of the New Spanish community. Yet, those living in the system found ways to manipulate and strive, with some success, for social advancement. Imposition of strict policies, however, did not render them successful. Although the development of determined social roles to enhance the *casta* community, they were often undermined and difficult to keep in place. As miscegenation continued for several hundreds of years after the arrival of the Spanish social interactions were reshaped and norms were necessary to place restriction on a fast-growing *mestizo* community. Although *sistema de castas* and *limpieza de sangre* sought control, *calidad*, in turn, reiterated the malleability of the *casta* system. Most researchers submit to the notion of idealized *casta* characterization in the paintings and the use of taxonomic and divisive characteristics to control the imagined subjects. However, the character representation patterns within the paintings strongly contradict this concept.

Most researchers maintain that these paintings were working in conjunction with the purpose of the *casta* system. For them, the *sistema de castas* was created and sustained for the encouragement of social order and relieving social pressures felt by the Spanish elite as a result of a changing social structure. Between the *criollos* occupying the majority of political seats and

the *casta* community merging and penetrating the once clearly divided social circles, the Spanish elite status came under attack. Most researchers focus on the anxieties stemming from this social upheaval. However, these anxieties are difficult to identify without the existence of historical chronicles supporting the supposition. Despite researchers' awareness the colonial Mexican idealization illustrated in *casta* painting, they also put emphasis on the reasoning behind this glorification without the study of iconography to help draw conclusions. If the paintings were only an idealization to pacify anxiety driven Spaniards, then the characters and their environment go to the wayside, no longer speaking for themselves, but letting history speak for them.

Through this investigation I decided to divide the study between these two contentious groups in colonial Mexican society: the *criollo* and *mestizo* characters. The *criollo* character, appearing once out of documented and existing paintings in the database, fails to be represented in a genre that sought to visualize communities present in colonial Mexico. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact purpose of the painting genre, there are some paintings containing a notation stating that the painting serves to demonstrate the subjects in colonial Mexico (fig. 9 and 27). Figure 9 contains seventeen scenes, the final depicting an indigenous group, and script at the bottom stating:

Estas Castas de nueva España pinto (al instancias del Theniente Coronel de Exercito, Don Antonio Rafael de Aguilera y Orense) Su dignissimo Amigo, y apasionado a este arte, Don Ygnacio María Barreda y Ordoñes Br [Bachiller] en Fphia [Filosofía], en México a 18 de Febrero del Año de 1777¹³ (Saíz, *Las castas* 140)

Figure 25 similarly contains a script at the bottom edge of the composite painting stating “Depiction of castas of peoples that make up the Kingdom of Mexico; the reasons for which they are diverse; and the names that distinguish all their qualities; Made in Puebla of the Angels”. Through my study I have determined that as part of the idealization process, the *casta* painting genre presents the *criollo* as part of the *español* class. As a result, the *criollo* character contradicts both the perception of control and authority of the *casta* system and portrayal of all colonial Mexican communities and the division between the elite and the non-elite. The contention between *criollo* and *español* has multiple features: the *criollo* was of Spanish lineage

¹³ These castes of New Spain were painted (upon the request of Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Rafael de Aguilera y Orese) by his great friend and art enthusiast Ygnacio María Barreda y Ordoñes, Ph.B., in Mexico on February 18, 1777 (translation from Saíz's *Las casta mexicanas*, 140)

and part of an elite community, as they participated within the political and administrative circles; and the *criollo* was still secondary to the Spanish from Europe.

Although paintings refrained from depicting *criollos* and the representation of Spanish characters surpass that of any other group, collectively the *mestizos* of Spanish America make up the majority of the paintings. Characters born out of mixed marriages were generally part of the lower *casta* levels and had economic and political restraints imposed by the dominant classes. However, in the paintings these characters collectively represent transgression and inconsistency in a supposedly ordered and controlled society. On the one hand the paintings depict characters that follow conventions of poverty, yet there are equally characters that break these norms. From this contradiction several conclusions can be made. The paintings, although trying to demonstrate control and order, are ultimately confirming the social anxiety of the Spanish elite's loss of control over the *castas*. Moreover, the loss of control manifests itself in the confirmation and perpetual breaking of *casta* system norms within the paintings. And finally, through this process the idealization of consistency and Spanish social dominance is shattered when the *casta* paintings are viewed in a cohesive manner.

This study sought not only to close read documented and located *casta* paintings, but also to view them as a cohesive collection of *casta* character representations in the eighteenth century. Although not meant to demonstrate a correct manner to study the *casta* subjects, it rather presents an efficient way to support and complement previous research. However, through this study several limitations need to be accounted for. Data modeling, although efficient in organizing and facilitating research and analysis, was focused on investigating relationships between character, objects, and actions. A further study of other characteristics not mentioned in this study would call for a redevelopment of data modeling. Additionally, the use of the database methodology should be considered as a necessary, but additional, part of the research process, and the need for close reading is imperative in the study of *casta* characters. Although time periods were included in the metadata of the paintings, their use was not implemented to its potential. The division of paintings by time period with the cross reference of associated actions, objects, settings, would have been central in mapping the development of *casta* character evolution in the *casta* painting genre.

Multiple future works can be extracted from this data set and research methodology. Overall, some essential questions were answered with this study concentrating on the use of the *casta* characters. However, focus can also be given to the relationships between characters and setting in association with objects and actions. Additionally, the inclusion of time periods can be used to map a possible progression parallel to the historical development of colonial Mexican society. This way, questions on the development of the genre could propel answers on the possible function of colonial society in the development of the genre. And finally, the integration of paintings in the database can lead to a study of the network of painting models and influences in the *casta* genre to better understand the movement and conventions.

Casta paintings visualize colonial Mexican society, although imagined, it participates in the development of the New Spanish identity. The study of the characters validates the movement towards identity formation in the paintings and suggests a much more stabilized and uniform view of the *casta* and Spanish subjects. Although Spanish concepts contributed to the formation of the *casta* system through their transference and acculturation in the colonial context, the resulting representation is strictly American and a novel artistic interpretation of identity.

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Appendix: Tables

Table 1. Final tally of all nodes in the *casta* painting database

Paintings	370
Characters	1471
Creators	22
Family	139
Setting	12
Action	34
Object	24
Series	72 (incomplete/complete/composite)

Table 2. Taxonomic table presented in García Saíz's catalogue

TABLA TAXONÓMICA			
<i>Casta</i>	<i>Procedencia del nombre</i>	<i>Significado del nombre</i>	<i>Mezcla racial</i>
Criollo	Adaptación del portugués <i>crioulo</i> : "blanco nacido en las colonias".	Hijo de padres europeos nacido en cualquiera otra parte del mundo.	Americanos descendientes de europeos.
Mestizo	Del latín <i>mixtus</i> : "mixto".	Persona nacida de padre y madre de raza diferente.	Descendiente de español (blanco) e india o viceversa.
Mulato	Del latín <i>mulus</i> : "mulo". Mulo "macho".	"Macho joven" (1525). (Por comparación de la generación híbrida del mulato con la del mulo.)	Descendiente de español (blanco) y negra o viceversa.
Zambo	Del latín <i>strambus</i> : "bizco".	"El que tiene juntas las rodillas y separadas las piernas hacia afuera" (1610). (El sentido de "mestizo del indio y negro" del siglo XIX se explica por el distinto desarrollo de las piernas del negro, de pantorrillas más delgadas.)	Descendiente de: negro e india o viceversa mulato e india o viceversa.
Castizo	Término de origen incierto. Derivado de casta.	En 1513 significaba: "clase, calidad o condición".	Descendiente de español y mestiza o viceversa.

Table 3. Table indicating family and associated hierarchical numbers with number of paintings associated to each family

Family title	Hierarchical number in painting title	No. of paintings with a number	No. of paintings with no number	Total No. Paintings
De castizo y española, produce español	2	2	16	32
	14	3		
De español y albina, torna atrás	7	11	5	19
	8	1		
	9	2		
De español y de India, mestizo	1	18	19	37
De español y de morisca, produce albino	6	9	15	28
	7	2		
	8	1		
	9	1		
De español y mestiza, castizo	1	1	20	34
	2	13		
De español y mulata produce morisca	5	11	15	30
	6	2		
	7	1		
	8	1		
De español y negra produce mulato	3	2	17	30
	4	9		
	5	2		
	6	2		
	7	1		
	15	1		
De mestizo y de india, produce coyote	4	4	7	16
	9	4		
	15	1		
De negro y de india, produce lobo	5	1	7	17
	8	4		
	9	2		
	10	2		
	14	1		

Appendix: Figures

Figure 1. Miguel Cabrera, 4. *De español y negra, mulata* (From Spaniard and Black, Mulatto), 1763, oil on canvas, 132 x 101 cm. Private Collection. Source: ARTstor Collections. Web.



Figure 2. Attr. Juan Rodríguez Juárez, *De castizo y española, produce español* (From Castizo and Spaniard, produce a Spaniard), c. 1715, oil on canvas, 80.7 x 105.4 cm. Breamore House, Hampshire, England; rpt. in Iлона Katzew, *Casta Painting* (University of Texas Press, 1996; print; 12)



Figure 3. Attr. José de Ibarra, *De castizo y española, español* (From Castizo and Spaniard, Spaniard), c. 1725, oil on canvas, 164 x 91 cm. Museo de América, Madrid. Source: Museo de América. Web.



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Figure 4. Schema in SylvaDB

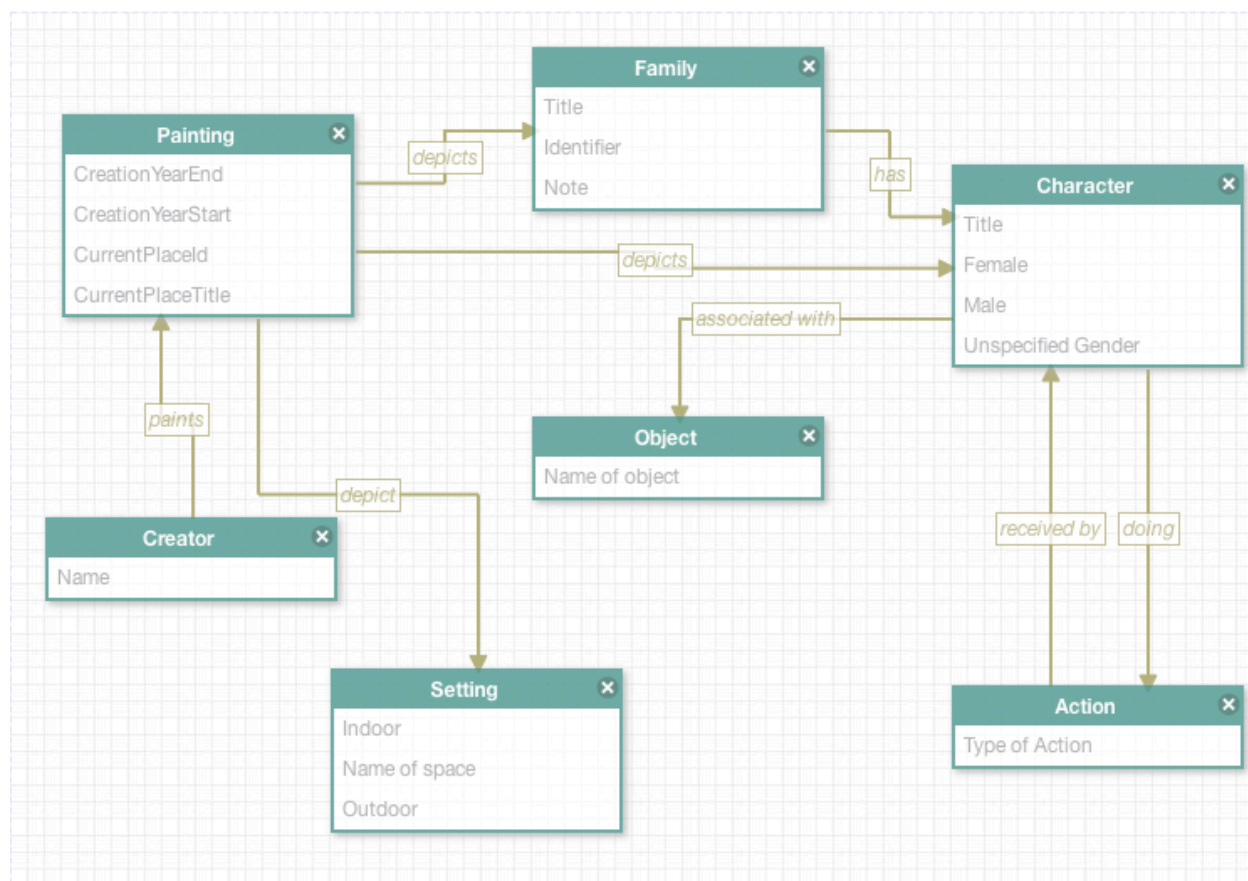


Figure 5. José de Páez, *De español y castiza, español 3*. (From Spaniard and Castiza, Spaniard), c. 1770-80, oil on copper, 50.2 x 63.8 cm. Private Collection; rpt. Iлона Katzew, *Casta Painting* (University of Texas Press, 1996; print, 23)



Figure 6. Attr. José de Ibarra, *De español e india, mestizo* (From Spaniard and Indian, Mestizo), c. 1725, oil on canvas, 164 x 91 cm. Museo de América, Madrid; rpt. in Iлона Katzew, *Casta Painting* (University of Texas Press, 1996; print; 182)



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Figure 7. Distribution of characters by casta groups

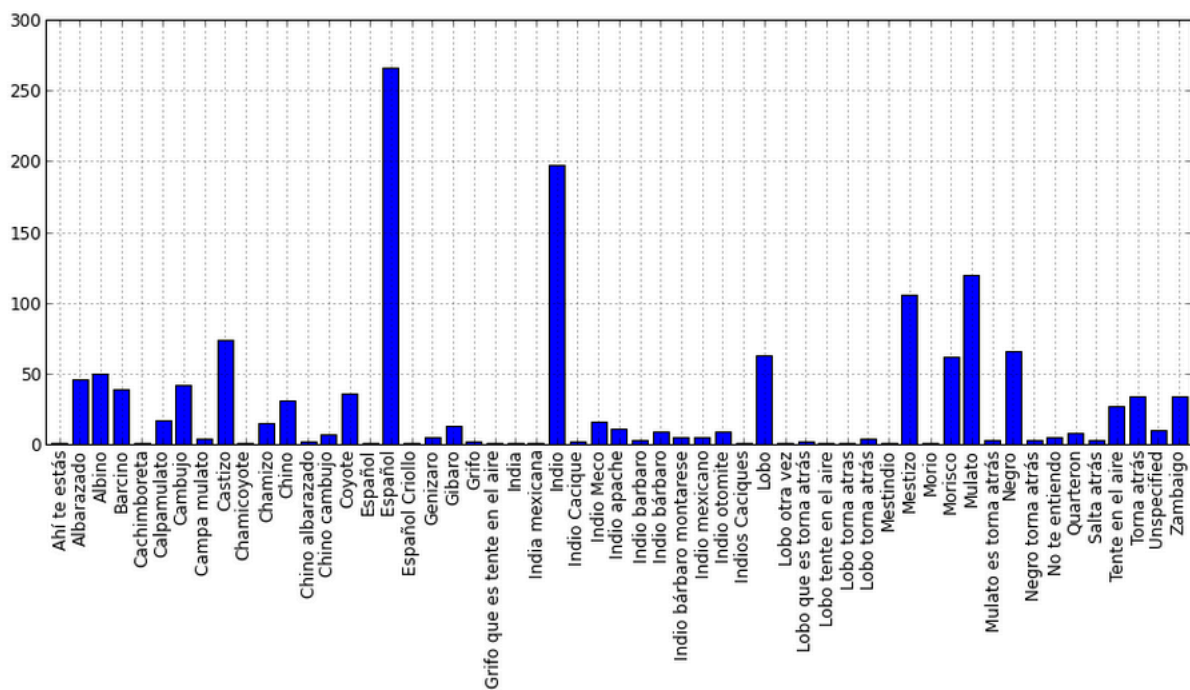


Figure 8. Distribution of *español* characters compared with the collective *casta* groups

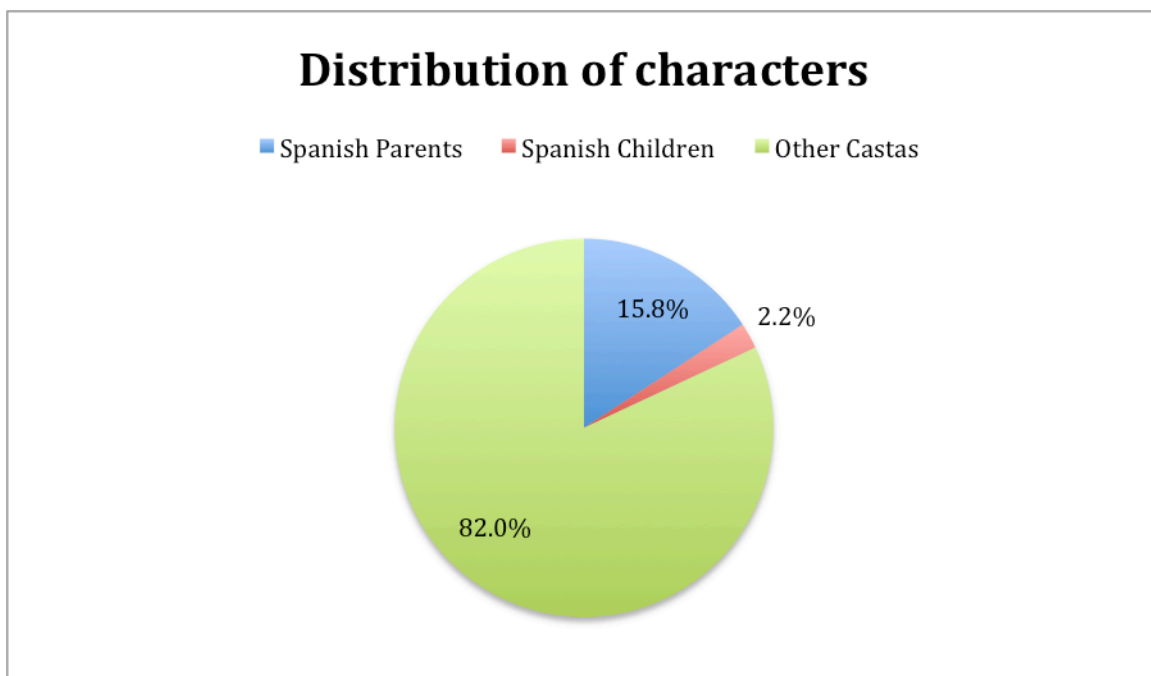


Figure 9. Ignacio María Barreda, *Pintura de castas* (Casta Painting), 1790-99, 77 x 49 cm. Real Academia Española de la Lengua, Madrid; rpt. in María Concepción García Saíz *Castas mexicanas* (Olivetti, 1989; print; 140)



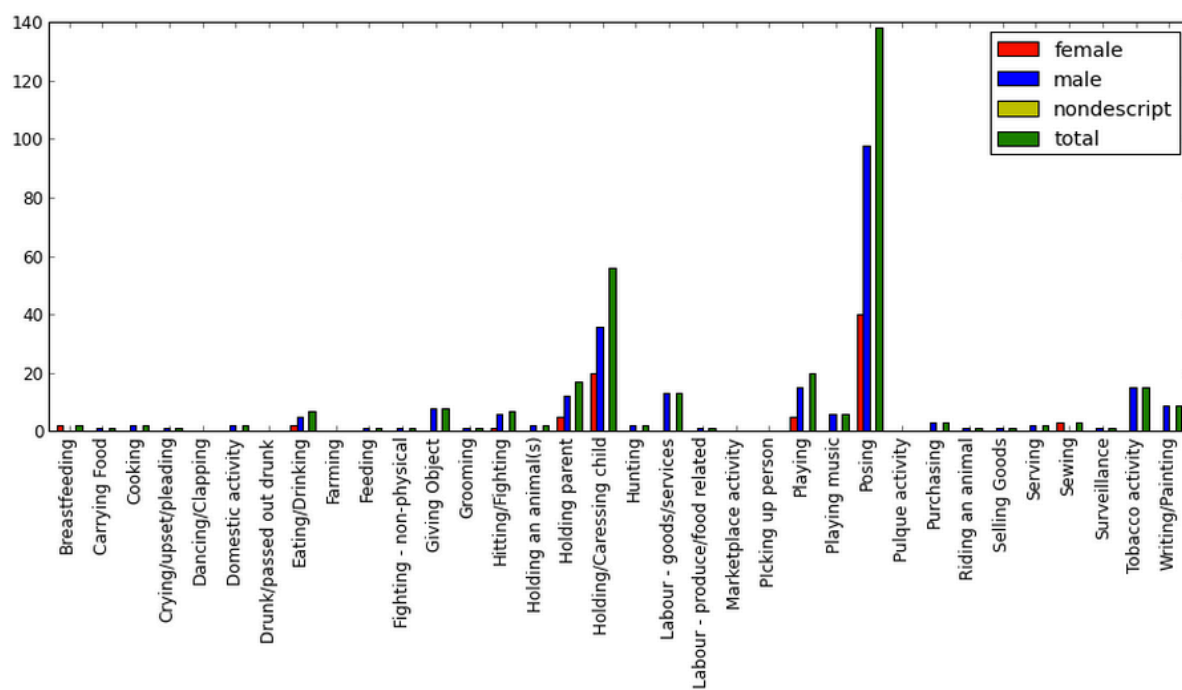
Figure 10. Distribution of activities *español* characters perform, divided by gender

Figure 11. Paintings that depict *español* character as *posing*. Anonymous, *De Español y de India produce Mestizo* (From Spaniard and Indian woman, Mestizo), c. 1700-50, oil on canvas, 81 x 109 cm. Private Collection, Mexico; rpt. in María Concepción García Saíz *Castas mexicanas* (Olivetti, 1989; print; 63)



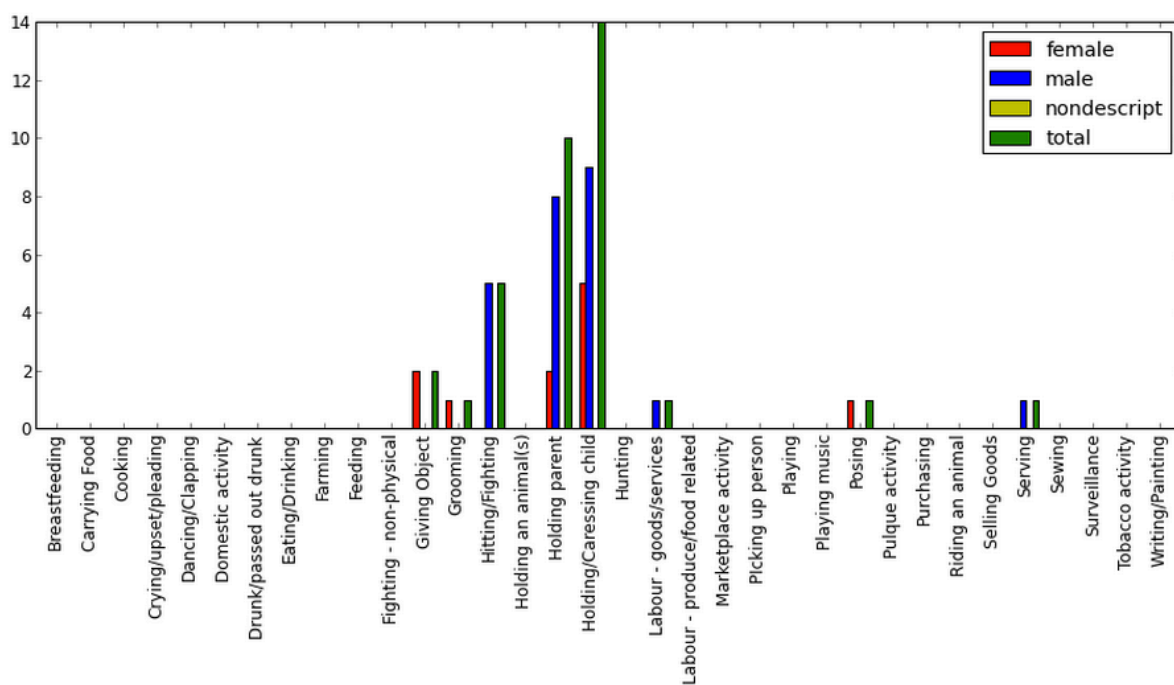
Figure 12. Distribution of activities *español* characters receive, divided by gender

Figure 13. Character performing violent and non-violent actions

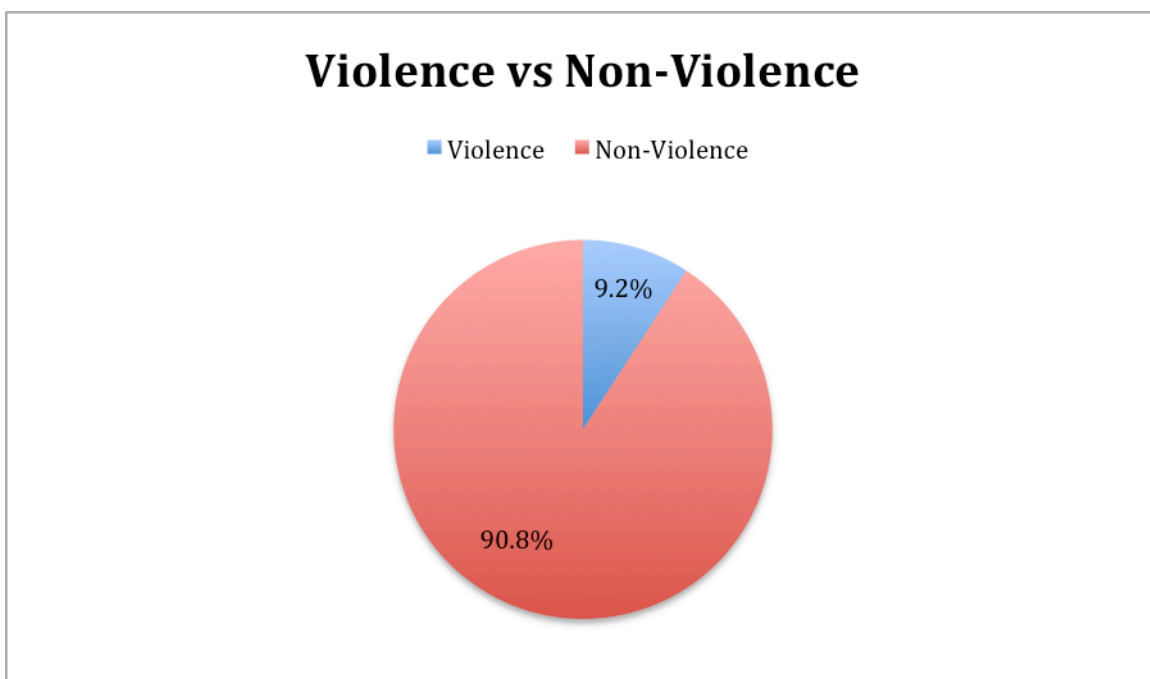


Figure 14. Division of violent actions by percentage of Spanish characters who participate in this action

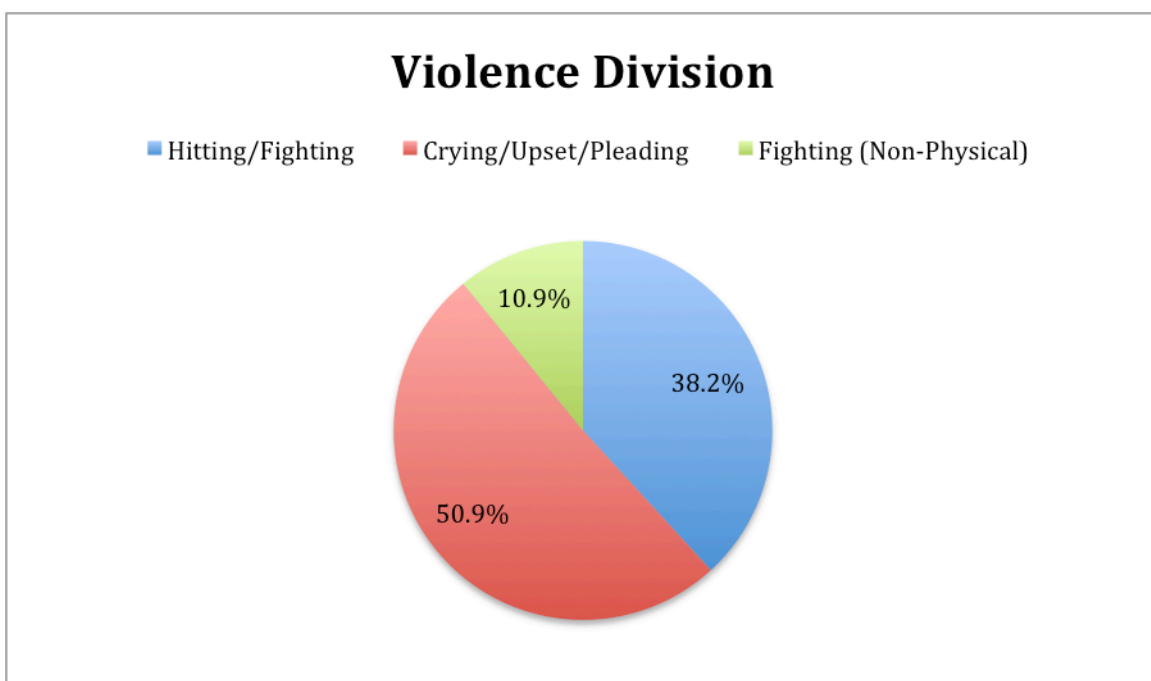


Figure 15. Unknown, *De Indio y Lova produce Sambaigo* (From Indian and Lobo woman, Zambaigo), c. 1790-99, no size. Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna, Austria; rpt. in María Concepción García Saíz, *Las castas mexicanas* (Olivetti, 1989; print; 211)



Figure 16. Andrés de Islas, *No. 4. De español y negra, nace mulata* (From Spaniard and Black, Mulatta is Born), 1774, oil on canvas, 75 x 54 cm. Museo de América, Madrid; rpt. in Museo de América (web).

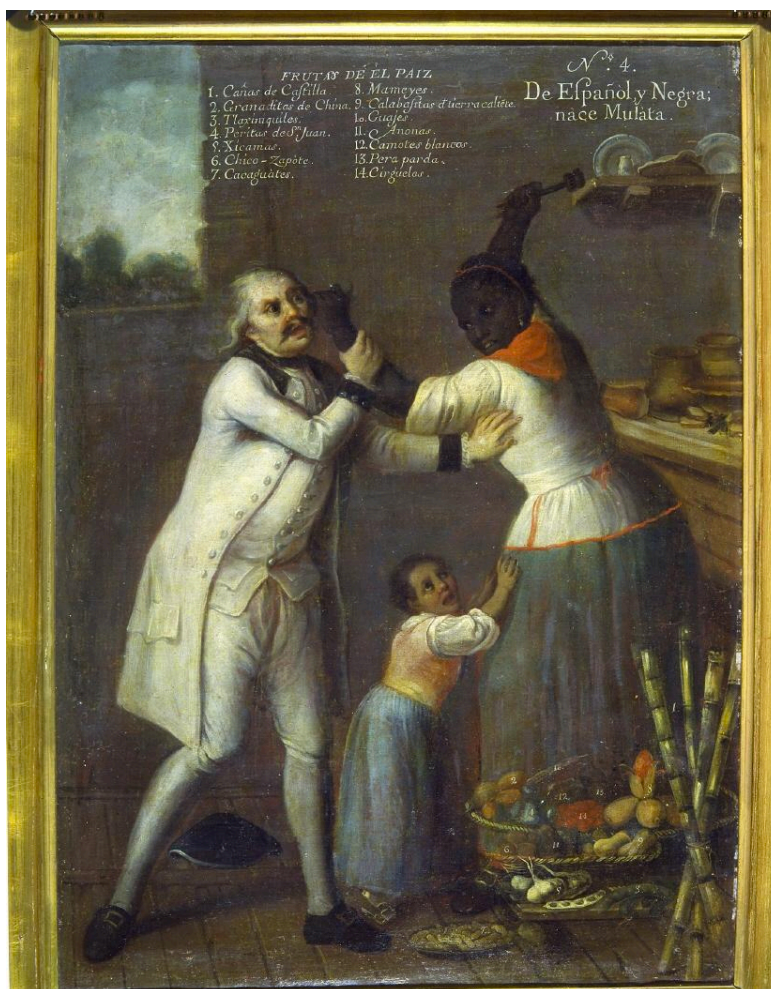


Figure 17. Heat map indicating relationships of violence by character

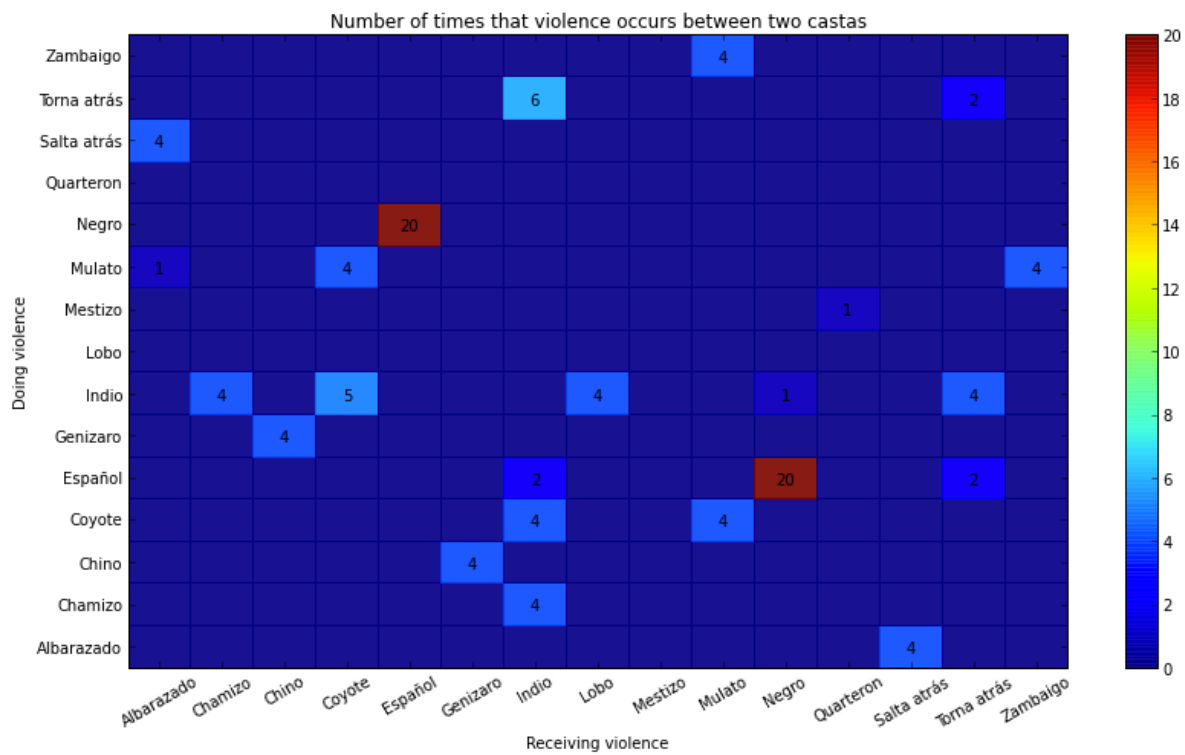


Figure 18. Anonymous, *4 de Español y Negra Mulata* (From Spaniard and Black woman, Mulatto), c. 1775-1799, 36 x 48 cm. Museo de América, Madrid; rpt. in María Concepción García Saíz, *Las castas mexicanas* (Olivetti, 1989; print; 144)

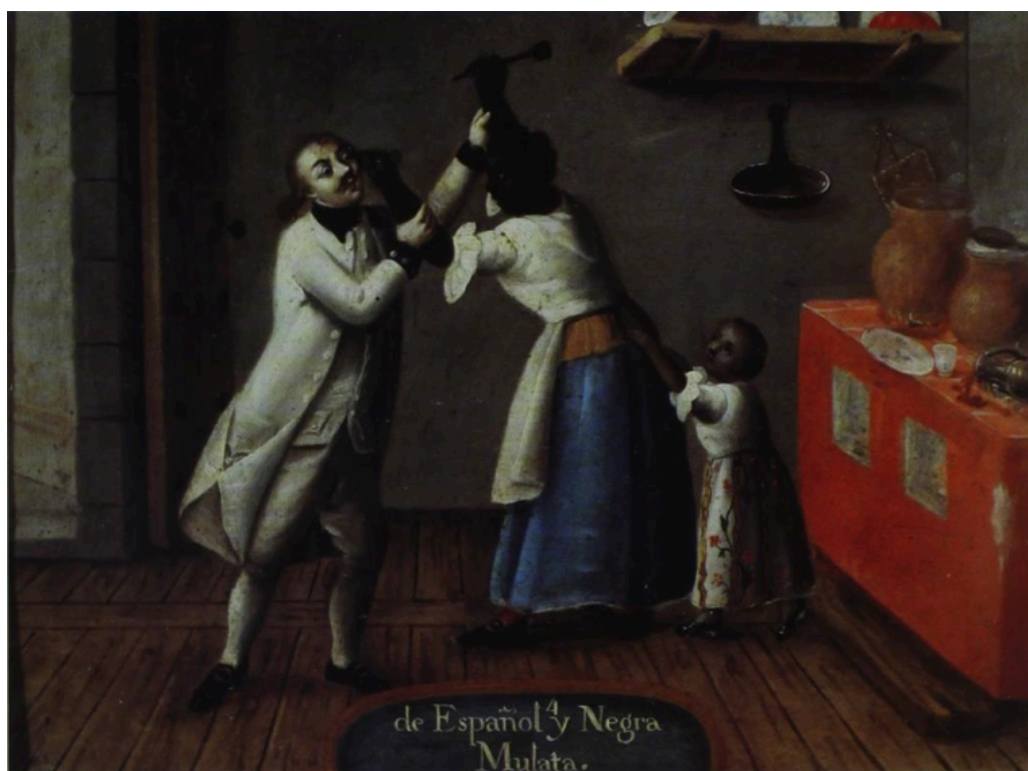


Figure 19. Anonymous, *N. 4 De Español y Negra nace Mulata* (From Spaniard and Black woman, Mulatto), c. 1775-1799, 33 x 43. Museo Nacional, Mexico; rpt. in María Concepción García Saíz, *Las castas mexicanas* (Olivetti, 1989; print; 154)



Figure 20. Anonymous, *3 De Español, y Negra nase Mulata* (From Spaniard and Black woman, Mulatto), c. 1775-1799. Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, San Juan de Puerto Rico; rpt. in María Concepción García Saíz, *Las castas mexicanas* (Olivetti, 1989; print; 160)



Figure 21. Anonymous, *De español y negra, nace mulata* (From Spaniard and Black, a Mulatta is born), ca. 1785-90, oil on canvas, 62.6 x 83.2. Private Collection; rpt. in Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting* (University of Texas Press, 1996; print; 138)



Figure 22. José Joaquín Magón, 4. *De albino y española, lo que nace es torna atrás* (From Albino and Spaniard, a Return-Backwards is What is Born), c. 1770, oil on canvas, 115 x 141 cm. Museo de Antropología, Madrid. rpt. in Iлона Katzew, *Casta Painting* (University of Texas Press, 1996; print; 156)



Figure 23. Anonymous, 7. *De Español, y Negra, nace Mulata* (From Spaniard and Black woman, Mulatto), c. 1775-1799, 43 x 56 cm. Private Collection, Mexico. rpt. in María Concepción García Saíz, *Las castas mexicanas* (Olivetti, 1989; print, 187)



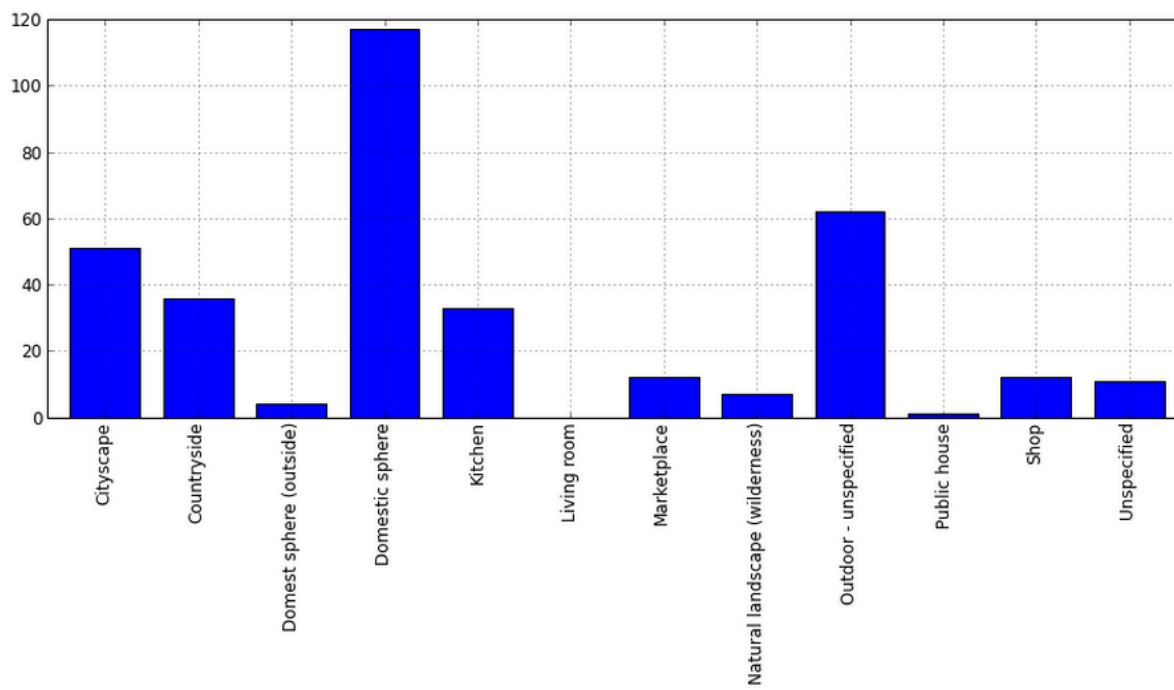
Figure 24. Distribution of *español* characters by setting

Figure 25. Anonymous, casta painting, c. 1750, oil on canvas, 67 x 56.2 cm. Private Collection. rpt. in Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting* (University of Texas Press, 1996; print; 36)



Figure 26. (*detail*) Ignacio María Barreda, *Pintura de castas* (Casta Painting), c. 1790-99, 77 x 49 cm. Real Academia Española de la Lengua, Madrid; rpt. in María Concepción García Saíz *Castas mexicanas* (Olivetti, 1989; print; 140)



Figure 27. José Joaquín Magón, 3. *De Español y Castiza, torna a Español* (From Spaniard and Castizo woman, Spaniard), c. 1770, 115 x 141 cm. Museo Nacional de Etnología, Madrid; rpt. in María Concepción García Saíz, *Las castas mexicanas* (Olivetti, 1989; print; 92)



Figure 28. Distribution of casta characters by families

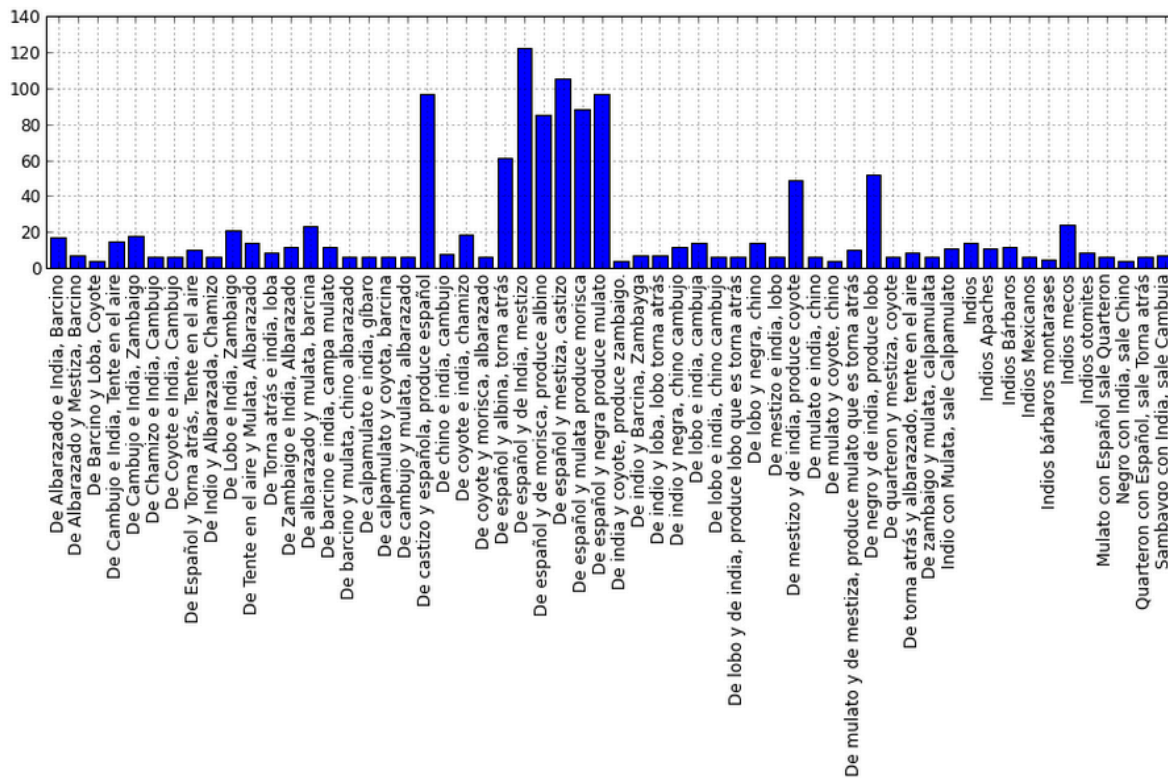


Figure 29. Division of paintings with an enumerated title and those that do not include an enumerated title

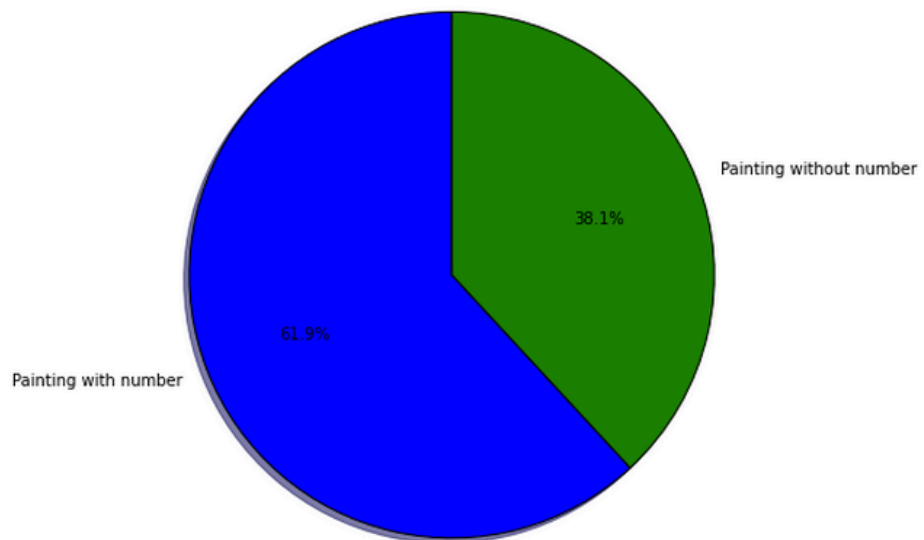


Figure 30. Attr. José de Páez, 9. *De negro e india, produce loba* (From Negro and Indian woman, Loba is produced), c. 1780-1785, no size. Private Collection, Mexico; rpt. María Concepción García Saíz, *Castas mexicanas* (Olivetti, 1989; print; 200)



Figure 31. Andrés de Islas, *No. 8 De indio y negra, nace lobo* (From Indian and Negro woman, Loba is produced), 1774, oil on canvas, 75 x 54 cm. Museo de América, Madrid; rpt. María Concepción García Saíz, *Castas mexicanas* (Olivetti, 1989; print; 129)



Figure 32. Ramón Torres, *14. De negro e india, sale lobo* (From Black and Indian woman, Lobo), c. 1770-80, oil on copper, 32 x 42.5. Private collection; rpt. Iona Katzew, *Casta Painting* (University of Texas Press, 1996; print; 126)



Figure 33. Attr. José de Alcívar, 4. *De indio y mestiza, coyote* (From Indian and Mestizo woman, Coyote), c. 1760-70, oil on canvas, 78.7 x 101 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art; rpt. Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting* (University of Texas Press, 1996; print; 106)



Figure 34. Attr. José de Páez, 4. *De indio y mestiza, produce coyote* (From Indio and Mestizo woman, Coyote), ca. 1780-1785, no size. Private Collection, Mexico; rpt. María Concepción García Saíz, *Castas mexicanas* (Olivetti, 1989; print, 198)



Figure 35. Anonymous, 5. *De negro y española, sale mulato. Negro 1. Española 2. Mulato 3.* (From Black and Spanish woman, mulatto), c. 1780, oil on canvas, 38 x 52 cm. Malú and Alejandra Escandón Collection, Mexico; rpt. Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting* (University of Texas Press, 1996; print; 131)



Figure 36. Distribution of parents by casta groups

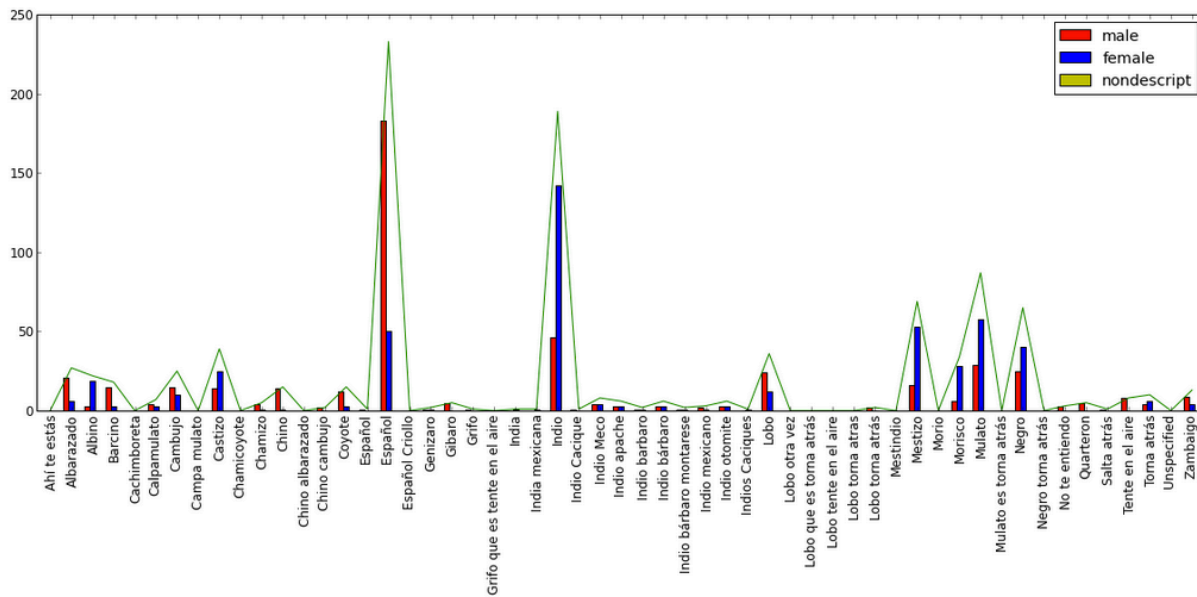


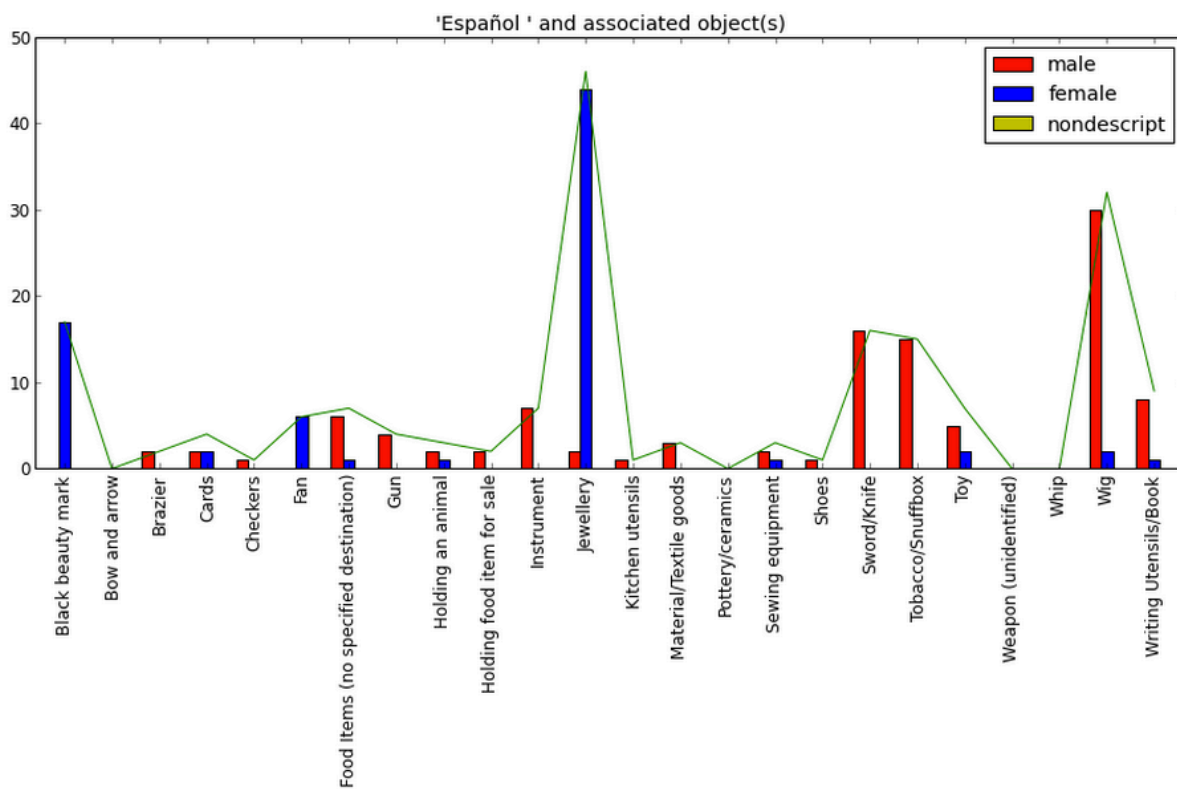
Figure 37. Distribution of *español* character by associated object divided by gender

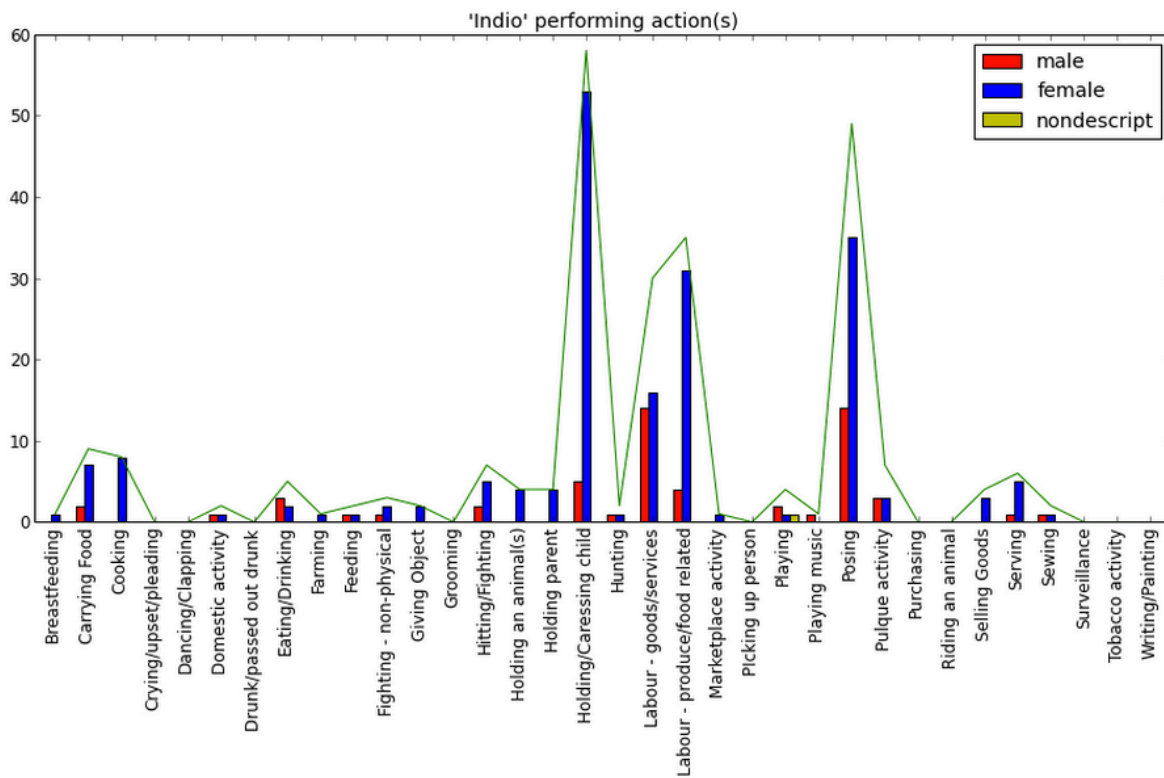
Figure 38. Distribution of actions for *indio* characters

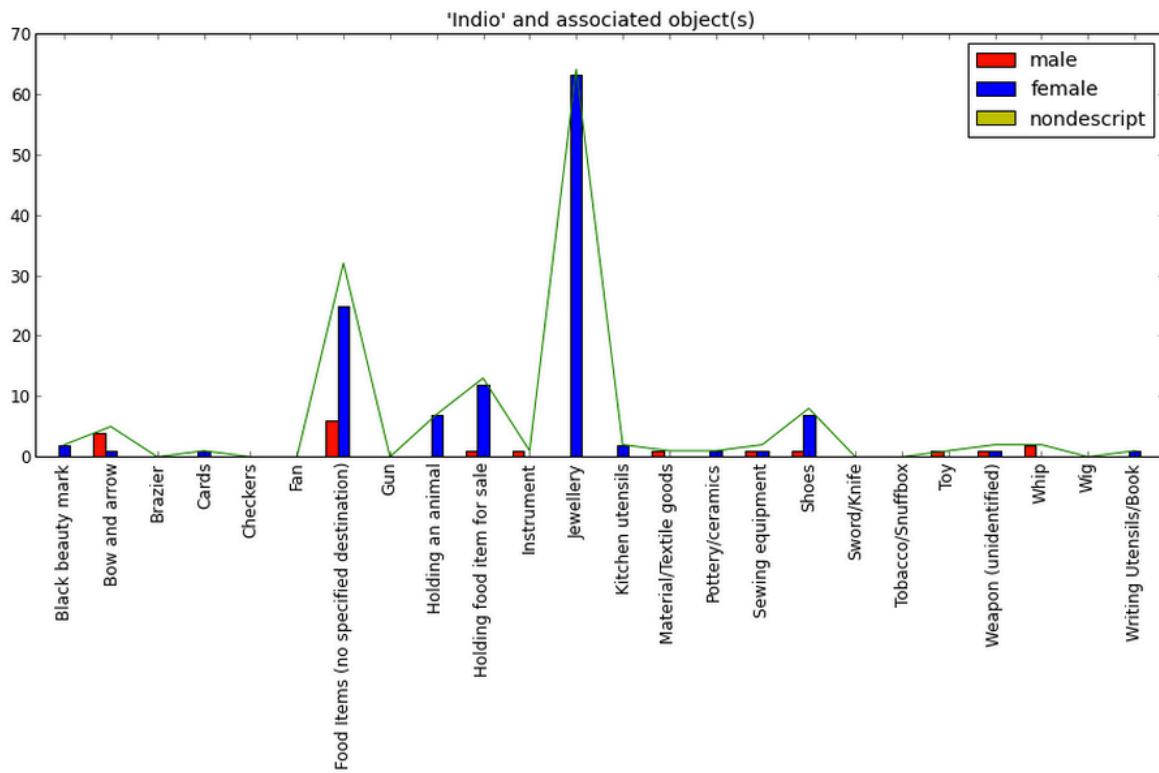
Figure 39. Distribution of objects for *indio* characters

Figure 40. Comparison of *indio* characters based on their familial association

(left) Miguel Cabrera, 1. *De español y de india, mestizo* (From Spanish and Indian woman, Mestizo child), 1763, oil on canvas, 132 x 101 cm. Private Collection; rpt. Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting* (University of Texas Press, 1996; print; 101)

(right) Miguel Cabrera, 15. *De mestizo y de india, coyote* (From Mestizo and Indian woman, Coyote child), 1763, oil on canvas, 132 x 101 cm. Private Collection; rpt. Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting* (University of Texas Press, 1996; print; 105)

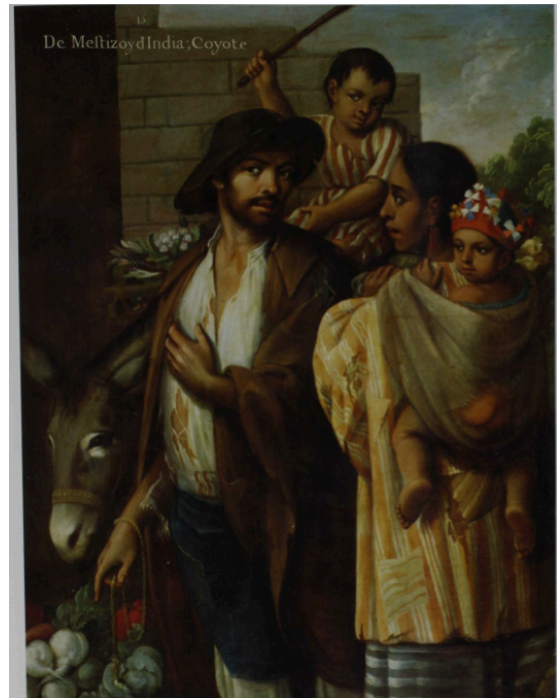


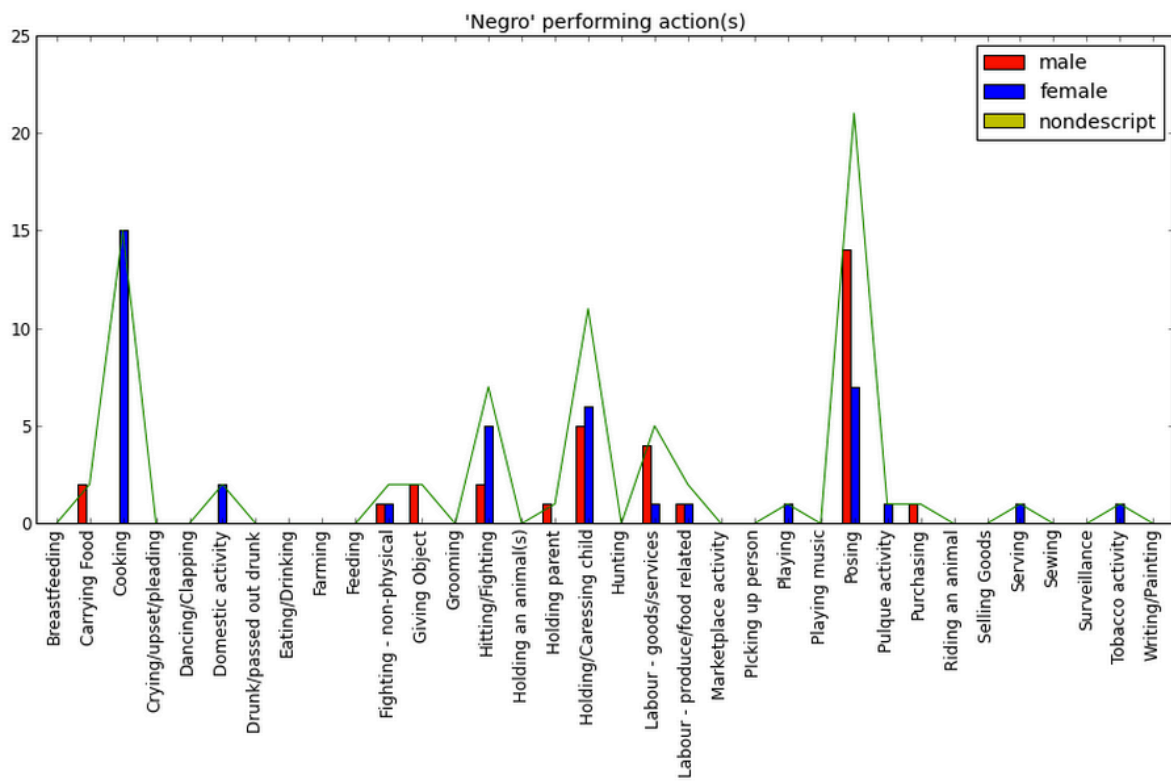
Figure 41. Distribution of actions for *negro* characters

Figure 42. Anonymous, *De español y negra, produce mulato* (From Spanish and Black woman, Mulatto is produced), c. 1730-50, oil on canvas, 84 x 105 cm. Private Collection. ; rpt. Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting* (University of Texas Press, 1996; print; 18)



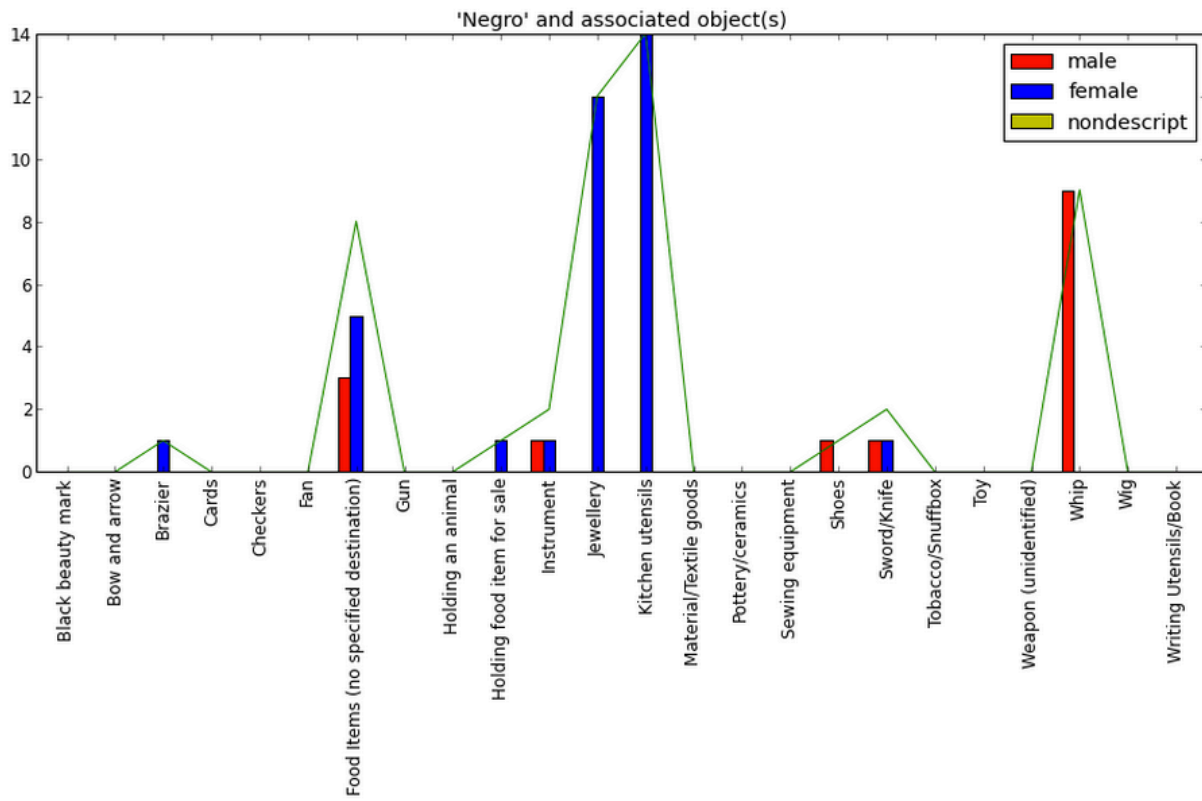
Figure 43. Distribution of objects for *negro* characters

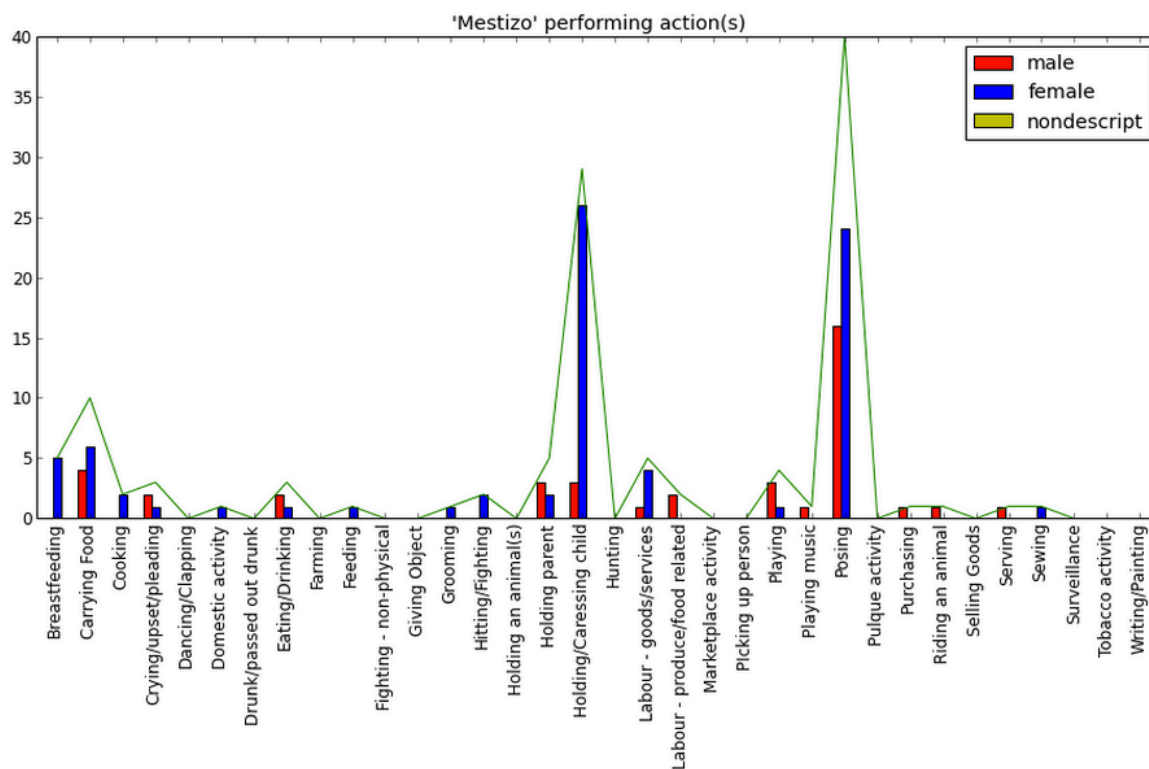
Figure 44. Distribution of actions for *mestizo* characters

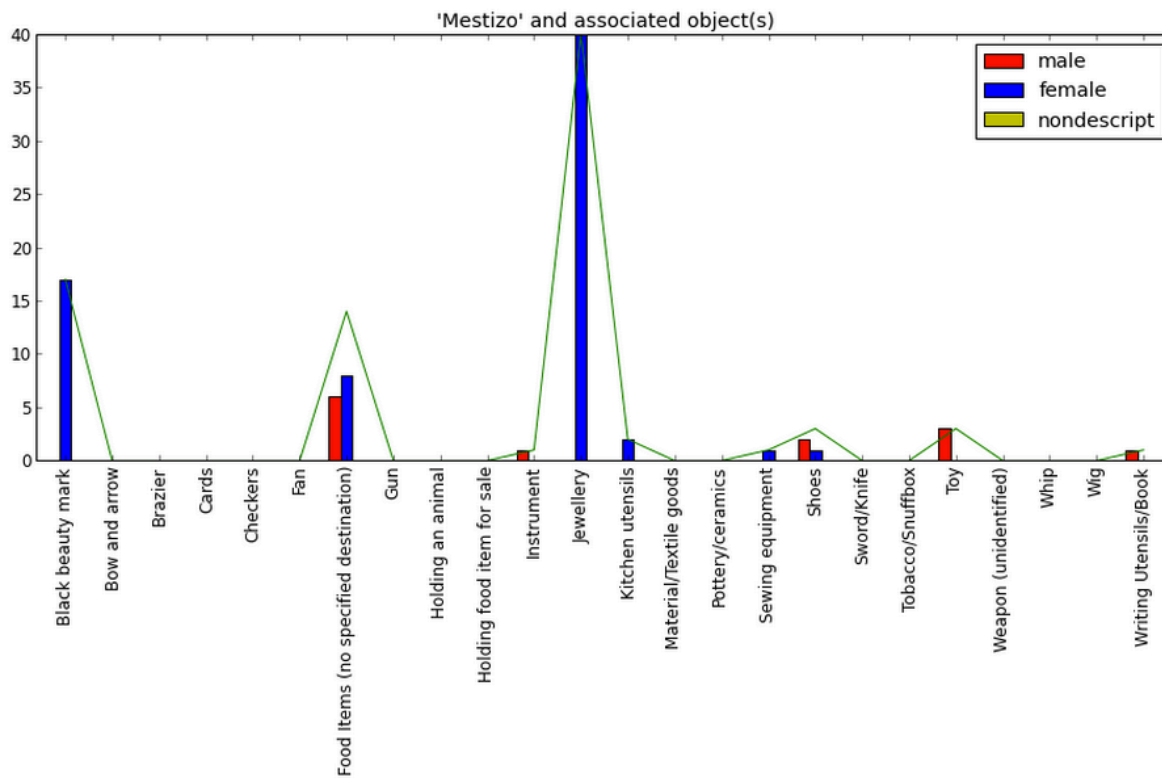
Figure 45. Distribution of objects for *mestizo* characters

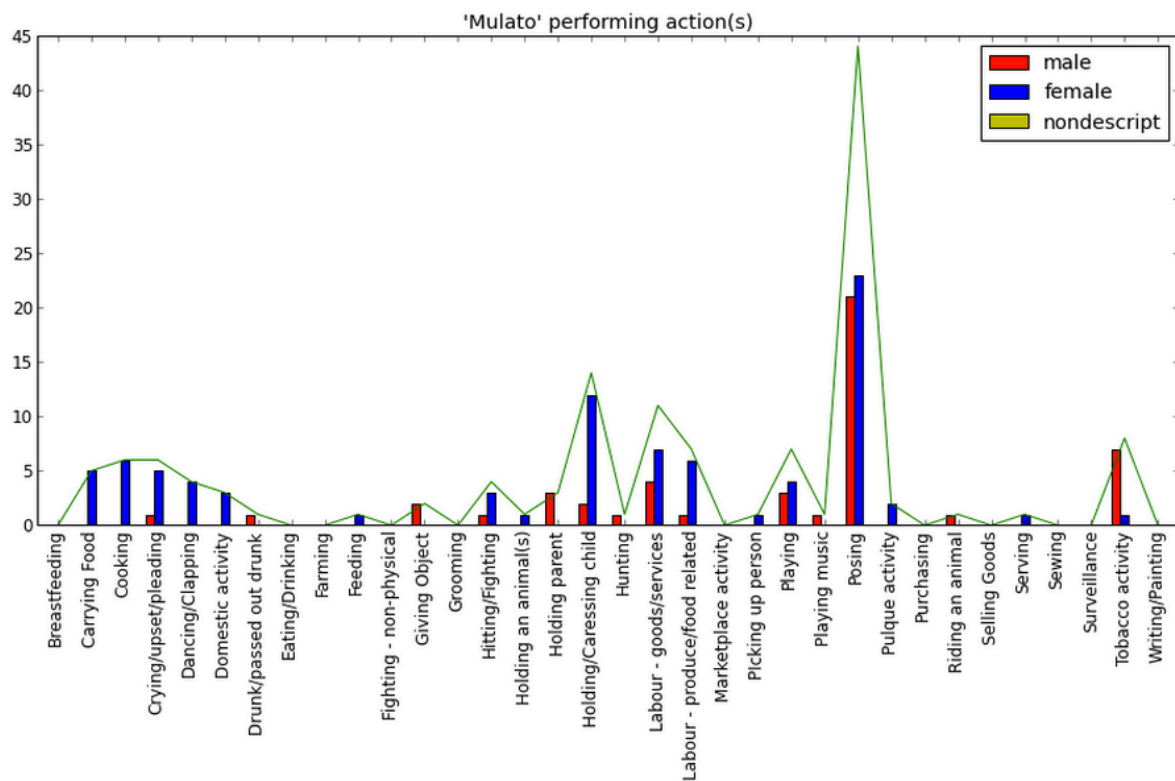
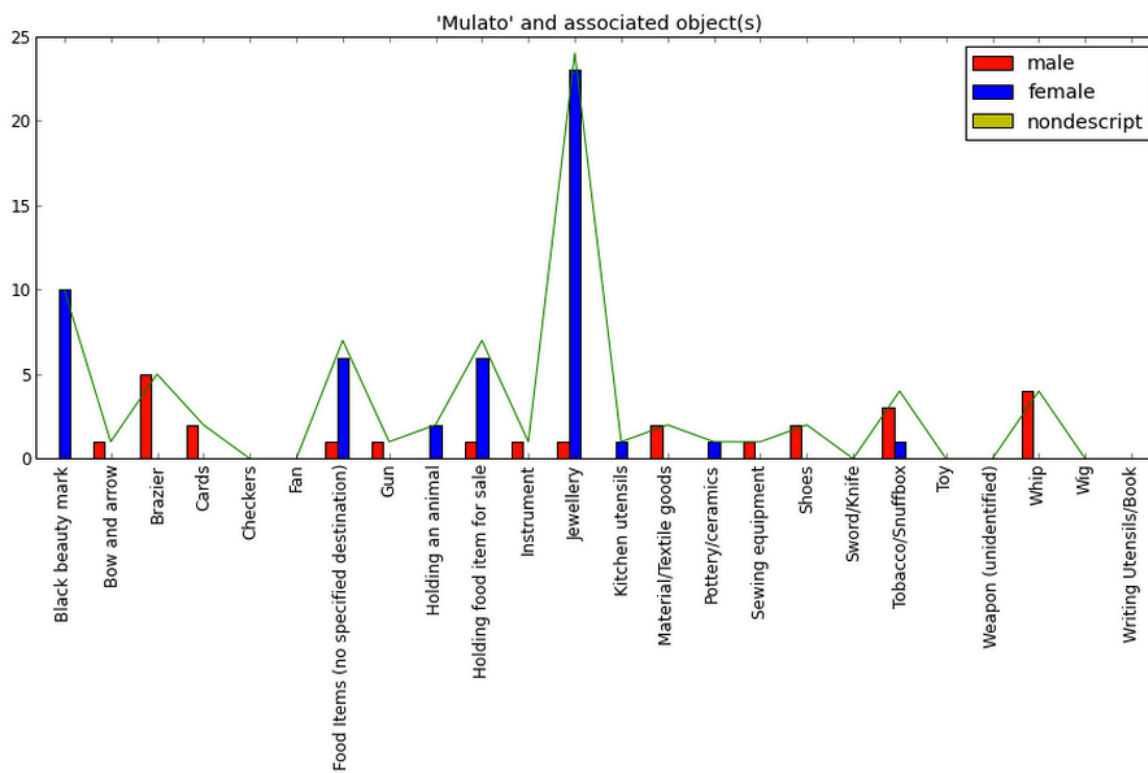
Figure 46. Distribution of actions for *mulato* characters

Figure 47. Distribution of objects for *mulato* characters

Curriculum Vitae

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Lausanne University. Lausanne, Switzerland. July 2014.