

Critique

Race, class and identity—key ethnic issues of the 1980s—have been analyzed from various disciplinary perspectives, and Martinez’s article is a contribution to the growing number of written assessments concerning racism and classism in the United States. His research explores the psychological and social perceptions of color, race, identity, and class among Puerto Ricans living in the United States and in Puerto Rico.

Color—white or non-white—which is significant within a mainland U.S. socio/historical context takes on different meaning for island Puerto Ricans. And yet, historical and economic exploitation by white Americans has effectively altered identity perceptions based on visible color and class orientation. Although Martinez concludes that island Puerto Ricans classify themselves as white and acknowledge miscegenation, few perceive themselves as having any familial ties to blacks. Mainland Puerto Ricans do align themselves socially and politically with blacks, however.

Color—the amount of melanin in skin pigmentation—and the cultural perception and attitudes color differentiation has on identity development are critical areas of study in examining race, class, and mental health issues. Perception of color as a cultural phenomenon exists among ethnic peoples throughout the world. The Japanese, for example, believed themselves to be “white” even after European contact. The ideology of color, “whiteness” as related to wealth and not having to work out in the sun, and class are key issues for Japanese identity. When color is used as a form of class differentiation and used to subvert a people’s cultural consciousness, confusion and mental health problems may develop.

Martinez suggests how the differences in color perception between Puerto Ricans living on the mainland and the island stem from external forces, i.e., a white cultural value system and a capitalist economy. As Puerto Ricans accept the values imparted by a capitalist economic situation and see whites as the emblems and models of monetary success, their identity is transformed. The transformations of Puerto Rican identity differ in degree but not in quality. Although island Puerto Ricans fear the one drop syndrome, “cryptomelanism,” and miscegenation with blacks, class concerns account for other variations in identity development. The author shows how identity confusion appears as the most prevalent perception among both mainland and island Puerto Ricans as race, class, and varying acceptance of white values become integrated into the personality profile.

Dialectical analyses of race and class among peoples of color, especially blacks, is a primary issue among sociologists and economists in attempt-

ing to interpret race relations, racism, and capitalism in the United States. William Julius Wilson's *The Declining Significance of Race* and Mario Barrera's *Race and Class in the Southwest* examine capitalism and American racism upon the lives of blacks and Mexican/Mexican Americans. The research while addressing racism and economic labor exploitation does not focus on ethnic group identity or hidden problems associated with the groups studied. The one drop rule in the United States categorizing people along black or white racial axis has created a genre of literature and social science studies concerning mulattos, miscegenation, and "passing." The significance of Martinez's article is his presentation of a comparative analysis of race and class issues in terms of the effect American white values have had on Puerto Ricans living in the United States and those living in Puerto Rico.

The genre of literature focusing on the "tragic mulatta" theme in such works as William Wells Brown's *Clotelle* and Nella Larsen's *Passing* clearly illustrate psychological problems inherent in a "white-superior" "colored-inferior" American value system. Within a capitalist economy, island Puerto Ricans perceive themselves as being white and aspiring upper class status. Few families openly admitted to Afro-hispanic race mixture. The fear of cryptomelanism is a little-explored psychological development in Puerto Rican identity formation. In future studies, Martinez or others might address directly with their respondents the notion of cryptomelanism and examine the validity and reasons for the "fear of hidden blood of color." Are these values self imposed or externally derived?

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When the first Dutch missionaries reached the far shores of Java, they heard rumors of a recently captured large white monkey being held in a remote village. By the time the missionaries reached the village, however, the mysterious monkey had vanished. They found only the post where it had been tied. Chiseled in stone nearby in Latin, English and Dutch were these words: "Help! I am a Dutch sailor."