

NATIONAL EXCLUSION OF ANDEAN AFROS
IN ECUADOR

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

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Abstract

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While popular accounts of nationalism portray the ‘nation’ as a homogenizing, unifying construction, the historical oppression of Afro-Ecuadorians that has resulted in the widespread exclusion of Afro-history, heritage, and culture within Ecuador’s national discourse suggests otherwise. By situating dominant conceptions of nationhood within the context of Ecuador, this study expands upon the works of national theorists such as Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and John Breuilly to argue for a more inclusive conceptualization of nationhood. In positioning afro-descendants as the ‘ultimate Other,’ afro-descendants are both external, yet fundamental to the production of Ecuador’s national imaginings. Through an examination of key sites in national ideological production, this study explores the exclusionary history of afro-descendants in Ecuador and seeks to make sense of afro-descendant’s paradoxical position within Ecuador’s national imaginings. Thus, despite its consolidative potential, the nationhood is constituted by the very fragmentation that it attempts to overcome.

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1. INTRODUCTION

While popular accounts of nationalism portray the ‘nation’ as a homogenizing, unifying construction (Anderson 1983, Gellner 1983, Gilroy 1987), the historical that has resulted in the widespread exclusion of afro-history, heritage, and culture within Ecuador’s national discourse suggests otherwise (Johnson 2014, Sánchez 2007, Rahier 1998). By situating dominant conceptions of nationhood within the context of Ecuador, this study expands upon the works of national theorists such as Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and John Breuilly to argue for a more inclusive conceptualization of nationhood. In positioning afro-descendants as the ‘ultimate Other’ (Rahier 1998, 2011), they are both external, yet fundamental to the production of Ecuador’s national imaginings. Through an examination of key sites in national ideological production, this study explores the exclusionary history of afro-descendants in Ecuador and further, seeks to make sense of afro-descendant’s paradoxical position within Ecuador’s national imaginings. In the end, despite its consolidative potential, nationhood is constituted by the very fragmentation that it attempts to overcome.

Chapter 2 begins with an introduction into the field in which I review the methodology utilized within this study, including a general description of my informants, how I found these participant, the methods through which information was gathered, as well as the techniques through which data was analyzed. Next, Chapter 3 reviews dominant conceptions of nationhood as understood by leading theorists on the subject. While some theorists suggest that nations are communities imagined by culturally similar groups of people, others propose instead that the nation is an ideology utilized by the state to maintain control. I illustrate this first perspective of nationhood through an examination of the historical ‘pillars’ that enabled the emergence of

national consciousness within the colonial period of Ecuador. Next, the latter perspective is demonstrated through a review of a crucial period of state-formation and nation-building that occurred during the Liberal Revolution of Ecuador's history.

Next, Chapter 4 discusses some of the mechanisms through which national identity is imagined and perpetuated within the minds of its people. National imaginings are often constructed around the myths and memories that form its core identity and determine the boundaries of the nation. Myths and memories also play a role in dictating who can and cannot become a member of the national community, which I illustrate through an overview of the exclusionary practices against afro-descendants enacted by Ecuador's Liberal Party throughout a crucial nation-building period within the republic's history.

This leads to a discussion about the main critiques against traditional conceptions of nationhood as offered by post-colonial theorists, who argue that fragmentation continues to play a prominent role in nationhood, even after the nation has been formed. Throughout this discussion, I demonstrate that despite the inclusionary discourse espoused by Ecuador's *mestizaje* movement, fragmentation continues to be a prevalent albeit obscured aspect of identity within Ecuador. From there, I argue that this fragmentary national identity is tacitly stabilized through the positioning of Afro-Ecuadorians as the ultimate "Other".

Next, through the utilization of historical data, anthropological articles, and ethnographic information based in Ecuador, I demonstrate how afro-descendants are "Otherized" within Ecuador's national imaginings. After that, I touch upon the daily implications of being cast as the ultimate "Other," as evidenced through by the narratives of afro-descendants living in Cuenca, Ecuador. Finally, I culminate all this data into a conclusive argument that despite their historic

exclusion from the national ethos, Afro-Ecuadorians play a fundamental role in the imagining of the nation.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Entering the Field

I stand at the intersection of *Calle La Republica* and *Calle Gonzalo Zaldumbide*, but I do not see Rosa anywhere. Across the street, to my left, is a fenced-in lot with cars in need of repair strewn unevenly within. I scan my head to the adjacent corner where a *panadería* occupies the ground floor of a peach and cream colored building. My eyes continue onwards toward the remaining corner, then settle on the restaurant situated on the bottom floor of a white and coral apartment building. Though the business lacks any identifying features, I spot two sheets of paper posted on the side window that depict culinary dishes unfamiliar to me. Through the window, beyond the advertised dishes, dark bodies move inside. I approach the entrance, locking eyes with a woman who I believe is the woman I have been searching for. “Rosa?” I question. She smiles and leans in to touch her cheek to mine. I take a seat at the table nearest to me, as Rosa scurries into the back kitchen.

The restaurant is modest, with only six small tables dispersed throughout the room. Segments of a burlap-like material, each green, red, or brown are draped around the windows on either end of the restaurant. In the right corner of the room is a narrow bathroom area protected by a makeshift wall crafted from thin, woven, sand-colored leaves. I notice a painting of a tall, dark, impossibly thin woman in the left corner of the restaurant. She dons a long red skirt and a green head covering. Her face is void, lacking any features at all, while her head is attached to a string of a neck, too long to resemble reality. Her waist, too, curves into almost nothing, accentuating the curves of the woman.

2.2 Methods

Fieldwork was conducted between May 25, 2017 and August 25, 2017 within the colonial city of Cuenca, Ecuador. Cuenca is located in the Andean highlands of Ecuador, residing at an elevation of about 8,400 feet. The most recent national census cites Cuenca's population as exceeding 505,585, though only 2.2% of this population identify as afro-descendant (INEC 2010). This restaurant would become the primary site of my research, and Rosa, the owner, would become my closest informant throughout the summer. I made initial contact with Rosa via Facebook after learning that she was the leader of a local afro-descendant organization, to which she graciously agreed to help me with my project.

Rosa was the most active member of the local afro-descendent community that I encountered throughout my fieldwork. For instance, she founded an hour-long radio program, which airs once a week on a local station, to discuss culture, music, and various issues that relate to afro-descendants throughout the country. Meanwhile, Rosa described to me a television program to the same effect that was scheduled to air soon. Rosa also spoke at several events during my stay to promote awareness about the political, social, economic, and cultural issues that afro-descendants in Ecuador continue to struggle with on a daily basis. Rosa also engaged with these topics in the political sphere, regularly attending local government meetings, while also helping to charter a local branch of a national afro-descendant organization. Finally, Rosa was involved in several cultural events that aimed at promoting and celebrating afro-descendant culture in all forms. Despite her heavy involvement in advocating the plight of afro-descendants in Ecuador, Rosa still managed to raise three daughters and manage her own restaurant.

Rosa often encouraged me to join her in many of these events. For instance, she regularly invited me to sit in on her weekly radio program, which she hosted alongside her mother and a

friend. At times, I was requested to join them, though my intermediate mastery of the Spanish language often limited my participation. I also attended several of the political and cultural events in which Rosa promoted African-descendant awareness.

Because the afro-descendent population of Cuenca was dispersed throughout the city, there was no neighborhood or hub where I could reliably find informants. Luckily, Rosa allowed me to spend time at her restaurant to participate and observe in daily happenings. I often engaged in informal conversations with Rosa, restaurant employees, as well as other acquaintances and clients that would frequent the restaurant for lunch. Due to her reach within the afro-descendant community, Rosa introduced me to many of my informants. However, other informants were recruited through convenience sampling, in which I approached individuals that I encountered throughout the city.

Most interviews were administered in public places, such as cafés, places of employment, as well as Rosa's restaurant. Occasionally, I conducted interviews at private venues accompanied by either a friend or acquaintance. Many scheduled interviews fell through, due to the informants' failure to show up. All interviews were conducted in Spanish. Furthermore, interviews were documented via audio recorder with the permission of participants, then later transcribed into Spanish.

This study utilizes data from interviews with 35 different participants (14 female and 21 male) ranging from 18 to 57 years of age. Of the 35 participants, 31 self-identified as either afro-descendant, black (*negro/a*), or Afro-Ecuadorian, while the remaining four did not share with me their ethnic identity. A total of 27 participants were born and raised throughout Ecuador, while the remaining eight hailed from countries including Colombia, Cuba, Haiti, Mozambique, and

Brazil. All foreign-born participants had been living in Ecuador for at least 6 years, however most had lived there for much longer.

For the protection of study participants, Washington State University Institutional Review Board reviewed this project. The study was determined to be of minimal risk, meeting the regulatory guidelines for an expedited review on June 23, 2017. Verbal consent was obtained from each participant prior to their involvement in this study. To protect the identity of participants, all informants are referred to under pseudonyms.

The duration of interviews spanned from ten minutes to over an hour long. If time permitted, informants were also asked to participate in a free-listing exercise. Depending on the context and flow of the interviews, free listing prompts were introduced at different points throughout the interview. The data utilized from this study are primarily based off only two of these free list questions. The first free list question prompted participants with a variation of the following:

A stereotype is something that a group of people say about another group of people. For example, in the United States, people say that all Chinese people are intelligent. Though some Chinese people are intelligent, not all of them are. What are the negative stereotypes about afro-descendants here?

After responding, participants were posed with the follow-up question: “What are the positive stereotypes about afro-descendants here?”

In the first few interviews, individuals were asked to write their responses out on a sheet of paper. The purpose of free listing is to obtain rapid-fire responses. Upon noticing that participants were taking too much time in thinking about their responses, later informants were asked to relay their responses orally. In total, eight wrote out their responses.

For the purpose of analysis, relevant responses (as determined by the researcher) from other portions of the interview were included within the above free list data. For example, if a participant shared with me that people think that afro-descendants are thieves when prompted to talk about discrimination, these results were included in the free list data. Its position on the list was dependent upon when the comments were made in relation to the free listing exercise. Similar responses were collapsed into one category, while irrelevant responses were omitted. For example, many participants reported that a common stereotype about afro-descendants is that they are good soccer players or fast runners. Such responses were condensed into the category of “Good Athletes”. Responses were deemed irrelevant when it seemed as if the participant did not fully understand the question.

The responses were ranked by the order in which they were recalled, then the resulting free list data, along with basic demographic information including age, gender, and place of origin, was imported into R version 3.4.1 for analysis. The AnthroTools package (Purzycki & Jamieson-Lane 2016) was utilized to calculate the cultural salience (via Smith’s S) of each free list response.

3. THEORIES OF NATIONALISM

3.1 What is the Nation?

Despite the widespread categorization of global areas into a series of discrete nation-states, the concept of the 'nation' and 'nationalism' has proven especially difficult to define (Hutchinson and Smith 1994, Walker 1978). Though the weight of nationalism is acutely felt the world over, trumping other concepts of collective identity such as class, gender, or race, there is little agreement within the academic literature regarding the role regarding the role of cultural versus political factors in conceptualizing and defining nationhood. Walker (1978) attributes this confusion surrounding scholarship of the nation to the 'interutilization' of the terms 'state' and 'nation.' On one hand, Walker (1978: 36) characterizes the state as the globe's predominant political subdivision; a "territorial-political unit" which is "readily defined and... easily conceptualized in quantitative terms." For instance, Ecuador is a territorial juridical unit that contains over 16 million people within 283,561 square miles situated on the west coast of South America between 2 00 S and 77 30 W (Central Intelligence Agency 2018).

On the other hand, Walker (1978: 36) portrays the nation as having an essence that is intangible, describing it as "a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all other people." Walker (1978) acknowledges the inherently ambiguous nature of this bond, which undoubtedly contributes to the difficulty in defining nationhood. Furthermore, Walker (1978) observes that despite recognizing nationhood as fundamentally psychological, most theorists continue to regard it as interchangeable with the completely tangible concept of the state.

One such theorist, Anthony Giddens (1994:34), argues that the existence of the nation is

contingent upon the centralized, administrative reach of the state, thus characterizing the nation-state as a “bordered power-container.” Unlike Walker, Giddens (1994) does not make a distinction between the nation and the state, but rather compounds the terms to theorize the modern nation-state in contrast to the traditional state. The first distinction between the two is marked by the shift from frontiers (characteristic of traditional states) to borders (characteristic of the modern nation-state), which is the result of an escalation of both direct and indirect surveillance by means of customs officials, frontier guards, as well as the global regulation of passport information. Next, the modern nation-state differs from the traditional state in its official and exclusive ownership over the means of violence. Giddens (1994) further clarifies that while traditional societies may have asserted exclusive ownership over the means of violence, it was not until domestic pacification under the emergence of the nation-state that this claim proved to be successful. Thus, Giddens (1994:35) arrives at the following definition of the nation-state:

The nation-state, which exists in a complex of other nation-states, is a set of institutional forms of governance maintaining an administrative monopoly over a territory with demarcated boundaries (borders), its rule being sanctioned by law and direct control of the means of internal and external violence.

Though few would argue with the central role of the state in conceptualizing nationhood, this characterization does not address the whole story. This is best articulated by Stuart Hall (1996:612), who states:

We only know what it is to be English because of the way 'Englishness' has come to be represented, as a set of meanings, by English national culture...a nation is not only a political entity but something which produces meanings – a system of

cultural representation... people participate in the idea of the nation as represented in its national culture. A nation is a symbolic community.

Like Walker, Hall extends beyond the notion of the state as synonymous with nationhood, instead emphasizing the psychological nature of nationhood. Thus, it becomes clear that both cultural and political factors are crucial towards a comprehensive theorization nationhood and nationalism.

However, there is no significant consensus among academics regarding the role of cultural versus political factors in conceptualizing and defining nationhood. Rather, Itzigsohn and vom Hau (2006) observe that theorists of nationalism tend to fall into two opposing camps. While some academics focus more heavily upon political ideology, defined as “a consciously articulated ideology put forward by the state or by social movements in order to legitimate authority, mobilize political support, and achieve social control,” other theorists envision the nation as an imagined community, tied together by a “cultural script with almost self-evident plausibility that provides a lens through which common people frame their social relationship and construct solidarity in their daily habits and routines” (Itzigsohn and vom Hau 2006:196).

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I first outline the theories scholars who conceive of nationhood as an imagined community, including Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and Anthony Smith. Later, I review the theories of John Breuilly and Étienne Balibar who highlight the role of political ideology in nation formation. Meanwhile, Ecuador’s history of nation formation serves as a case study from which each of these perspectives on nationhood are illustrated. At its conclusion, this chapter demonstrates that these perspectives are not mutually exclusive, but instead, represent two different, yet related aspects of the same phenomenon.

3.2 Imagined Communities

Benedict Anderson is the scholar most closely associated with the notion of the nation as an imagined community. Unsatisfied with the ability of previous theorists to adequately capture the nuanced complexities that characterize nationhood, Anderson set out to rectify this theoretical void with his 1983 publication, *Imagined Communities*, in which he outlines the sequence of historical events that fortuitously intersect to enable the widespread adoption of the national framework. The historical pillars that lay the groundwork for the rise of the ‘nation’ include the emergence of print capitalism, popularization of administrative vernaculars as languages-of-power over ‘sacred silent languages,’ as well as the formation of a new conception of time (Anderson 2006). *Imagined Communities* would eventually prove to be a groundbreaking work that continues to be the most influential theorization of nationhood.

Anderson (2006:6) begins his theoretical journey by defining the concept of the ‘nation’ as an “imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” He further clarifies that nationhood is imagined in that, even in the smallest of nations, members may never know the whole of their fellow countrymen, yet they are able to conceptualize the legitimacy of their shared bond (Anderson 2006:7). For instance, though a Wall Street banker may never come into any contact with a social worker on Los Angeles’ Skid Row, both are able to envision the threads of their mutual affiliation. Furthermore, even the largest of nations does not encompass the entirety of the human race. Thus, the nation is imagined as limited in that all nations are bounded within a delimited space, which distinguishes it from the confines of other nations. Next, Anderson (2006:7) characterizes the imagined nation as sovereign, given that the emergence of nationhood coincided with the rise of Enlightenment, a time in which the Divine Right of Kings was actively being challenged. Finally, nationhood is imagined as a community

in that, despite disparities, “the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 2006:7).

Though not originally intended to be psychological in nature, Anderson takes an inherently psychological orientation in theorizing the emergence of nationhood. First and foremost, Anderson’s central argument lies in the claim that nationhood is ‘imagined’ in the minds of its members. Thus, group belonging is fundamentally based within both individual and collective perception, rather than external, objective truths. Furthermore, Anderson (2006) explicitly argues the importance of cognitive shifts within the individual in the establishment of a new brand of collective identity; nationhood.

Though Anderson was the first to coin the term ‘imagined communities’ within the context of national scholarship, he was not the only of his contemporaries to recognize the significance of collective identities upon the development of the nation. For instance, Ernest Gellner (1983) argues that nations played a crucial role in filling the ideological void created from industrialization’s disintegration of social hierarchy. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, agrarian societies were characterized by a rigid separation between the ruling class and the majority peasant population. The rise of industrialism caused a mass migration of people from rural areas into urban cores in search of economic opportunity. Thus, while the Industrial Revolution provided many with the opportunity for social and economic advancement, it simultaneously displaced the very structures through which individuals rooted their sense of identity.

Meanwhile, this rise in industrialism required a work-force that could communicate with one another despite their varied origins. Thus, the state, the only institution capable of

monitoring an educational system large enough to maintain itself, introduced widespread access to education. The state-sponsored educational system acted as a means of unifying the diverse population of rural migrants via the standardization of a common language and culture. It was this homogenization within the educational system, Gellner (1983) argues, that was essential to the development of the national 'imagined community'. In this way, both Gellner and Anderson point to the formation of a collective identity as crucial to the development of the nation.

Adamantly opposed to these modernist conceptualizations of the nation, Anthony Smith (1986) rejected the notion that nations were the result of modern shifts in society and cognition. Instead, Smith (1986:32) places importance on premodern forms of social organization, or *ethnies*, defined as "named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity." Smith (1986) maintains that it is from these premodern *ethnies* that emerge the deep-seated sentiments from which nationalism evolves. Despite the disagreement over when nationalist sentiments emerged, Smith (1986) does not dispute the crucial importance of an imagined, collective, cultural identity in the formation of the nation. Furthermore, Smith (in Finlayson 1994:284) clarifies that the memory and myth upon which *ethnies* (and later, nations) frame identity need not be based upon "lines of physical descent," but instead upon "the *sense* of continuity, shared memory, and collective destiny" (emphasis added). Therefore, *ethnies* can be thought of as a form of imagined community, in which a strong sense of collective identity and belonging is based upon shared symbols, myths, memories, values, and traditions.

While there is no consensus among theorists as to how or when nations became the predominant form of political organization, most agree on the fundamental role of culture in the

creation of the modern nation. As demonstrated above, many prominent theorists frame the sense of cultural homogeneity (whether real or symbolic) as the core unifying force of national ‘imagined communities.’ This is underscored by Paul Gilroy (1987:66) who observes that popular conceptions of nationhood implicate “a distinct theory of culture and identity which can be described as ethnic absolutism.”

Anderson, Gellner, and Smith further credit the success of nationhood with its ability to provide a durable sense of identity based around ‘imagined communities.’ Nations, as large-scale ‘imagined communities,’ provide a stable sense of identity larger than their immediate kin, though smaller than humanity (Schwarzmantel 2004). Finlayson (1994:282) suggests that these communities are “a kind of social theory: a way of comprehending our social relationships; of imagining how we are connected to each other; of shaping our understanding of the social world, of parcelling it up and giving it meaning.” Thus, through the creation of ‘imagined communities,’ nations not only ground individuals’ relationships within in the modern world, but also their relationships to unknowable others (Finlayson 1994). Therein lies the key to understanding the profound psychological importance of nationhood.

Within modern politics, the nation has become the predominant source of identity, delimiting citizens of one nation from the citizens of another and providing individuals with a feeling of affinity and unity that cultivates nationalism (Schwarzmantel 2004). This sense of identity and belonging is crucial to understanding the widespread rise of nationhood, as will be demonstrated by the circumstances that triggered the first instances of national consciousnesses within Spanish-American *creole* communities. Specifically, the initial emergence of national consciousness within Ecuador aptly demonstrates the process by which nationhood can develop

as an imagined community.

3.3 Creole Beginnings

Ultimately, the makings of national consciousness in Ecuador were the consequence of an acute struggle for power between *creoles* (American-born Spaniards) and *penninsulares* (European-born Spaniards) within the Spanish-American Empire. This struggle began as the result of a series of administrative shifts that tightened Spain's control over its American colonies. Policy changes include the imposition of new taxes, the increased efficiency of collection services, the enforcement of metropolitan economic syndicates, the centralization of administrative hierarchies, as well as the active promotion of the immigration of *penninsulares* into the Americas (Anderson 2006:52). Due to self-serving trade restrictions, these economic zones could not trade directly with one another, but instead had to use Spain as an intermediary, effectively transforming administrative units into discrete economic zones. Coupled with the difficulty in communication characteristic of the pre-industrial age, the development of distinct regional cultures would later facilitate the formation of national consciousnesses post-liberation (Anderson 2006:54).

Spain's 'second conquest of the Americas' provoked an increasing sense of anger and frustration among the community of elite *creoles* (Anderson 2006:52). To make matters worse, strands of racist thought, common within the imperialist ethos, envisioned *creoles* as fundamentally tainted due to their inherent affiliation with a 'savage' land. According to Anderson (2006:60), despite being virtually identical to *penninsulares* by manner of religion, language, and ancestry, *creoles* were considered fundamentally subordinate within the

racial/spatial order. This is evidenced by the overwhelmingly majority of *penninsulares* in places of power, despite being the vast minority within the New World. Touching upon the cases of Simón Bolívar and San Martín, Anderson (2006:59) contends that this second-class sentiment was acutely felt among *creoles* sent to Spain for education. From this underlying racism was borne the idea that if *creoles* could never truly be Spanish, then the inverse must also be true, thus planting the first inkling of national consciousness.

Once this groundwork was set, the final link towards the materialization of a new *creole* nation was the popularization of print capitalism. The emergence of local presses led to the distribution of newspapers which circulated regional information such as commercial news, colonial political appointments, elite wedding announcements, etc. Readers of these newspapers began to develop the imaginings of shared association amongst themselves. Anderson (2006:65) further argues that newspapers also permitted awareness of other administrative centers like themselves, while maintaining their essential ‘otherness.’ Eventually, in recognition of their shared fatality, *creole* editors began referring to themselves as Americans.

With an angered, disenfranchised *creole* class able to envision a shared national consciousness, they began to take steps to make these imaginings a reality. With the help of marginalized communities, namely indigenous populations as well as both freed and enslaved afro-descendants, the nation’s fight for independence culminated in 1830, when the new Republic of Ecuador was formed. Following independence, white and white-*mestizos* continued to be the only population included within the national imaginings, thus, they alone were extended citizenship into the new republic. Thus, the Republic of Ecuador began as the product of elite American *creoles*’ imagined community.

3.4 Political Ideology

While Anderson, Gellner, and Smith highlight the shared sense of cultural identity in the emergence of nationhood, others, such as John Breuilly and Étienne Balibar, focus on the role of the state. While they do not reject the importance of the ‘imagined community’ in the formation of the nation, the latter argue that these communities are fabrications of the state in order to fulfill political means. For instance, John Breuilly (1994) focuses upon the relationship between the state and society in his historicist-inspired approach towards nationalism. Historicism views human societies through a lens of cultural relativity in arguing that human societies all sit on an even playing field with none being superior than another. Further, historicism takes the perspective that humankind can be demarcated into ‘natural’ groups (or nations) that are defined by the sum of their distinctive characteristics, such as language, law, customs, dress, etc. Consequently, invasion by other groups, either politically or culturally, is characterized as disrupting the existing state of equilibrium, leaving an ‘unnatural’ stain upon the inherent identity of subjugated groups. Therefore, the most effective means of protecting a group’s identity is through the establishment of its own government, which Breuilly (1994) calls the nation-state.

However, Breuilly (1994) makes two crucial observations in conjunction with the historicist perspective outlined above. First, he notes that human societies can be categorized in a multitude of ways. Next, he points out that because miscegenation (both political and cultural) occurs constantly, the determination of what constitutes the ‘natural’ inherent identity of any society is an arbitrary distinction. Thus, the floodgates are open for conflicting claims as to the true inherent identity of the group, which is where nationalist ideology emerges. Successful

nationalists, Breuilly (1994) argues, will shape the authentic quality national identity to match their own political enterprise.

Balibar (1996) similarly subscribes to the political ideology argument observing that national histories are always expressed in the form of a linear narrative, highlighting continuity. Further, Balibar (1996) notes that national development is consistently presented as the culmination of a centuries-long endeavor towards self-awareness. Balibar (1996:132) further argues that this process is regularly framed as a “self-manifestation of the national personality.” Thus, Balibar (1996:132) fundamentally rejects this linearity of national formation as a “retrospective illusion.”

Instead, Balibar (1996) believes that the emergence of the nation is connected to the development of the world-economy. Under this paradigm, nations manifest in the structure laid out by the world-economy, which is organized hierarchically around a ‘core’ that actively accumulates and exploits labor forces that are located in the ‘periphery.’ Though the nation was not the only bourgeois political form to develop, it prevailed because it enabled for “struggles between heterogeneous classes to be controlled and for not only a “capitalist class” but the *bourgeoisies* proper to emerge from these – state bourgeoisies both capable of political, economic and cultural hegemony and *produced* by that hegemony” (Balibar, 1996:135).

The fundamental challenge for the ‘core’ of any nation is to unify the ‘periphery,’ then produce citizens from them. For Balibar (1996), nations are never naturally constituted of a pure ethnical base, thus the modern state manufactures an imagined community based off an ideology he terms ‘fictive ethnicity.’ In convincing the population that it constitutes a natural community, the state obscures the absence of any real unity between them. However, rather than repressing

all manner of diversity within the population, ‘fictive ethnicity’ need only subordinate these differences to itself so as to create a symbolic distinction between “citizens” and “foreigners.” As will be discussed further in the following section, ‘fictive ethnicity’ grounds itself in an identity based on appearance of shared origins, culture, and interests.

3.5 State Development and Nation Formation

Following independence in 1830, the Ecuadorian state began to manipulate national imaginings towards the benefit of the elite as well as towards the perpetuation of the state itself. This was largely accomplished at the expense of indigenous and afro-descendant populations. Despite the promise of freedom to enslaved blacks who helped fight for liberation, slavery would not be legally abolished until 1851. Further, due to lack of funds, the emancipation of slaves did not take full effect until 1854.

Regardless, legal abolition did not put an end to *de facto* slavery. Instead, the system of dependence and exploitation continued through a system of debt-peonage, called *concertaje*, whereby *hacienda* owners would give former slaves plots of land (called *huasipungos*) in exchange for labor. Despite being emancipated, former slaves had no legal access to land. Because *hacienda* owners continued to monopolize access to the region’s farmable land and water, former slaves had little choice but to continue to rely on *haciendas*. Thus, former black slaves continued to live and work on *haciendas* for another century.

On the other hand, while the administration of the indigenous as tributaries remained unchanged following the start of the republic, a slight shift in the state’s attitude towards the indigenous population began to take place. The state began to create the image of the indigenous

as a 'needy', 'uncivilized' class requiring protection from their own 'ignorance and misery' (Guerrero 1997:561). For instance, following liberation, the state enacted legal devices aimed at protecting indigenous populations from abuses associated with collecting tributes. However, Guerrero (1997) argues that this image of indigenous populations emerged not from genuine concern of one's fellow man, but instead, as the result of political power plays amongst local elites. He states,

Some honourable gentlemen evoke specific aspects of a figure of the indian, while others oppose different features. Immersed in the game, as social agents they endow those expressions with a functionality according to their positions in the dispute. In this case, constrained by the norms inherent to the play of forces and the rules of parliamentary debate, they manipulate these expressions with a view to their material and symbolic interests. However, all make use of a shared imagery, they speak from the common denominator of their experience of ethnic domination, incorporated into the schemata of a colonial collective mentality (Guerrero 1997:567-568).

Guerrero (1997) further emphasizes the crucial role that these mental schemata hold in both legitimating and perpetuating symbolic violence against those who are deemed an inferior race.

Regardless of the reasoning that motivated it, this characterization of the indigenous as 'needy' and 'ignorant' portrays a clear picture regarding the structure of the racial/ethnic hierarchy that continues to prevail within the republic. Common thought identified three 'pure' races; 'white,' 'Indian,' and 'black.' Wielding political, economic, and cultural authority, the white race was clearly situated at the top of the racial hierarchy, as evidenced by the systems of

ethnic domination described above. However, in establishing the indigenous as in need of protection (a status not extended to afro-descendant populations), white elites symbolically position the indigenous above the afro-descendants within the racial/ethnic hierarchy. This would have important implications after the rise of the Liberal party in 1895.

In the meantime, by 1857 the state put an end to the tributary system, thus legally extending citizenship status beyond white and white-*mestizo* elites. However, as with the abolition of slavery, ethnic domination persisted in practice by effectively shifting ethnic administration from the public to the private domain (Guerrero 1997). For instance, *hacienda* owners supplemented the labor of *huasipungueros* with local indigenous wage-laborers. Low wages and a reliance on the goods cultivated by the *hacienda* trapped these indigenous workers into a similar system of debt-peonage into which former slaves were forced (Ruggiero 2010).

1895 marked the beginning of the Liberal Revolution in Ecuador, during which time the Liberal party would gain and maintain control of the state until 1944. Race held a prominent position in the Liberal agenda, which trumpeted ideals of inclusion and equality. However, Foote (2006) notes that the growing majority of racially subordinate groups mediated these ideals. Foote (2006) also suggests that the issue of race was pressured onto the Liberal platform from below, due to the support of indigenous and black troops in the civil war of 1895, which was instrumental to Liberal the defeat of the Conservative party.

In support of the agro-export elites on the coast, the Liberals prioritized free trade and planned to implement widespread political and economic programs aimed at establishing a secular state, integrating into the world economy, and creating a more flexible national labor market. While the Liberal party represented the interests of the coastal elite, the Conservative

party served the interests of the Catholic Church and the land-owning highland elite. Thus, the Liberal party's focus on economic development drastically reduced the stronghold that the Catholic Church and land-owning elites in the highlands held on the nation. Other notable achievements that resulted from the Liberal reign included the development of a national currency, the institution of formal military service, the expansion of state-sponsored education, and the construction of the Quito-Guayaquil railway. In total, the Liberal party took long strides in state formation and nation-building (Foote 2006).

Nicola Miller (2006:207) notes, “[O]ne strategy for legitimating a claim to control the central state, and mobilising popular support for it, was to advocate extending the benefits of republican government to broader sections of the population.” Being the most populous of the racially subordinate groups, it behooved the Liberal party to include indigenous populations into the framework of the nation, however tangentially. Consequently, though indigenous populations were still seen as ‘needy’ and ‘uncivilized,’ Liberals maintained that they could be redeemed from their ‘miserable’ status. Conceptually, indigenous individuals could elevate their status through cultural assimilation.¹ Beck, Mijeski & Stark (2011:106) recognize the public narrative regarding race and ethnicity within Ecuador as one that associates modernization with “European- and American-dominated cultural strands.”

The Liberals’ inclusionary framework was successful in advancing the economic development of the nation. During their reign, the nation experienced a stretch of capitalist expansion, a period of economic booms in cocoa and rubber, and an expedited assimilation into

¹ This sentiment was only applicable to the indigenous native to the highlands. Instead, afro-descendants and indigenous Amazonians were viewed as unredeemable ‘savages.’

the global market economy (Foote 2006). Therefore, cultural assimilation of the highland indigenous populations was a crucial step towards the Liberals' goals of modernization (Beck et al., 2011).

While the Liberal Revolution ushered in a new era of inclusion into the national framework, it ultimately represented a political ploy in an elite battle for state control. Though the Liberal party espoused discourse of universality and equality, it was more focused on dissolving the monopoly of land held by the Church and the highland elites. Furthermore, elites feared widespread participation of the government, as it threatened their own control over state power. Instead, both the Liberal and Conservative parties were more concerned in advancing their own class interests, than promoting a democratic government (Crain 1990). With Ecuadorian state elites manipulating nationalist ideologies to legitimate and perpetuate their own control, national formation following independence supports the importance of political ideology to nationhood, as suggested by Breuilly (1994) and Balibar (1996).

Thus, nation formation in the context of Ecuador both pre- and post-independence supports the earlier argument that both perspectives of the nation as a political ideology and an imagined community are essential to a comprehensive conceptualization of nationhood. While members of a nation do not need the state to imagine themselves as compatriots of some form or other, the state holds control over many of the institutions that produce and disseminate national narratives to a wider audience. It is undeniable that the state can and does use these institutions to legitimate its own authority, however, the state does not concoct these narratives from thin air. Rather, it borrows from existing cultural scripts. Thus, Itzigsohn and vom Hau (2006) propose that peripheral elite and social movements can challenge the existing power by developing

alternative narratives of the nation, as is demonstrated in the period of nation formation following Ecuador's independence. The following chapter delves into the ways in which nations are able to generate feelings of unity and belonging among its members.

4. THE CREATION OF NATIONAL IMAGININGS

Nationalism plays crucial role in delimiting the borders of the national community, engendering feelings of belonging, as well as developing the basis of organization within the nation (Itzigsohn and vom Hau 2006). Regardless of whether it emerged as the result of a shared sense of cultural identity or as a political ideology, nationalism is exceptionally potent in its ability to mobilize a population (Schwarzmantel 2004). Homi Bhabha (1994:66) identifies two traditions in the discourse of identity, which he articulates as “the self-reflection in the mirror of (human) nature; and the anthropological view of the difference of human identity as located in the division of Nature and Culture.” This section will discuss these traditions in the context through which the national identity is imagined.

4.1 Myth and Memory

According to Ernest Renan (in Finlayson 1994:285) “Being a nation means getting one's history wrong.” As has been addressed in previous chapters, nationalism derives its potency from its ability to arouse emotion from sentiments of solidarity. These sentiments are largely derived from myths concerning common origin, shared culture, and a collective destiny. These nationalist myths are derived from and perpetuated by the symbols and traditions that invoke them, establishing a timeless quality. In assuming an eternal status, national identity portrays itself as a natural phenomenon, thus utilizing the Bhabha’s first tradition in the discourse of identity.

Thus, many national theorists, such as Anthony Smith, underscore the importance of ethnosymbolism in the construction of nationalist ideology. For Smith (in Eley and Suny

1996:105), “There can be no identity without memory (albeit selective), no collective purpose without myth and identity, and purpose or destiny are necessary elements of the very concept of a nation.” Thus, national communities derive a strong sense of collective identity and belonging based upon shared symbols, myths, memories, values, and traditions. Bhabha (1990:297) advances this perspective in stating that, “[t]he scraps, patches, and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture.” In other words, national belonging is engendered through the reproduction of narratives, rituals, and symbols.

For instance, Breuilly (1994) argues that national communities are founded upon a core sense of authenticity. Nationalists create authenticity, first, by fabricating a ‘national past,’ in which arbitrary historical events are compiled into a cohesive narrative. Next, nationalists attach specific beliefs, values, and traditions to these historical narratives, which together, characterize the unique ‘spirit’ of the community. Thus, it is on the basis of their own manufactured authenticity that nationalists catalyze self-determination and legitimate authority.

Further solidifying the relationship between myth and national imaginings, Balibar (1996:139) presents nationalism as “a religion – if not *the* religion of modern times.” Just as religions produce communities from individual “souls,” so does national ideology create a collective identity from individual identities. Likewise, national ideologies institute social values in the same way the religions establish social ‘morality.’ Balibar (1996:139) further claims that theological discourse provides the psychological groundwork for the “ideation of the nation and the sacralization of the state.” In other words, national ideology enables individuals to forge a sacrificial obligation amongst each other and endow the legal system with an aura of universal justice and truth. Finally, Balibar states that national ideology consists of ‘ideal signifiers,’ (such

as the name of the nation) upon which love, respect, sacrifice, and fear can be bestowed.

In summary, though theorists of nationhood and nationalism disagree in the extent to which the state manufactures nationalist ideologies, most can agree that national imaginings are constructed around the myths and memories that form its core identity and determine the boundaries of the nation. National myths and memories also play a role in dictating who can and cannot become a member of the national community, as the exclusion of afro-descendants in Ecuador will illustrate below.

4.2 Liberal Exclusion of Afro-Descendants

Though indigenous populations continued to be treated as a subordinate race throughout the Liberal regime, they were given the opportunity to culturally assimilate, an opportunity not offered to afro-descendants. This occupation at the bottom of the racial/ethnic hierarchy would endure throughout the Liberal regime, as demonstrated by an intellectual, Alfredo Espinosa Tamayo, who characterized afro-descendants as a “servile race [that] is the least suitable for incorporation into civilization” (in Foote 2006:265). Thus, in the response to the influx of immigrants from the West Indies, no attempt was made to embrace these populations. To the contrary, contracts for infrastructure construction often precluded black laborers (Foote 2006). Afro-descendant populations were blamed for everything including the nation’s political instability to the widespread gambling, alcoholism, and violence among railway laborers. One writer, Hanns Heiman Guzman, even accused afro-descendants of having altered the course of the nation’s history as a result of their ‘bloody and war-like ways’ (in Foote 2006:265). Afro-descendants were further accused of being lazy, being criminal, and of having a detrimental

influence on the indigenous populations in the Esmeraldas region. The state even made efforts to belie the national identity of afro-descendants in discussions of state policy, the reporting of crimes in the predominantly black province of Esmeraldas, and even through alleging blacks to be Colombian rather than Ecuadorian (Foote 2006).

Efforts towards the exclusion of afro-descendants stand in direct contrast to the state's treatment of indigenous populations. For instance, though both black and indigenous troops were instrumental to the success of the Liberal Revolution, black support for Liberal military causes spanned back much further than that of the indigenous. Despite this, indigenous involvement in the military struggle was both recognized and rewarded by the Liberal party, while black participation was omitted from the official narrative, erasing them from the nation's official memory. Further, a key aspect of the Liberal project surrounded emancipating indigenous workers from the exploitative debt-peonage system, as it was a crucial step towards their conversion into citizens. However, no such effort was made to free black victims of this same system, even though many likened the debt-peonage system to slavery (Foote 2006).

This disparity between the treatment of afro-descendants and the indigenous is rooted in the imagined 'nature' and potential of each group. While afro-descendants were excluded on the grounds of biological 'inferiority,' the indigenous could be uplifted from their 'needy' status. Liberal policy embraced the protective, paternalistic attitude that originated at the start of the republic and sought out to civilize. Education was seen as an important avenue through which the indigenous could be transformed into citizens. Therefore, the state instituted a specialized "indigenous education," which aimed to expand fidelity beyond local communities to the nation, assimilate the indigenous into the national community, as well as prepare them to be productive

within the national marketplace (Foote 2006).

Meanwhile, state support of predominantly black communities, especially the Esmeraldas, remained virtually non-existent. For instance, while epidemics continued to ravage the region, neither hospitals nor paved roads were constructed in the provincial capital until the 20th century. Additionally, in 1907, only 28 of the 42 schools in the Esmeraldas were in operation. Due to the proliferation of harmful stereotypes about afro-descendants, the educated class declined to work in the region, leaving the remaining 14 functional schools without access to qualified teachers (Foote 2006). Instances such as this clearly demonstrate that afro-descendants were never meant to be included within Ecuador's national imaginings. This disparity between the treatment of indigenous populations and afro-descendants during the Liberal regime lays the groundwork for the *mestizo* myth upon which Ecuadorian identity would be based.

4.3 *The Thrust of Mestizaje*

Though cultural and political salience of *mestizaje* (the mixing of Spanish and indigenous heritage) first emerged during the Liberal Revolution, it intensified in the 1970s along with strong national modernization efforts tied to Ecuador's entrance into the global market as an oil-producing nation (Beck et al., 2011). Thus, in an effort towards modernization and national unity, the phrase "*todos somos mestizos*" ("We are all *mestizos*") was heavily indoctrinated into the ethos of the nation by the 1990s, a time in Ecuador which Rahier (1998) coins as 'monocultural *mestizaje*.' This movement was successful given that an overwhelming majority of Ecuador's population (72%) self-identifies as *mestizo* (INCE 2010). Because an overwhelming majority of the population identifies as *mestizo*, the plight of minority populations

including indigenous (7%), Afro-Ecuadorian (7%), and *mulatto* (7%) was of little national concern (INCE 2010). As a result, the *mestizaje* movement created a mentality which made it increasingly easy to overlook and undermine the cycles of structural discrimination that fell onto those with phenotypic markers of indigenous or African heritage. According to Beck et al., surprisingly low percentages of Ecuadorians reported understanding the concepts of racism (51.4%), racial discrimination (37.2%), and racial prejudice (30.6%). This finding leads them to characterize Ecuador as a “race-conscious but racism-unaware society” (2011:110).

The success of the *mestizaje* movement creates a phenomenon best illustrated by Eleanor Rosch’s ‘prototype theory’ (1973). Unlike past theories which held that mental concepts are classified in the mind according to strictly bounded categories, Rosch (1973) argues that mental concepts are focused on a prototype of the category. For instance, when given the concept of a ‘mammal’, ‘dog’ is more likely to be cited than ‘dolphin’ because ‘dog’ is located more centrally within the category of ‘mammal.’ Thus, the *mestizaje* movement places *mestizos* as prototypical Ecuadorians, while afro-descendants are positioned on the periphery. Rahier (2011:68) observes,

In this official imagination of Ecuadorian-ness, there is logically no place for blacks: they must remain peripheral. Afro-Ecuadorians... constitute the ultimate Other, some sort of a historical accident, a noise in the ideological system of nationality, a pollution in the Ecuadorian genetic pool.

The *mestizaje* movement was so successful as a national ideology that Ecuador did not acknowledge itself as a multicultural/ multiracial nation until the adoption of the republic’s 1998 Constitution. This document guaranteed a list of 15 collective rights to the indigenous populations of Ecuador within Article 84, notably leaving out Afro-Ecuadorians. It was not until

Article 85, which was added after a first round of discussions at the Constitutional Assembly, that these same collective rights were extended to Afro-Ecuadorians. The inclusion of a separate article for Afro-Ecuadorians literally positions them below indigenous populations within the Ecuadorian Constitution, reflecting the continuity of the ethnic/racial hierarchy established earlier during state formation/nation-building eras. Regardless, it was the first official recognition of afro-descendants as a part of the state, taking steps to counter the historic invisibility of afro-descendants.

A decade later, under the presidency of Rafael Correa, the 2008 Constitution would take further steps in acknowledging the racial and cultural diversity of Ecuador. For instance, the new Constitution recognized the republic as consisting of a variety of distinct national groups, then reaffirming the set collective rights granted in the previous Constitution. The document would also identify racial discrimination as a criminal offence. Finally, the 2008 Constitution would compel the state to establish affirmative action policies for afro-descendants as well as other subalterns.

However, some argue that this ‘multicultural turn’ was “more rhetorical, than substantive” in nature (Johnson 2014:116). For instance, Cervone (2010) challenges the efficacy of multiculturalism in overcoming long-lived forms of ethnic domination. She suggests that while the ‘multicultural turn’ may have afforded the possibility to reconsider the nation’s fragmented social and cultural fabric, ultimately, it did not result in a more inclusionary framework of control. Similarly, Rahier contends that though the ‘multicultural turn’ suggested by the adoption of the 1998 Constitution “obviously denotes a change of attitude towards Afro-Ecuadorians... at the same time... it reaffirms their marginality and reinscribes their subalternity:

the place of blackness within/outside Ecuadorian national identity continues to be ambiguous” (2011:76).

Throughout the 1990s, the indigenous community successfully asserted themselves as political agents within the national political domain through the widespread mobilization of a political indigenous movement. With the widespread application of concepts such as diversity and plurinationality, the indigenous movement threatened to expose the illusion of cultural homogeneity upon which the state elite depended (Cervone 2010). Should the general public discover the national ideology for what it was, the authority of the state elite would be jeopardized. Thus, the adoption of the 1998 Constitution, provided a means through which the state elite could *appear* to appease the demand for cultural inclusion without dismantling the ethnic/racial hierarchy which secured their power. Thus, the multicultural discourse sprinkled throughout the 1998 and 2008 Constitution effectively functioned to once again obscure the ethnic/racial domination.

This historic neglect of afro-descendants by the Ecuadorian government, prompts one informant, Pedro, to share the following:

We do not have an afro-descendant in the Congress nor as president, or as anything. So they have us a little isolated, they put us aside ... because white people always... want to cover everything, understand? So afro-descendants are discriminated against a bit. This is one of the reason why black people are not motivated to keep fighting.

In this passage, Pedro describes feeling “isolated” and “put aside” by the state, a sentiment that is also expressed by Javier:

We are a bit abandoned. Because we have people who have the capacity for many things, to create something, to work for the wellbeing of many countries... but we do not have support, that is, we do not have people to help us... We are also prepared people, yes, but the negative is that we do not have help, no support from anybody... We ask for it, but they do not give it. It pushes us back.

This sense of abandonment and lack of support from the state is justified by the fact that afro-descendants have historically been neglected by the government. While the state has taken steps to incorporate the indigenous into the national imaginings, the same opportunity was not extended to afro-descendants. This lack of political and cultural resources only exacerbates the continuity with which the significance of afro-descendant culture, history, and significance is undermined within Ecuador.

4.4 The National Education System

This type of exclusion also manifests itself within the education system, which occupies a privileged space through which hegemonic imaginings of the national consciousness are simultaneously established and reaffirmed. As noted by Gellner (1983), the educational system was one of the primary means through which early forms of national communities could be unified and imagined. Being the only institution capable of administering an educational system capable of supporting itself, the state holds a monopoly on legitimate education. To this day, the education system continues to reproduce and enforce national narratives through the indoctrination of the nation's youth.

In an examination three social studies textbooks in a school located in the predominantly black province of Esmeraldas, Johnson (2007) finds few references to the role or significance of afro-descendants in the history of Ecuador. This supports an earlier study by Stutzman who observes a conspicuous absence of Afro-Ecuadorians and their cultural, political, and contributions to the nation within the curriculum (Johnson 2007).

This was illustrated to me one evening, during my own fieldwork, when I was asked to babysit two school-aged Afro-Ecuadorian girls, while their mother, Anita, was out. While she was away, an older *mestizo*, active in the struggle for Afro-Ecuadorian rights, showed up looking for Anita. While he waited for her return, he began to quiz the girls about afro-trivia with questions spanning from famous Afro-Ecuadorians to popular coastal gastronomy. At first, the girls were enthusiastic in their attempts to answer his questions. However, upon the realization that they could not answer most of his questions, the girls gradually began to shrug him off. As they wandered off to play, the man lamented to me about how young Afro-Ecuadorians do not learn about their own history, culture, and heritage.

The absence of afro-descendants within the narrative of the nation is further evidenced in that the degree of knowledge regarding the history of afro-descendants in Ecuador varied widely among my informants. For example, of 20 participants that were born and raised in Ecuador, only 11 were able to share anything about Afro-Ecuadorian history with me. The remainder of these participants either denied having much knowledge on the subject, or gave me unrelated answers, such as naming some the predominantly black regions in the country. Furthermore, of the 11 informants who could recount anything about the history, only six expanded past the narratives that afro-descendants were brought to Ecuador as slaves or that some afro-descendants

were able to escape Spanish slave ships and settle in the Esmeraldas, located in the northwest coast of the country.

Some of my informants, like John, have an ambiguous understanding of Afro-Ecuadorian history. He explained to me the following:

Three Spanish galleons arrived on the shores of the Esmeraldas that shipwrecked, right? They shipwrecked and landed on the shores of the Esmeraldas and these Spaniards, so that the slaves do not kill them, they adopted them, they made them marry their daughters, they gave them their surnames. There are many surnames that are foreign like Kellerman, Johnson, Bennett. There are like six, seven, eight surnames, then there they managed to join the Afros. In the Esmeraldas, that is where the Afro culture came from.

At first, John's understanding aligns with published historical accounts of the history of afro-descendants in the Esmeraldas. However, his story begins to deviate when he describes the Spanish captors as joining the escaped maroons, then giving the maroons their surnames. Oddly, the names that John provides are not Spanish, but English. Here, it is important to note that both John's first and last names are English. Though there is a Hispanic variation of his first name (Juan), John goes by the Anglicized version of this name.

A university-educated professional, John's nephew, Paulo, provides a different narrative:

First, we are of Jamaican descent, but before being Jamaicans, we are Nigerians. Why? Let's see, our surname... is an English surname, yes, English of Jamaican descent, Jamaica being an English colony. While an English colony, in the year of 1900, in the presidency of Eloy Alfaro, the first concession to a foreign company

was made to work in Ecuador, yes, the government does it with an English company. In turn, England sends Jamaican workers. Among these Jamaicans come our ancestors with five lineages of afro-descendant English surnames; Bennett, Clinter, Smith, Johnson and Barker.

Paulo's account aligns much more closely with historical evidence. For instance, during the Liberal Revolution, the Liberal government encouraged the importation of foreign companies as a means of integrating into the world economy (Foote 2006). Furthermore, during this time, the nation saw an influx of immigration from the West Indies (Foote 2006). Thus, John provides a plausible account of why his family holds an English last name. It is probable that, like many of my other informants, John only know a few basic details about the history of afro-descendants in Ecuador. Thus, given Paulo's account, it is likely that John attempted to reconcile his English name with his seemingly Hispanic heritage through the little knowledge he did have.

In his analysis, Johnson (2014:119) further argues that the Ecuadorian educational system functions as "a regime of equality," which "through the silencing and erasure of racial and cultural differences and their significance, formal curricular and pedagogical practices and processes attempt to push all students to consider themselves as members of the nation." In effect, this 'regime of equality' denies an understanding of what it means to be Afro-Ecuadorian, harkening back to a past in which they were stripped of their cultural identities and arranged into homogenous groups. Johnson further maintains that the national education system "denies students of African descent as legitimate members of society and the critical role race plays in their lives, while compelling them to shed their racial and cultural identities for membership to the nation" (2014:119). For instance, Johnson (2014) indicates that the national education system

does not provide students with the space and opportunity to discuss issues of race and discrimination that they experience both in school and in society, at large. This effectively delegitimizes these experiences, denying their significance.

Furthermore, the education system continues to reproduce the ethnic/racial hierarchy through a functional segregation of schools. Johnson (2014) explains that whites and *mestizos* generally attend private schools, which the relative poverty of their black and indigenous peers precludes. Within these private institutions, white and *mestizo* students are taught, through formal and informal practices, to uphold the ethnic/racial hierarchy that denies the significance of Afro-Ecuadorians and indigenous populations.

On the other hand, Johnson (2014) asserts that Afro-Ecuadorians and indigenous students are overrepresented in public, Catholic, and military schools. Public schools are notorious for their lack of resources, which is where the majority of these students can be found. While military and Catholic schools garner better reputations, these institutions are often blatantly hierarchical. Furthermore, these schools are known to use racial discrimination in their admission policies to maintain their good reputations (Johnson 2014). This was most clearly articulated to me by Manuel, a fair-skinned middle-aged professor of African descent, who is employed at a local Catholic university. He states:

You go to an elite school and they do not accept a black. In this university that has 4,000 students, there are four blacks. One, two, three, four. Is that a black problem or is the problem here? It's not black. Understand? So, please, please, it's not a black problem. And in this university that is Catholic and God and the story, there are

four blacks. And of the four, there are three have scholarships, that means that the university is obligated to accept them, because the government sends them.

Manuel further laments the absence of black professors at the university, declaring:

In this university there are 1,000 teachers and the blackest is me... Is it chance or coincidence? No, because it is not possible that among 1,000 teachers there is not a black one, not even one. You are going to tell me that there is no racism? Yes, there is racism, what happens is that you cannot talk about it.

As a black man, it is clear to Manuel that racial discrimination is rampant throughout the education system, however this passage points to the success with which racial discrimination is overlooked and obscured within the educational system. Without more people of color in positions of power, like Manuel, afro-descendants and indigenous students continue to be the victims of physical, verbal, and symbolic forms of violence.

Fernando, a 32-year old Haitian transplant attending university in Cuenca illustrates further instances of racial discrimination within the education system:

I was not such a bad student, but there are teachers who never gave me the grade I deserved. I never went to complain to my teachers about it either... It is not because I did not speak Spanish perfectly, as Hispanic speakers do; I could do my homework well, but they did not give me the grades, and that is a form of discrimination. That has happened to several of my classmates who failed the classes and had to retake them. They are small forms of discrimination. There are people, to date, who have too much power at the university, so even if you want to talk about the discrimination they overlook you.

Again, Fernando indicates that racial discrimination is obscured within the educational system, perpetuating the ethnic/racial hierarchy.

4.5 Fragmentation

This brief examination of afro-descendant exclusion both historically as well as in the current education system points to a gaping flaw in the traditional way in which the nation has been conceptualized. All of theorists discussed thus far portray nationhood as a homogenizing, unifying force. Under this paradigm, the national community emerged to overcome fragmentation during modernization through the formation of united communities within which individuals would be ensured a stable collective identity, economic security, and political rights (Schwarzmantel 2004). However, both an overview of nation formation in Ecuador history and an examination of the nation's education system reveal widespread exclusion of afro-history, heritage, and culture. Though modernization often required nations to expand its conceptions of national belonging, it was not expanded to everyone. This points to a gaping flaw in the traditional way in which the nation has been conceptualized. While the emergence of the nation might have had a consolidative effect on the colonial elites who imagined them, traditional theorists rarely address the polarizing effect it often had on subalterns, such as indigenous populations or afro-descendants.

Post-colonial theorists, such as Partha Chaterjee (1993), Homi Bhabha (1994), and Clara A. B. Joseph (2001), have been outspoken critics of traditional conceptions of the nation, arguing instead that the nation is fundamentally fragmentary. For instance, because the identities of both the colonizers and the colonized consist of elements of different cultures, Bhabha (1994) claims

that 'pure' identities do not exist, a notion that many traditional theorists of nationhood acknowledge. Given that these identities are hybrid, Bhabha (1994) concludes that nationalism and nationhood are far more fractured and unstable than classic characterizations suggest.

Schwarzmantel (2004) refers to "fragmentation" as the dissolution of underlying identities and institutions, which, he argues, can be applied in several different ways. In the context of nationhood and nationalism, national boundaries are often established by the colonial elite, who rarely consider the plight of the culturally diverse populations. As a result, national political borders regularly bifurcate culturally similar groups. One such example of this can be found in the Andean region, where the Ecuador-Colombia border divides groups such as the Awá. On the other hand, despite vast cultural differences, the subalterns living within these borders are essentialized. As a part of the same process, those on the periphery of national imaginings are put into competition for resources, further fragmenting these societies. Thus, Schwarzmantel (2004:386) argues that nationalism is inherently ambiguous, being "both the cause and consequence of the fragmentation of political units." The intrinsically unstable and hybrid nature of nationhood and nationalism brings up the question of how nations are able to develop and maintain homogeneous national imaginings despite the fragmentary forces challenging it.

Itzigsohn and vom Hau (2006) identify another means by which the nation stimulates fragmentation. Because national imaginings are limited, they are in a continuous process of shaping internal and external boundaries. They further note that colonial categories of exclusion incite ethnoracial divisions within the nation, which dictate the extent of their belonging and exclusion. On other words, these tensions discern between, what Itzigsohn and vom Hau (2006)

term, “strong” and “weak” citizens, as is evident within the ways in which the *mestizo* identity is negotiated in Ecuador.

Some have challenged the efficacy of the *mestizaje* movement as a homogenizing force, arguing instead, that it has further complicated racial discrimination by creating a façade of equality that obscures a fundamental fragmentation within the nation. Rather, Cervone (2010) argues that, despite the embrace of multiculturalism, *mestizaje* continues to be a prominent ideology, enforcing the ethnic/racial hierarchy to exclude the indigenous, afro-descendants, and even “poor *mestizos*” from hegemonic national imaginings. Though a majority of the population self-identifying as *mestizo*, Ecuadorians demonstrate little trouble categorizing others into commonly recognized ethnic-based categories, including *blanco*, *mestizo*, *negro*, *mulatto*, and indigenous (Beck et al., 2011). This suggests that racial/ethnic distinctions continue to lie at the forefront of the Ecuadorian consciousness.

Furthermore, in Ecuador, race is determined by a complex interplay of phenotypic, geographic, cultural, and economic markers from which individuals constantly negotiate themselves and others along the ethnic/racial hierarchy. In his examination of how the category ‘*mestizo*’ is conceptualized and constructed in the minds of the middle-upper and upper-class in Ecuador, Roitman (2008) investigates the widespread use of the terms ‘*longo*’ and ‘*cholo*’ among his informants in Quito and Guayaquil, respectively. He observed that these terms were largely utilized to denote individuals with an indigenous phenotype that have acculturated into the *mestizo* identity. The use of racially-charged terms such as ‘*longo*’ in the sierra region and ‘*cholo*’ in the coastal regions act to distinguish indigenous-*mestizos* from white-*mestizos*. This suggests that while those with indigenous heritage are theoretically able to become *mestizo*, it is

not possible in practice. Roitman concludes that “significant processes of ‘racial’ exclusion and discrimination appear to be taking place among and between mestizos” (2008:25).

Similarly, Cervone (2010) finds that despite possessing land both locally and in a separate province, owning two-story building in the provincial capital, and amassing much more wealth than the neighboring ‘white’ families, her informants were nonetheless referred to by others as ‘*chagras*’ (*mestizo* peasants of the highlands). Rather, local ‘whites’ characterized Cervone’s informants as “Indians who believe they are white,” citing the family’s humble beginnings as impoverished, landless peasants, as well as their proximity to indigenous people (Cervone 2010:101). On the other hand, Cervone (2010) observes that ‘*chagras*’ staunchly distinguish themselves from the indigenous, while referring to themselves as ‘white’ in formal conversations. Thus, though the *mestizaje* movement made efforts to blur the lines between ethnicity (and thus, social status), elite *mestizos* have responded by creating an informal discourse through which to maintain their own hegemonic authority by castigating those who threaten the ethnic hierarchy.

In summary, faced with the challenges an increasingly modern world, the state created the *mestizaje* movement as a national myth, through which they could engender national belonging. While *mestizaje* creates the hypothetical possibility of social mobility, those deemed ‘*cholo*,’ ‘*longo*,’ and ‘*chagra*’ are unlikely to access positions of power. In this way, such derogatory terms identify indigenous-*mestizos* as ‘weak’ citizens, while positioning whites and white-*mestizos* as ‘strong’ citizens. However, this raises the question of how are Ecuador’s national imaginings able to maintain themselves on such a volatile foundation. The answer, I argue, lies in the positioning of afro-descendants as the ultimate “Other”.

4.6 The “Other”

As has been stated, the assertion of a community’s singularity is fundamental to nationalist movements. As a corollary, this means that nationalist movements must also demonstrate that its community is *different* from others. Consequently, national ideologies often bolster their own sense of uniqueness by positioning itself in direct opposition to an imagined “Other” (Schwarzmantel 2004). Just as the national identity is endowed with mythic qualities, so too is the identity of the “Other,” whose image often consists of an amalgam of negative values and missing qualities (Chavez 1991). Both Edward Said (1978) and Frantz Fanon (2008) elaborate upon this idea, noting that the national “Other” is often defined along racial lines and characterized as a foil to the civilized, moral, rational West/white man. In this way, nations utilize the second tradition of the identity of discourse; “the difference of human identity as located in the division of Nature and Culture” (Bhabha 1994:66). However, the national “Other” need not be a distant, abstract population. Rather, Balibar argues that the prototypical “Other” can be embodied by the ethnoracial subalterns that sit on the inclusion/exclusion borders of the nation (Hogan 1993). At this point, it is useful to note that though associated with one another, national inclusion is not interchangeable with access to citizenship. According to Itzigsohn and vom Hau (2006), while both assume the political, civil, and social rights of the national community, citizenship does not preclude symbolic forms of exclusion, which may impact access to these rights. As a result, the domestic “Other” may frequently be the victims of state policies that limit their access to critical resources, such as education, employment, health care, and housing (Chavez 1991).

To articulate the importance of afro-descendants as the ultimate “Other”, Balibar and Wallenstein argue that the domestic, racialized “Other” plays a crucial role within the modern

capitalist nation (Hogan 1993). Their case begins with the basis that capitalists are confronted with three primary obstacles. First, fluctuations in the market result in an inconsistent demand for labor, meaning that capitalists need flexibility in hiring and firing. Next, production costs (including wages) must be kept low, while also cultivating a class of potential consumers. Finally, fluctuation in employment and wages can spark discontent among employees, and discontented employees can both interrupt production or inflate wages. According to Balibar and Wallenstein, the domestic racialized “Other” provides a solution to these challenges (Hogan 1993). Further, the negative qualities that define the domestic racialized “Other” work to both cloud their contribution to the economic order as well as rationalize the existing social and economic order (Chavez 1991). Thus, the nation fundamentally depends on the very difference it claims to overcome.

I offer some slight alterations to this theory in the context of Ecuador. As discussed earlier, the Liberal Party was successful in advancing the economic development of the nation through including the mestizo masses into the national imaginings. From then on, the state relied and continues to rely on the labor of the mestizo masses to remain competitive within the global economy. While *mestizaje* creates the hypothetical possibility of social mobility, elite *mestizos* maintain the ethnic/racial hierarchy through the implementation of derogatory terms such ‘*cholo*,’ ‘*longo*,’ and ‘*chagra*.’ Though the elite depend on the labor of the *mestizo* masses, they can afford to enforce *mestizos*’ status as ‘weak citizens’ through the positioning of afro-descendants as the ultimate “Other.” This is a low-risk solution for the state, as the afro-descendant population is not nearly as populous as the overwhelming *mestizo* majority. Because it is better to be included within the national imaginings, however peripherally, than to be outside of these imaginings, the state mitigates the risk of a *mestizo* revolt. This idea is best articulated

by John, who states:

What does it mean to be an Ecuadorian Afro?... Not that I exaggerate, but almost... like Christ... to not be accepted by anyone and sacrificed for everything, punished for everything.

To illustrate how afro-descendants are positioned as the ultimate “Other” within Ecuador’s national imaginings, I draw from Breuilly (1994) who offers three elements essential to an effective nationalist ideology; simplification, repetition, and concreteness. He further states that simplification can be achieved through the creation of stereotypes. Consequentially, the negative values and missing qualities that come to characterize the “Other” develop into stereotypes, which regularly portray its subject as inferior, lazy, and ignorant.

Cognitive studies help to shed light on why stereotypes are so effective as a means of proliferating national imaginings. Sperber (1997) frames the human population as being occupied by a greater populace of mental representations, while the physical environment is equipped with its member’s public productions. This notion is further supported by Atran, Medin, and Ross (2005:751) who state,

People’s mental representations interact with other people’s mental representations to the extent that those representations can be physically transmitted in a public medium (language, dance, signs, artifacts, etc.).

When mental representations become similar enough, they start to be perceived as versions of one another, creating the prototypical categories earlier described by Rosch. Sperber (1997:410) further argues that there are “complex causal chains where mental representations and public productions alternate,” which continually transform one another. These imperfect replicas are

what enable cultural units to be subject to Darwin's theory of selection, though on a much more rapid scale than biological evolution.

Though most cultural mutations are short-lived, some stick, drifting towards basins of attraction. Stereotypes are strong basins of attraction towards which mental representations of afro-descendants gravitate, creating a form of cultural schema. In noting the importance of slower evolutionary processes on the formation of schema, Sperber (1997:421) states, "Mental modules... are crucial factors in cultural attraction. They tend to fix a lot of cultural content in and around the cognitive domain for the processing of which they are specialized." Thus, this type of cultural transmission is only possible through evolutionary heuristics that allow humans to take and attend to huge quantities of information, which allow for the intuition and innovation that has allowed humans to survive thus far. This helps to shed light on why stereotypes are so difficult to overcome.

4.7 *Mainstream Media*

Mainstream media offer an avenue through which hegemonic national imaginings are both expressed and validated. Drawing from Erving Goffman, Rahier (2011:64) notes that mainstream media functions "to convince viewers that this is how women and men are, want to be, or should be," and further, that they "greatly contribute to the reproduction of social values and social orders." Mainstream media is a common channel through which analysts have evaluated how cultural constructions are influenced by the national communities from which they originate (Finlayson 2004). Such media may vary in the form of novels, dramas, television,

films, music, as well as others. Thus, it is through mainstream media that we can examine common notions of national identity within Ecuador.

Though not comprehensive in nature, Rahier (2001, 2008) explicitly focuses his examinations on the stereotypical depictions of afro-descendants within mainstream media. In his first analysis, Rahier (2008) provides a historical analysis of visual representations of Afro-Ecuadorian men, which overwhelmingly portray them as either violent, criminal, or a combination of the two. Furthermore, Rahier (2008) notes that the African continent is predominantly characterized in a negative light with stories highlighting political turmoil, famine, military coups, and tyrannical leaders. Meanwhile, journalists broadly associate African peoples as animal-like, motivated largely by instinct as opposed to reason.

Furthermore, with the relatively small population of afro-descendants living in Cuenca, the stereotypes against them are particularly acute, especially before the adoption of the 1998 Constitution. Diego recalls his local reception upon moving to Cuenca from the predominantly black Chota-Mira Valley a few decades earlier:

The problem was because of my color. Because of my race. I arrived here and, appearances deceive, in that if I was poorly dressed ... they would say that I was a thief or a drug addict. I did not know why people ... were mad at me. When I went to the store the people moved away from me.

Diego further illustrates the dilemma that dominant stereotypes, such as these, perpetuate:

If I don't have anything, "You're lazy." If I have too much, "You're a thief." And if I have something, "You're stuck in some bad stuff." Why do you think that about

black people? Why don't they think the same about white people? If you don't have anything, "You're lazy." If you have too much, "What are you up to?" Only white people are good at everything, but for a person of color they see everything.

Diego's statement indicates the acute sense of "Otherness" that afro-descendants feel within Ecuadorian society.

While the mainstream media has continuously re-enforced the notion of the *mestizo* as the prototypical Ecuadorians, images of afro-descendants are often accompanied by captions which emphasize their black skin. This is especially true of afro-descendant athletes, who are also often identified with global stereotype about the physicality of black bodies. This is also evident within a second analysis by Rahier, which demonstrates the prevalence of the female afro-descendant's hypersexuality to the point that it has become "common-sensical and ordinary... in the press, advertisements, in television shows, in everyday conversations, on the Internet, etc." (2011:76). Starting in colonial times, the stereotypical trope in which the Afro-body is portrayed as "savage" continues to be depicted within contemporary media. A recent example of these types of associations occurred during my fieldwork in which a Peruvian sports announcer publically referred to the majority-afro Ecuadorian national soccer team as apes.

Recall Breuilly's elements for effective nationalist ideology; simplification, repetition, and concreteness. Simplification is manifested in two ways in Ecuador's nationalist ideology. First, the Ecuadorian national state creates a national myth that essentializes the prototypical citizen as *mestizo*. Second, through the harmful stereotypes that rationalize the situation of afro-descendants at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The educational system and mainstream media repeat and replicate both the *mestizo* myth and stereotypes against afro-descendants, until

eventually, they begin to be reproduced within the minds of the Ecuadorian, at which point the nationalist ideology has achieved concreteness.

4.8 The Cultural Salience of Stereotypes

Bloch (2012:111) argues, “the very idea of role is a matter of imagination since it does not relate to an empirical aspect of the persons who are endowed with the role.” While sometimes true, it is not necessarily applicable to areas with strong racial/spatial orders, like Ecuador. Instead, roles can be restricted based on empirical features, like race. For instance, afro-descendants are largely restricted from roles such as ‘president,’ ‘beauty queen,’ or, in the extreme case, ‘compatriot.’ Meanwhile, based on their empirical features, others may place afro-descendants into the role of ‘athlete,’ ‘prostitute,’ or ‘thief.’

Table 1: Salience of Negative Stereotypes

n=29

Code	Frequency	Percentage	Salience
Thieves	18	64%	0.5106
Lazy	12	43%	0.3050
Unintelligent	8	29%	0.1417
Violent	8	29%	0.1417
Hyper-Sexual	6	21%	0.1311
Delinquents	5	18%	0.0969

Table 1 depicts the most salient negative stereotypes identified by my informants. The most salient outlier among the negative stereotypes was that afro-descendants are “Thieves,” a result that is further supported by interview data in which participants were asked to relay an instance of discrimination from their own life. The most common response referred to micro aggressions on the street in which passerby either clutch their bags closer towards their body or cross the street to avoid proximity to participants.

The second most salient negative stereotype was that afro-descendants are “Lazy” or do not like to work. The final grouping of salient responses include: “Unintelligent,” “Violent,” and “Hypersexual.” After that, saliences scores steadily taper off. Notably, each of the most salient negative stereotype were discussed by Rahier (2011) in his study of mainstream media, supporting the vital influence of widespread public productions.

Table 2: Salience of Positive Stereotypes

n=26

Code	Frequency	Percentage	Salience
Athletes	11	42%	0.2904
None	6	23%	0.2308
Good Food	9	35%	0.1808
Dancers	8	31%	0.1718
Hard Workers	6	23%	0.1493
Friendly	4	15%	0.1205

Table 2 outlines the most salient positive stereotypes identified by my informants. The most salient outlier was that afro-descendants are good athletes, with a Smith's S score of .3775, which makes sense given that nearly the entire national soccer team is afro-descendant. Though "Athletes" is the most salient of the positive stereotypes with a Smith's S score of .2904, it still falls far behind "Thieves" as the overall most salient stereotype. The response, "None," received a Smith's S score of .2308, making it comparable to the "Lazy" stereotype listed within Table 2. That afro-descendants have good "Food" (Smith's S = 0.1808), are good "Dancers" (Smith's S = 0.1718), are "Hard Workers" (Smith's S = 0.1493), and are "Friendly" (Smith's S = 0.1205) represent the final grouping of significant positive stereotypes, before the list dwindles below to Smith's S scores below 0.100.

However, another participant, Jaime, points to a darker side of these positive stereotypes: "The black man serves for his musculature and for his physical condition. He serves for sports." From Jaime's point of view, even positive stereotypes portray a problematic image of the prototypical afro-descendant; as that of a servant. Indeed, upon further examination, a majority of the salient positive stereotypes valorize the afro-descendant's ability to serve, either through sports, cooking, dancing, or through their work ethic and positive demeanor.

4.9 The Implications of Afro-Descendant Stereotypes

The implications of these stereotypes act as daily reminders of afro-descendants' position as the ultimate "Other." Some instances of discrimination are subtle, such as people crossing the street to avoid passing you or grasping their bag closer as you approach, as Anita describes:

It always happens to me on the street, when someone walking the opposite direction sees me, they cross the street or grab their wallet stronger or guard their cell phone. And I know that it is the ignorance of the people. It is ignorance because, anyone can rob you. It doesn't matter if they are black or mestizo, or whatever. They can rob you. So it is something that the people here have in their minds, because they heard about an afro-descendant robbing someone... but they remember more when an afro-descendant robbed them... than when a mestizo robbed them. In other words, there is always discrimination. A lot and it keeps happening.

Anita is astute in her recognition of the power that stereotypes can have. However, other instances of discrimination prompted by stereotypes can be much more serious, such as this humiliating encounter that Angelo recounts:

Once I was walking alone on the street and the police caught and searched me in front of everybody, and just because I was walking I was not doing anything. They checked my backpack and everything to see if I had anything; but I was calm and nothing happened, but I did not feel good because I was not doing anything, I was just walking. And they searched me for nothing. Just because I was black, that's why.

Furthermore, accounts of daily discrimination can manifest in outrageous ways, as Anita demonstrates:

This happened to me no more than 2 or 3 weeks ago ... I left at 9pm to jog, and near my house... there is a park where there is a wifi signal. Since I don't have wifi, I go out to chat on my phone. I take advantage of the fact there is a hill... I

jogged up the hill. Once I reached the top, I was out of breath, tired, so I rested a little while chatting on my phone. I am standing with my back to other people and I saw two women with their bags walking. It seemed like they left work or something like that. After they walked about half a block, I felt rested and decided to jog down the hill to climb back up. I saw that the women looked back at me and started running, running, running hurriedly, and I said: "What's going on?" They yelled, "Thief, thief, thief." They wanted to go into the stores to take refuge and bang the cars. I thought, "Are these ladies crazy or what?" They walked by me and after they are half a block away and I start jogging, they thought I was going to steal from them. My goodness. I asked the people in the cars: "What's wrong? Are these ladies are crazy?" In other words, it's proof that racism is latent in this city.

Diego further describes how stereotypes hinder the efforts of afro-descendants to secure employment:

Yes, there are about 5,000 Afro Ecuadorians here in Cuenca. It is a lot. They are in the outskirts of Cuenca. They are poor people, who do not have much so they live outside of the city, because they do not charge much for rent. Children live there, ask for alms. As you can see, people here ask for alms a lot, they clean windshields. Those people, live like that, because they do not have anywhere to work. The people here in the city center do not give work to the black, because they think he is a thief.

This popular stereotype afro-descendants cause individuals, like Javier, to experience discrimination when seeking employment. He explains:

Sometimes, for example, when you go to apply for a job... you ask for the position then they look at you from head to toe and they say: "Hold on, let me talk to the boss." Then they tell their boss: "That man is looking for a job, he is a black man." Then the boss answers, "No, no, no, no, tell him that the position has already been filled." He discriminates. Then he comes back and tells you: "If you had come yesterday, yesterday we were in need of a worker. Now there is no vacancy." And it is a lie. But if a white person asks for the job, he will get it.

Stereotypes only act to justify and perpetuate the neglect of Afro-Ecuadorians as is illustrated by several of my informants who describe their experiences with trying to secure crucial resources such as education, employment, and housing. For instance, Andrés poses the following:

Then the question is how do you change the view of the authorities, if they believe: "Ah! They are black, they live like this, it's okay, it's natural for them to live like that." You can tell them: "No, your son and my son need the same opportunity." But usually they respond: "It is normal that they do not have [anything]." So that is the fight, that is the fight of my life and that has cost us our lives and that has been a struggle for years, many years. And that's how it is. We are happy, fucked, but happy.

Indeed, much like Bhabha's mimic men, the nation often requires afro-descendants to discard their racial and cultural identities to imitate the language, dress, culture, and politics of their colonizers. This is a strategy that Diego would learn through his continued residency in Cuenca:

If you grew up with an ideology that you have to be well dressed for people to respect you... If I look like this, it's because I want to be like this. I got used to dressing like this. But if they see me walking with bad clothes, they get scared... For an afro-descendant to come here to the sierra to work, he has to take 2 things into account: Be well dressed, and pretend to be something that he is not.

Thus, as a result of nearly three decades of living in Cuenca, Diego offers the following advice:

For an afro-descendant to come here to the sierra to work, he has to take 2 things into account: Be well dressed, and pretend to be something that he is not.

Similarly, Ana laments:

We want to forget our outfits, to embrace the modern; we want to straighten our hair ... and it's not ours. Our hair is afro, and sometimes that is what we are ashamed of. The black is ashamed to wear hair like that. He does not like it. He wants to be like whites, he wants to wear it straight. It is those customs we forget. We should not forget about it. We should keep it because it is ours. It is typical of us, and we should feel proud.

These suggest that afro-descendants, living in Ecuador feel a fundamental disconnect between who they are and what it means to be Ecuadorian, or at least what others believe it means to be Ecuadorian.

However, this attempt to break away from the stereotypes that continue to marginalize afro-descendant can back fire, as is demonstrated by John, who describes the following encounter:

There was a time when I was dressed... in a suit and tie. "Hello young man, how are you? Where are you from? What country are you from?" I am from Guayaquil... That is the difference here, in a suit: gentleman sir, like this: vulgar thief. How you dress in Cuenca is how they treat you.

In wearing a business suit, John deviates from the stereotype that Afro-Ecuadorians wear loose, casual clothes. This disparity signaled to the interlocutor that John must not be from Ecuador, prompting them to ask John where he is from. Another informant, Andrés, describes a similar encounter:

I've had such racist events as: "Are you Latino?" "Yes, yes, I'm Latino, yes."

"No, because you seem [to be] a gringo. Yeah, if you don't dress like this, don't act like this, you are not from here."

Encounters such as these are constantly reminders to afro-descendants of their inherent "Otherness."

Another means through which afro-descendants shed aspects of their cultural and racial identity is through the *mestizo* myth. Throughout my fieldwork, I gradually began to notice that many of my afro-descendant informants had *mestizo* partners. Though I had already interviewed several informants, I began to inquire about the ethnicity of my informants' partners. Here, I use the term 'partner' to refer to a current girlfriend/boyfriend, a spouse, or the other parent to their child. Because having children out of wedlock was a common occurrence in Cuenca, several informants had more than one partner, as I employ the term here. Of the twenty informants with partners, twelve had either white or white-*mestizo* partners, six had afro-descendant partners, and

two had both white/white-*mestizo* partners and afro-descendant partners. This indicates that the *mestizaje* myth was a common strategy employed as a means of national inclusion.

Again, despite these attempts for entry into the national imaginings, afro-descendants are still reminded of their peripheral position. Recall John's nephew, Paulo. Paulo was one such informant who was married and had several children with a *mestiza*. In my discussion with Paulo, he explained to me:

My wife is asked or has been asked many times: "Why with him? And how come with him?" ... And many people, not one nor two.

Diego makes a similar observation in his discussion with me:

Then they see me with you and say, "Ah! That black man married that gringa, with that foreigner. But why? What did she see in him? He must have something that she fell in love with him or vice versa. What did he see in her? The problem here is that we are talking about me. How lucky is that black man? So if you are black, people talk, that I should not be with a white person. That is racism in every sense of the word.

Therefore, attempts to subvert the ethnic/racial hierarchy are regularly slapped down by others. The staunch defense of the hierarchical social order attests to the enduring strength of Ecuador's national ideology.

Despite their exclusion from Ecuador's national imaginings, my informants were not shy in sharing pride in their heritage. For instance, Paulo asserts:

I am very proud to be seen as I am. I do not have any objection at all to showing myself as I am, so being Afro is to be everything. It's everything, of course. Being afro is everything, from when I get up, until I go to bed.

This appears to be a sentiment that a majority of my informants shared given that 20 of my 35 informants mentioned feeling pride in being an afro-descendant, despite the fact that none of my interview questions addressed the topic.

However, some informants expressed that while they themselves were proud of their race, others in their race were not. For instance, Diego indicates this in the following:

The black race, or the Ecuadorian Afro, is disappearing a lot because parents or mothers marry people of color, then children no longer want to be close to a person of color, because they feel ... pity, more than pity, shame. So I am proud of being an afro-descendant, and I feel ashamed for those who would say no. I cannot live based on what people say.

This suggests that to some extent, the ambiguous position of afro-descendants within Ecuador's national imaginings has been internalized within the minds of my informants.

5. CONCLUSION

Through the utilization of historical data, anthropological articles, and ethnographic information based in Ecuador, this project explores the seemingly paradoxical position of afro-descendants as both outside, yet foundational to the national imaginings of Ecuador. In situating the nation-building of Ecuador within dominant conceptions of nationhood and nationalism, I argue for an inclusive conceptualization of nationhood. First, the notion of nationhood in terms of imagined communities and political ideology need not be divisive. Instead, both provide necessary perspectives in the scholarship of nationhood. However, as the case of Ecuador demonstrates, these conceptualizations miss an important angle in national imaginings. Instead, the nation depends on and is constituted by the very fragmentation that it attempts to overcome.

Within Ecuador, the state elites disguise fragmentation within the country to maintain political, economic, and social control. Through the creation the *mestizo* myth, white elites welcome the indigenous and *mestizo* masses into the national imaginings. The elites rely on their labor and productive value to compete within the global market. However, the use of terms such as ‘*cholo*,’ ‘*longo*,’ and ‘*chagra*’ preserve these social distinctions that maintain the ethnic/racial hierarchy upon which state elites rely for power. The *mestizo* myth further marginalizes the minority who are not *mestizo* by underestimating their numbers. Though the position of the indigenous and *mestizo* masses remains inherently volatile, it is stabilized by afro-descendants who are unambiguously excluded from the national imaginings as cast as an ultimate “Other.” In locating their own identity in opposition to afro-descendants, *mestizos* recognize themselves as within the national imaginings, despite being marginalized by whites and white-mestizos. Thus,

despite their invisibility, afro-descendants' peripheral position is fundamental to the production, stability, and maintenance of Ecuador's national imaginings.

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