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# Imperial ways of Knowing Blackness

*Legacies of demographic visibility in eighteenth-century New Spain and New Granada*

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# Comparative Rationale

# Statistical Visibility of People of African Descent in Latin America (1810s-2010s)

	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	
Argentina						■			■		■			■		■						●
Bolivia			?	?	■			?		●					■		■		■			●
Brasil							●		●	■		■		●	●	●			●	●	●	●
Chile	●		■	■	■	■						■									●	●
Colombia		■	■								●	■			■					●	●	●
Costa Rica												●			●						●	●
Cuba				●		●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●		●	●			●	●
Rep. Dominicana											■	●	●		●	●						
Ecuador																					●	●
El Salvador							?	?	?	■			●								●	●
Guatemala								■	■			●		●							●	●
Honduras								■		?	?		●	●							●	●
México								■	■													●
Nicaragua				●		●		●		?		●		?							●	●
Panamá											●	●	●	●								●
Paraguay				●				■	?				?									●
Perú		●	■		■	■	●							●								●
Uruguay					■	■				■												●
Venezuela							■	■	■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	●

■ : censo

● : visibilidad afrodescendiente

■? : censo sin datos encontrados sobre el cuestionario

# Statistical Visibility of People of African Descent in Latin America (1810s-2010s)

	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	
Argentina																						
Bolivia			?	?				?		●												
Brasil							●		●					●	●	●			●	●	●	●
Chile	●																				●	●
Colombia																				●	●	●
Costa Rica																					●	●
Cuba				●		●	●	●	●	●											●	●
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El Salvador							?	?	?												●	●
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México																						●
Nicaragua				●		●		●		?											●	●
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Paraguay				●					?													●
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Argentina																						●	
Bolivia			?	?				?		●													●
Brasil							●		●					●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●
Chile	●																					●	●
Colombia											●									●	●	●	●
Costa Rica												●			●						●	●	●
Cuba				●		●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●		●	●		●	●	●	●
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Ecuador																						●	●
El Salvador							?	?	?				●									●	●
Guatemala												●		●								●	●
Honduras										?	?			●	●							●	●
México																							●
Nicaragua				●		●		●		?		●		?								●	●
Panamá											●	●	●	●									●
Paraguay				●					?				?										●
Perú		●					●							●									●
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# Statistical Visibility of People of African Descent in Latin America (1810s-2010s)

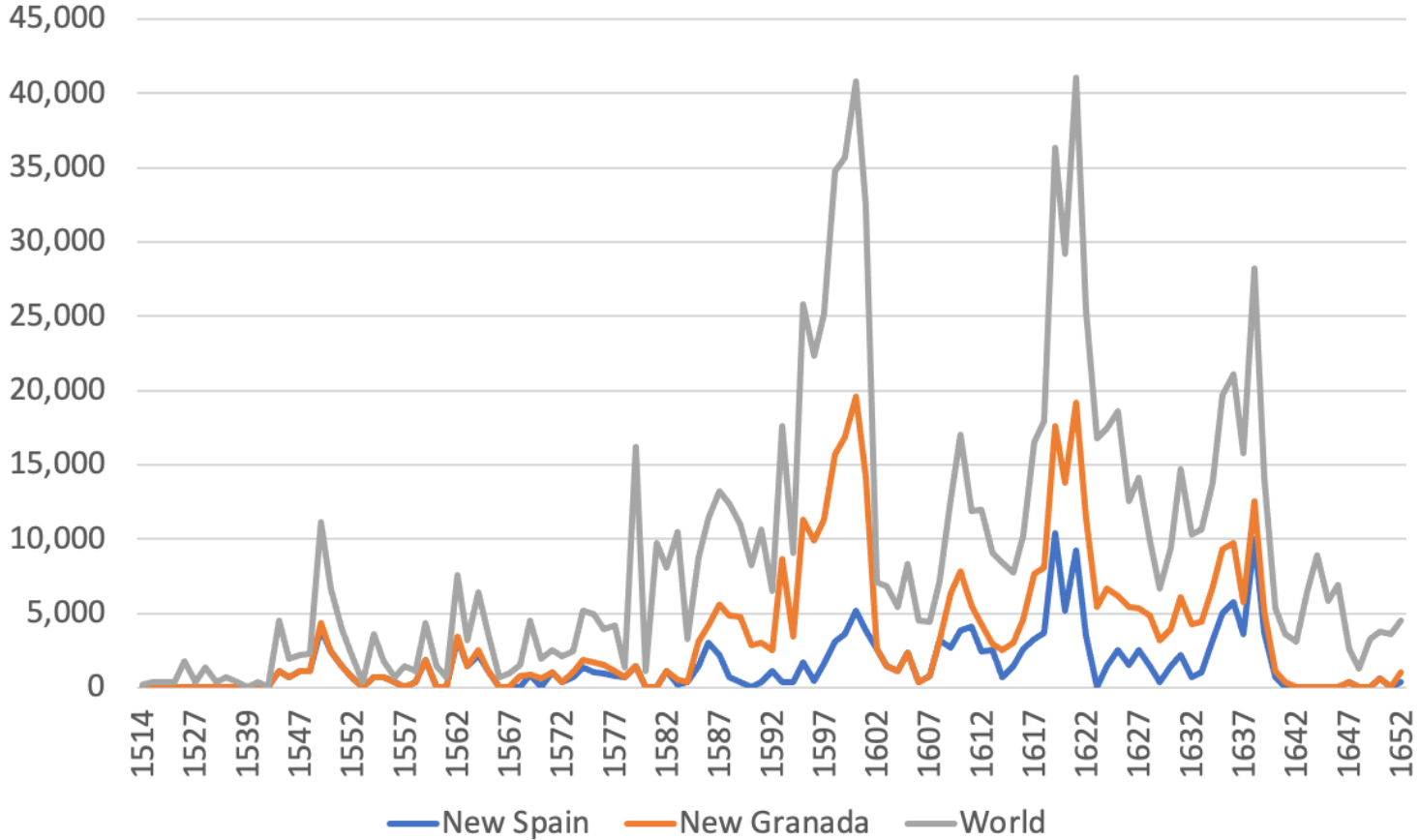
	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010		
Argentina																						●	
Bolivia			?	?				?		●													●
Brasil							●		●					●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●
Chile	●																					●	●
Colombia											●										●	●	●
Costa Rica												●			●						●	●	●
Cuba				●		●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●		●	●			●	●	●
Rep. Dominicana												●	●		●	●							●
Ecuador																						●	●
El Salvador							?	?	?				●									●	●
Guatemala												●		●								●	●
Honduras										?	?			●	●							●	●
México																							●
Nicaragua				●		●		●		?		●		?								●	●
Panamá											●	●	●	●									●
Paraguay				●					?				?										●
Perú		●					●							●									●
Uruguay																							●
Venezuela																							●

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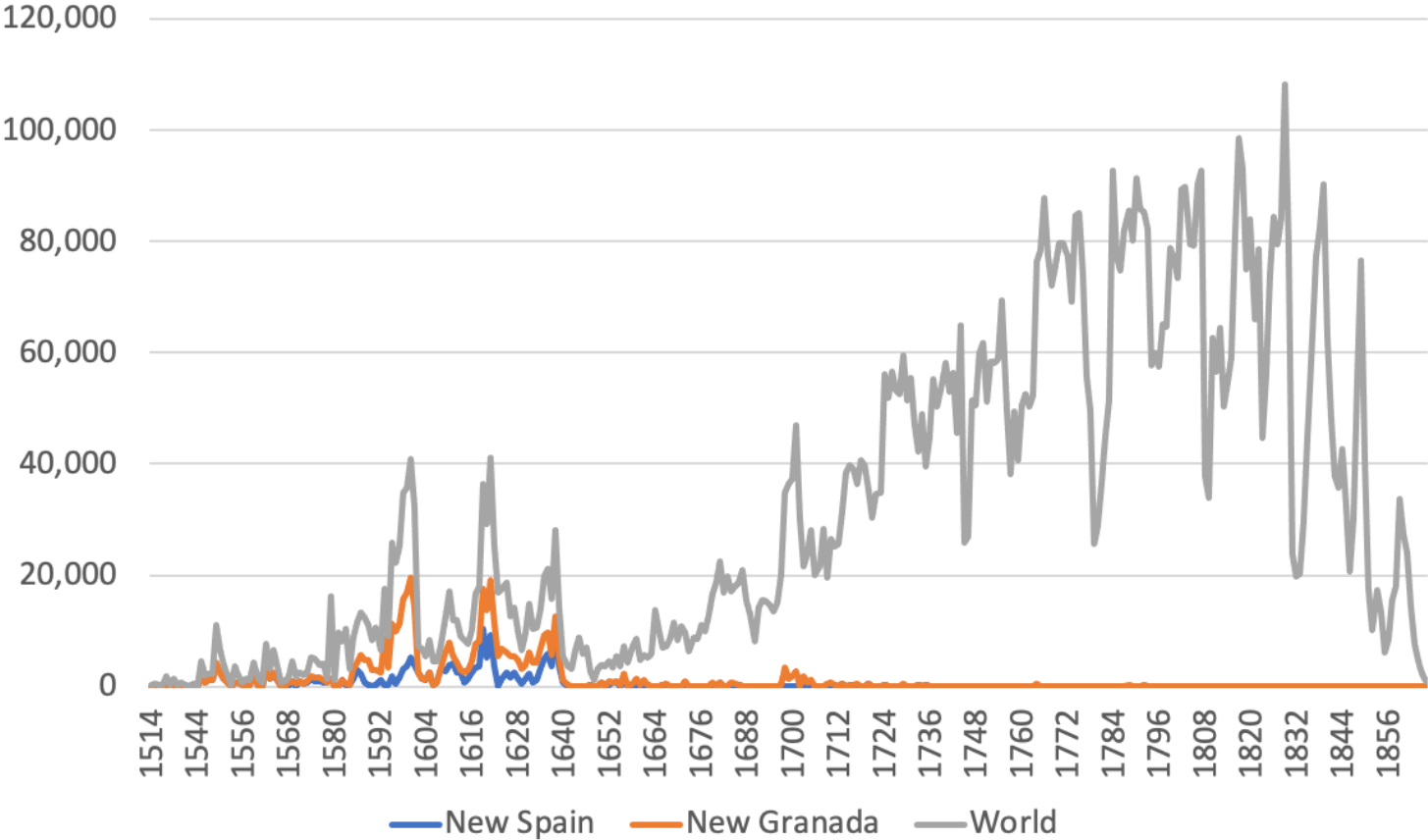
■? : censado sin datos encontrados sobre el cuestionario

# Slave Trade of People of African Descent (1514-1652)



(Slave Voyages Database)

# Slave Trade of People of African Descent (1514-1856)



(Slave Voyages Database)



# Analytical Approach

# Institutionalization of Ethnoracial Categories of People of African Descent

## Demographic Realism

- ♦ Under-politicized account
- ♦ Nothing *beyond* numeric representation
- ♦ Demography as fate
- ♦ No limits to demographic reification

## Political Instrumentalism

- ♦ Over-politicized account
- ♦ Nothing *behind* numeric representation
- ♦ Demography as farse
- ♦ No limits to political manipulation

# Empirical Puzzle

# Kaleidoscopic Patterns of Classification and Stratification in Colonial Latin America

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Multiplicity of Ethnoracial Visions and Divisions.

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Prevalence of Heterogamous Marriage Practices.

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Predominance of Illegitimate Births.

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Regionally specific forms of categorical inequality in occupational access.

# The 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Puzzle for the Last Colonial Censuses

*How can we explain the Bourbon efforts to establish clear distinctions and make specific categories of Blackness statistically visible in a context where it was increasingly difficult to do so?*

# Intensified Inter-Imperial competition against the British Empire

At the end of the Seven Year's War (1756-1763), after the loss of Havana to the British in 1762, two imperial imperatives became particularly salient for the Spanish Crown :

- ♦ Strengthen authority within colonial territories (enhance *coercion*)
- ♦ Generate additional revenue to pay the war debt (increase *extraction*)

# Different Response from Metropolitan and Colonial Authorities

## New Granada

Increase the revenue produced by enslaved labor of people of African descent classified through categories of “pure Blackness” (e.g., *negros* or *esclavos*)

## New Spain

Increase revenue by taxing free people of color who were classified under categories of “mixed Blackness” (e.g., *mulatos* or *pardos*)

# The Case of 18<sup>th</sup>- Century New Spain



# Count of Revillagigedo (1794)

## On “Pure Blackness”

“*negros* have in every way disfigured and worsened the *casta india*, and have been the origin and beginning of so many deformed castas, as seen in these kingdoms. They also drive away europeos from domestic service and some other tasks, because it is not easy for [...] those who come from Europe to dare to mingle with them.” (De la Torre Villar 1991:1056).

## On “Mixed Blackness”

“enlistments should only include *individuos blancos o de casta limpia*. However, this rule cannot be followed in coastal and bordering jurisdictions, where it is indispensable to include *castas tributarias*, relieving them from tribute in order to count on a competent number of militias capable of containing the first threats or insults from any enemies.” (De la Torre Villar 1991:1133).

# Distinctions of *Casta* and *Clase* included in the forms of the 1790 census

DISTINCION DE CASTAS

CASTAS	HASTA 7 AÑOS		DE 7 A 16		DE 16 A 25		DE 25 A 40		DE 40 A 50		DE 50 ARRIBA		TOTALES	
	V.	H.	V.	H.	V.	H.	V.	H.	V.	H.	V.	H.	V.	H.
EUROP.														
ESPAÑ.														
INDIOS														
MULATOS														
OTRAS CASTAS														

Distinción de Clases

Curas  
Beneficiados  
Vicarios  
Sacristanes  
Ord. por Patrimonio  
Id. de Menores  
Depend. de Inquiz.

Id. de Cruzadas  
Id. de Acordada  
Titulos  
Hidalgos  
Letrados  
Estudiantes  
Empl. en RL. Hac.

Con fuero Militar  
Escribanos  
Depend. del Foro  
T.  
Labradores  
Mineros  
Comerciantes

Fabricantes  
Artesanos  
Jornaleros  
Medicos  
Cirujanos  
Barber. y Sargn.



# A Typical Census Response

“Don Jacinto Gutiérrez, Hacienda owner, native *español* from Tehuantepeue, aged 61, married to Doña Teresa Medina, *española*, aged 55. He has five children, one 23 years old, another 19, another 17, another 11, and another 7. He also has a 32-year-old *español* overseer who is single, a 28-year-old *mulato* servant, a 14-year-old young *indio*, and two maids: a 40-year-old *negra*, and another 18-year-old *loba*. The *mulato* servant pays tribute.” (Castro Aranda 1977:49)

# Census Controversy in the Spanish Crown

## Revillagigedo (1791)

“The number of men of *casta limpia*, from 16 to 40 years of age ready for enlistment are 91,419, and that of *pardos* 31,890, the total being 123,309 [...], whose number still seems well reduced for the vast extension of this kingdom.” (De la Torre Villar 1991:1132).

## Alzate (1791)

“The number of *uropeos* expressed in the registry seems very small to me [...]. What I have said about the *uropeos* should also be understood about the *negros*, that is: their number is excessively greater than that expressed in the census.” (Saborit 2018:108–9).

# Afrodescendant tributaries as percentage of total tributaries in 1794 and 1805

Province	Afromexican, 1794	Total tributaries, 1794	Afromexican, 1805	Total tributaries, 1805 <sup>a</sup>	% increase in Afromexican	% increase in total tributaries
Veracruz	1,284.0	30,706.5	1,330.5	33,867.0	3.62	10.29
Arizpe	—	—	2,369.0	4,345.0	—	—
Puebla	2,405.5	94,350.5	2,400.5	113,174.0	-0.21	19.95
Oaxaca	2,460.0	81,679.0	2,905.5	95,952.0	18.11	17.47
Guanajuato	7,701.0	47,328.0	8,086.0	62,874.0	5.00	32.85
Mexico	8,159.5	197,088.5	10,923.0	257,230.0	33.87	30.51
Valladolid	9,457.0	36,203.5	12,455.0	46,804.0	31.70	29.28
Potosí	3,760.5	15,157.5	10,212.0	32,004.0	171.56	111.14
Zacatecas	—	—	12,768.0	23,459.0	—	—
Guadalajara	2,101.0	14,107.0	14,885.5	46,682.0	608.50	230.91
Totals	37,328.5	516,620.5	78,335.0	716,391.0	109.85	38.67

(Gharala 2019:140)

The Case of 18<sup>th</sup>-  
Century New  
Granada

# The “Black Savage”

Viceroy Pedro Messía de la Cerda (1772):

“In Chocó the Cunacunas frequently and repeatedly attack, set fire to Vigía de Atrato, kill people, steal what they find and put the Provinces in consternation, which is increased by the knowledge that they acquire dealing with foreigners; and it may be suspected that with this aid, they will ever try to create public disturbance caused by the disloyalty of the already reduced *indios* and the multitude of *negro slaves*, in whom no hope can be justified due to their servile condition and natural desire to shake off the yoke of slavery.” (Colmenares 1989:146)



# “Milicias de Todos los Colores”

Archbishop of New Granada (1789):

“The militia consists of an infantry regiment of *voluntarios blancos*, with eight hundred and ninety-two troops [...] In a battalion of *pardos libres*, whose total number is 893 [...] In two artillery companies of *pardos y morenos libres*, with the same number of plazas as the veteran companies [...] Within the province, there is the regiment of *milicias de todos los colores* from Mompós and the Lorica district made up of 893 plazas [...].  
(Colmenares 1989:484–86).

# 1778 Census of the “Number of Souls” in Santa Fé de Bogotá, New Granada

Padron hecho en el Año de 1778 del numero de Almas que havitan en esta Ciudad de Santa fe de Bogotá capital del Nuevo Reyno de Granada, y en toda su Jurisdiccion con distincion de sexos, clases y castas ynclusos Parbulos: con arreglo alo prevenido en la Real orden de lo de Noviembre de 1776.

Padron de las Almas que hay en la Ciudad de Santa fe y su Jurisdiccion en el año de 1778	Estado Eclesiastico.				Blancos.				Indios.				Libres de todos colores.				Esclavos de varios colores.			
	Secula res.	Regular res.	Legos res.	Religiosos res.	Hombres Casados	Mugeres ynclusos Parbulos	Mugeres Casadas	Ynteritos ynclusos Parbulos	Hombres Casados	Mugeres ynclusos Parbulos	Mugeres Casadas	Ynteritos ynclusos Parbulos	Hombres Casados	Mugeres ynclusos Parbulos	Mugeres Casadas	Ynteritos ynclusos Parbulos	Hombres Casados	Mugeres ynclusos Parbulos	Mugeres Casadas	Ynteritos ynclusos Parbulos
Ciudad de Santa fe Corregimiento de Obispo en cinco Pueblos.	0148.	0204.	0333.	0234.	0761	1733	0833.	2380	0211	0437	0233.	0869	1121	1932	3357.	3398	0049.	0390.	0049.	0366.
El de Boza en diez.	0001.	0000.	0000.	0000.	0152.	0270.	0152.	0220.	0792.	1583.	0792.	1632.	0854.	2365.	0814.	2076.	0058.	0000.	0038.	0010.
El de Vbaque en ocho.	0007.	0003.	0000.	0000.	0321.	0622.	0321.	0646.	0462.	0771.	0462.	0880.	0563.	1160.	0563.	1259.	0048.	0305.	0048.	0089.
El de Sipaquira y Vbaque en diez y ocho.	0010.	0000.	0000.	0000.	0498.	1400.	0498.	1161.	0691.	1077.	0691.	1289.	0795.	0938.	0795.	0998.	0059.	0029.	0059.	0025.
El de Guatunota en siete.	0021.	0002.	0000.	0000.	1371.	2399.	1432.	2355.	2363.	3648.	2344.	3891.	1660.	2477.	1590.	2567.	0008.	0052.	0050.	0036.
Suma total.	0207.	0233.	0333.	0234.	3685.	7722.	3835.	8265.	5722.	9337.	5721.	10692.	6233.	10723.	6399.	12000.	0153.	0352.	0553.	0553.

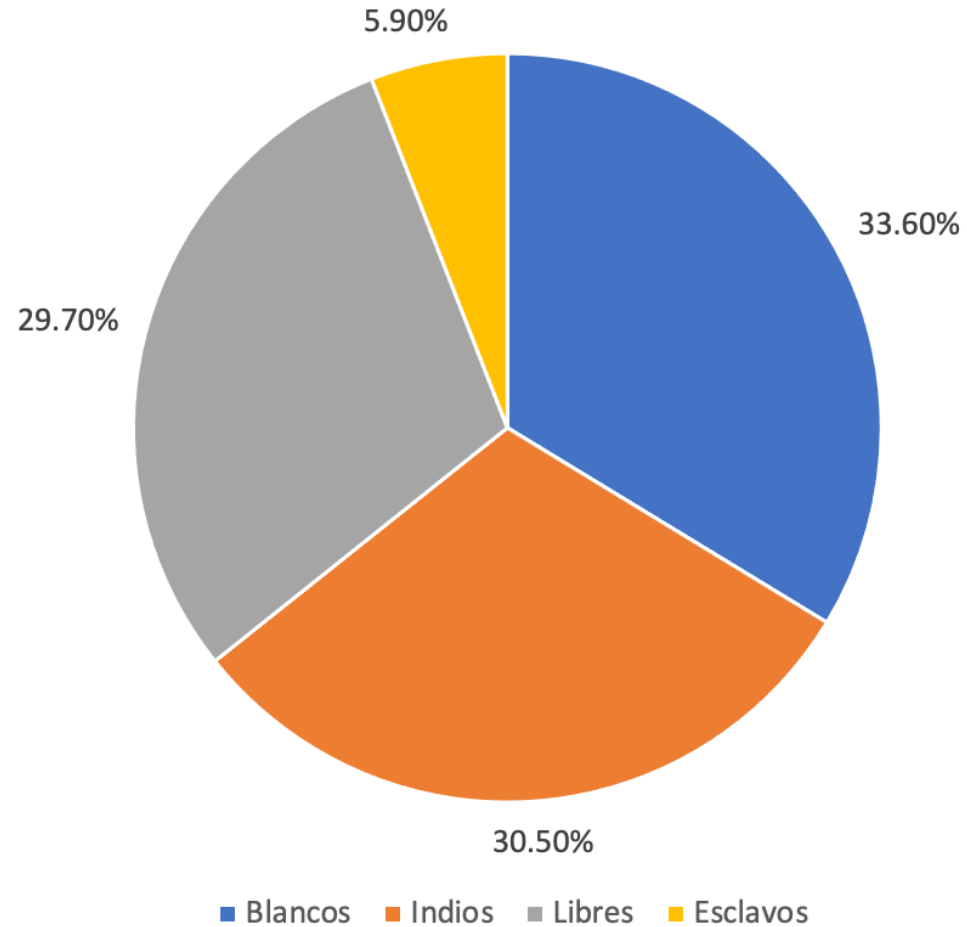
**Resumen general**

<b>Total de Matrimonios.</b>	<b>Total de hombres de todas Clases, Castas, y estados ynclusos Parbulos.</b>	<b>Mugeres de todos estados, y clases ynclusos Parbulos.</b>	<b>Total de Almas, ó Personas.</b>
De Blancos..... 3968.5	Eclesiasticos..... 009531.	Religiosas..... 00234.	Hombres..... 449453.
De Indios..... 3972.1	Blancos..... 119407.	Blancas..... 329076.	Mugeres..... 479587.
De Libres..... 69233.	Indios..... 159059.	Indias..... 169416.	Suma general..... 929042.
De Esclavos..... 09155.	Libres..... 169958.	Libres..... 189193.	
Suma Total..... 159797.	Esclavos..... 009500.	Esclavas..... 009666.	
	<b>Total de hombres. 449453.</b>	<b>Total de Mugeres. 479587.</b>	

Sala de ayuntamiento a Santa fe a Bogotá, 13 de Abril de 1778.

*Manriquez*      *Alcalde*      *Alcalde*      *Alcalde*      *Alcalde*

# Francisco Silvestre's Descripción (1789)

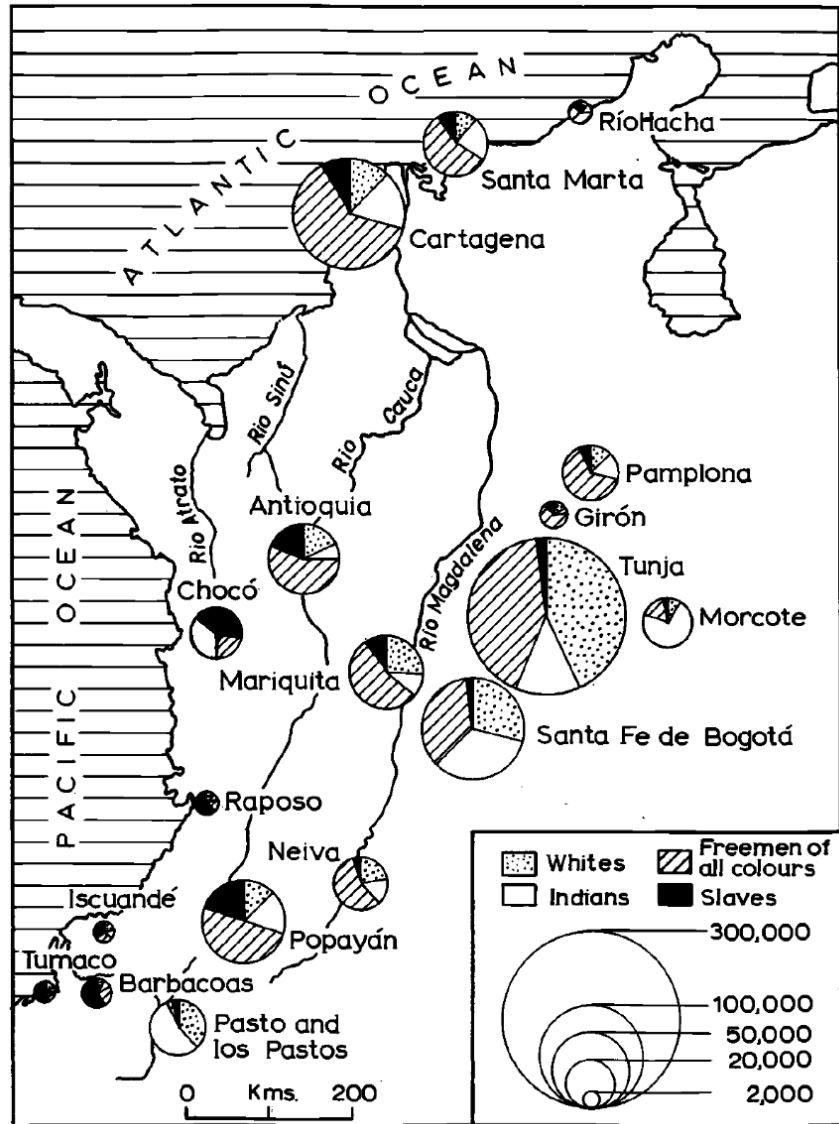


(Silvestre 1950:81–82)

# Cartagena Population by (available) Ethnoracial Category, 1777

Category	Total
<b>White</b>	<b>309</b>
<b>Free People</b>	<b>2,875</b>
—Libres	1,278
—Pardos	564
—Negros	425
—Mulatos	422
—Cuarterones	84
—Zambos	79
—Mestizos	20
—Quinterones	1
—Pintas	2
<b>Slaves</b>	<b>1,720</b>
—Negros	977
—Esclavos	507
—Mulatos	138
—Zambos	61
—Pardos	34
—Cuarterones	3
<b>Indian</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Ecclesiastic</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>No information</b>	<b>5,469</b>

(Díaz and Roca 2009:35)



(McFarlane 1993:33)

# Map of the Population of New Granada using Data from the 1778 Census

# Comparative Conclusions

# Empirical Conclusions

- While in New Spain the categories of “mixed Blackness” remained demographically salient, in New Granada these categories were subsumed within the broader category of *libres de todos los colores*.
- Whereas in New Spain the category *negro* disappeared from the late colonial census, in New Granada it became salient and expansive aggregating other categories of Blackness under the broader category *esclavo*.
- The censuses of the late eighteenth century rendered visible distinct categories of Blackness, responding to a different configuration of imperial imperatives, and also to a different form of intra-imperial politics.

# Analytical Conclusions

- Census categories are *selective demographic representations*, and as such, they are both enumerative *and* performative.
- The *selectivity criteria* is an empirical object that should be studied in the political contexts of production.
- Census results can be better understood as *objectified outcomes* of past and present *political struggles* that are then embedded in census words and numbers.



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