

Exploring Whitexicans' Narratives of Europeanness in the Postdigital Field of Action

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Abstract *This chapter explores the construction of narratives surrounding Europeanness, skin colour, and multilingualism of the public Instagram account @the_whitexicans and discusses how dominant imaginaries of coloniality and Mexicanness are reconfigured in the postdigital field of action. Whitexican is a neologism used to refer to “white Mexicans”. However, the term is related to (biological) phenotypes in a limited sense. Moreover, it reveals socialized categories that highlight various forms of discrimination, including racism. The case of the whitexican illustrates the intertwining of the online and offline fields of action via social networking sites, by showing how deep social divisions are reconfigured in the postdigital age through practices of mocking, privilege, inequality, and discrimination. Yet while these interactions may contribute to challenging coloniality, they also reimagine what may be considered as Mexican.*

1. Introduction

In Mexico, phrases such as “*quírate del sol que te vas a poner prieto*” (“get out of the sun, you’ll get dark”), “*cásate con un güero para mejorar la raza*” (“marry a blond/white person to improve the race), or “*ah como eres indio*” (oh you’re such an Indian)¹ are part of everyday life² and are in some contexts simply taken-for-granted. This is due to the complex construction of the Mexican nation-state based on two dominant imaginaries: coloniality and Mexicanness.

1 The word “Indio” is linked to the word Indigenous and, under the same lens of coloniality, has been used to refer to being “dumb” or “ignorant”. All translations by Yolanda López García (YLG), except where stated.

2 In everyday life, individuals – understood as social agents – are pragmatically oriented in a kind of “natural attitude”. This natural attitude can be understood as the archive of common-sense knowledge that is taken for granted as normal, self-evident, and part of the routine of everyday life (see: Berger & Luckmann, 1991: 37). It is expressed through practices and is so ingrained and naturalized that it is often not questioned.

These imaginaries are depicted in social networking sites (SNS), such as the accounts focusing on *whitexican* content. The term *whitexican* is a neologism that combines the words “White” and “Mexican” in English. In a limited sense, the term is related to (biological) phenotypes. However, in a broad sense, the term reveals historically constructed and deeply socialized categories that highlight different forms of discrimination, including racism. The origin of the term is uncertain. According to Forssel Méndez (2020) it has circulated since at least 2008 and has gained popularity since 2018, for example on Twitter/X with the account @loswhitexicans. Currently, there are different accounts on other SNS such as Facebook and Instagram, where (self-)labelled *whitexican* content is produced, posted and shared. These accounts post *whitexican* content, which presents people with actions and behaviour considered racist and classist (Rejón, 2020). The popularity of these accounts has led to their dissemination in traditional media and beyond the digital realm. This exposure has resulted in the appropriation of the term *whitexican* to describe people and their content displaying such attitudes. Third parties often label individuals and their actions as *whitexican*. Additionally, some people have begun to refer to themselves or their own practices as *whitexican*.

This chapter examines the content shared on the public Instagram account @the_whitexicans, which is managed by an anonymous administrator. Under the hashtag #cosasdewhitexicans (*whitexican* stuff) the content, often parodied, reveals attitudes and banal conflicts relating to the privileged lifestyle of *whitexicans*, such as travel and possessions, and their alleged unawareness of the system of inequalities in Mexico, which presupposes equal opportunities for all. In addition to displaying racist attitudes, the account shows interactions that *whitexicans* have with people from other social classes or phenotypes, such as domestic workers, Indigenous people, children begging for money and street vendors.

The dissemination of this content takes a primarily satirical and socially critical approach, encouraging debate among users with the aim of mocking and ridiculing the behaviour of (self-)identified *whitexicans*. I argue that the case of *whitexicans* is an emergent social phenomenon³ in the postdigital field of action⁴ because it involves practices among individuals who are engaged in both the online and offline fields of

3 Whitexicans as a web phenomenon has been discussed in journalistic articles (see Cruz (2017); Camhaji et al. (2019); Estrada (2021)); and has gained ground as a phenomenon to be investigated in academic work (see: Alvarez-Pimentel (2020); Islas Weinstein et al. (2024); Mejía Núñez (2022)).

4 In a postdigital field of action, technology is embedded and entangled in the different fields of everyday life in which agents interact (Knox, 2019: 358). The boundaries between online/offline fields of action (Gómez-Cruz, 2022: 31; Floridi, 2015: 1; Knox, 2019) are therefore diffuse and obsolete. In this context, meaning is reshaped through practices within the continuity and complexity of the postdigital field of action. In other words, I argue that social E-maginaries are (dynamically) reconstructed trespassing online and offline dichotomies, as

action. Therefore, this case shows, on the one hand, how meanings and practices are dynamically reshaped in an entangled and complex context, where the online field of action is deeply and profoundly intertwined with the offline field of action, and vice versa.

On the other hand, it demonstrates the depth and contemporary presence of dominant imaginaries of coloniality and Mexicanness. The concept has gained ground by being incorporated further into accounts posting on the topic, becoming a new term in the long list of social ascriptions that depict deep social divisions.⁵ The practices include making visible inequality and discrimination on SNS by commenting, criticizing, and even harassing other internet users. While this case opens the possibility of raising awareness and reflecting on the reproduction of meaning on SNS, it also raises questions regarding how content on *whitexicans* runs the risk of reproducing social dichotomization instead of contributing to a critical dialogue and awareness.

Therefore, it is interesting to explore how the imaginaries of coloniality and Mexicanness are manifested in the content posted on *the_whitexicans* Instagram account. What narratives are found?

Ultimately the aim of this chapter is to explore how these posts may be interpreted in a way that reconfigures the imaginary of Europeanness – imagined from a Mexican perspective and practiced in the postdigital field of action? Is the content of the narratives addressing *whitexican* practices a form of social critique or a return to closed notions of culture? What emergent imaginaries might emerge from there, and if so, how?

The chapter is organized as follows: Firstly, a brief overview on racism as the basis for the dominant imaginaries of coloniality and Mexicanness is given. Then the methodological approach is described which combines netnographic, thematic, and hermeneutic analysis, followed by the discussion of three themes: *whitexican* stuff and imagined Europeanness; skin colour, and multilingualism. Finally, I discuss how these narratives can be interpreted as *E*-imaginaries in the field of postdigital action.

2. Racism as the Basis of the Dominant Imaginaries of Coloniality

It is important to clarify firstly that social imaginaries are schemes of meaning that are socially constructed and shared. They influence the archive of common-sense knowledge and thus allow us to perceive, explain and act in which each field

the case of *whitexicans* shows. I propose the concept of social *E*-imaginaries as an encompassing concept for imaginaries within the postdigital field of action. See López García, 2024.

5 See Florescano (1995/2005); Navarrete (2017).

of action considers to be reality (Pintos, 2005: 42–43; Baeza, 2011: 33). They exist in a constant and changing dynamic between dominant and emerging imaginaries. Dominant imaginaries are hegemonic and institutionalized forms of meaning in the form of internalized knowledge, fixed, typified, and assumed as normal and evident, which are not questioned by the agents that interact in a specific field of action. In the dominant imaginaries power-knowledge is usually exercised (Foucault, 1975/2023: 36–37). Power-knowledge determines and reconfigures social practices. Therefore, the intersubjective knowledge that is influenced and constructed by social imaginaries orients the thinking and doing of individuals, understood as social agents who find themselves in a struggle between the search for autonomy and heteronomy (Castoriadis, 1975/2005). Emergent imaginaries are understood as dynamic processes that question dominant imaginaries and attempt to reconstruct meaning that incorporates new ways of doing and thinking that modify dominant imaginaries. If they achieve recognition as shared and legitimized common sense, they may – or may not – become dominant imaginaries.

The dominant imaginary of coloniality refers to the system of domination initiated in the period when the terrain of today's Mexico was the core area of the Viceroyalty of New Spain (established in 1535 and ending in the processes of Independence between approximately 1810 and 1821). The viceregal society consisted of groups which were mostly divided by Spanish-established “ethnic” categorizations: Spaniards, Criollos (Spaniards born on the American continent), Indigenous people (wrongly called *Indios*), and Africans (see Jaramillo Herrera (2008) for a historical introduction). The “coexistence” between these people gave rise to miscegenation and the *casta* system (Reyes Tosqui et al., 2019: 118). Tipa (2020: 114–115) refers to “caste discourse” instead of *casta* system, since it suggests that there was no rigid hierarchical logic, but rather “a doctrine or set of ideological constructs that were developed within colonial society and reproduced as an instrument of power and social control.” In this system of domination, the category of race is a fundamental criterion for the classification of society into social ranks and roles within that society. It is in this sense that Quijano (2005: 201) develops the notion of the “coloniality of power”. Coloniality is governed by a dominant and Eurocentric vision and understanding of the world, which imagines non-Europeans, their knowledge, and practices as inferior.

Figure 1 shows different combinations and names depicted in a painting (of unknown authorship and presumably from the 18th century) representing an elaboration of the official racial policies imagined by the patron elites. Depending on the origin of each parent, a category was created. For example, children of a Spaniard and an Indigenous woman were called *mestizos* (roughly speaking “mixed-race”) (Moreno Figueroa & Wade, 2022: 4), and those of a Spaniard and an African woman, *mulatos* (Reyes Tosqui et al., 2019: 118). As Taylor (2009: 38) points out, the fundamental racial distinction in Mexico was between Spanish (white European) and Indige-

nous people: A duality deeply rooted in law and everyday life. Thus, Taylor suggests that paintings (such as Fig. 1) depicting a detailed distinction between more *castas* were more imagined rather than an existing and functioning social order in everyday life. Viceroyal society was more complex in its social stratification, which intersected with other aspects such as kinship and ethnicity.

Figure 1: Representation of *Casta System*, Source: Wikimedia Commons.



Although colonialism in Mexico ended in 1810, coloniality was reinforced with the imaginary of coloniality/modernity (Mignolo, 2005), where the discourse of progress, development and growth were key to the construction of the nation-

state. As part of the nationalist political project of the 1940s, the subject of the “new modern Mexico” was imagined as *mestizo* and Mexican (Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar Tanaka, 2016: 522; Vasconcelos, 1925/2014). This sought a certain pride in Mexican nationality, which had been and has been imagined in a complex web of symbols, legends, and artefacts, but which also remains deeply intertwined with discriminatory and inequitable mechanisms deeply rooted in everyday life, and in which narratives of race, class, and gender, among others, converge.⁶

Racism in Mexico has not been sufficiently researched and addressed (Moreno Figueroa, 2016: 92), mainly due to the illusion of equality based on *mestizaje* and post-racial ideology⁷ (Mejía Núñez, 2022; Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar Tanaka, 2016; Gall, 2016). *Mestizaje* is perceived as inclusive and fluid, however, it “is shaped by clear racial hierarchies where whiteness is valued and blackness and indigeness are marginalized” (Wade, 2005: 240, cited in Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar Tanaka, 2016: 521). The racial project of *mestizaje* delegitimizes the importance of addressing, recognizing and naming racism since *mestizaje* feeds the belief that “Mexicans are mestizos and therefore, there is no race or racism in Mexico” (Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar Tanaka, 2016: 516; Moreno Figueroa, 2016: 92).

Racism can be understood as a “global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority along the line of the human that have been politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the ‘capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world-system’” (Grosfoguel, 2011 as cited in Grosfoguel, 2016: 10). Superiority and inferiority are constructed according to specific regional historical contexts and has been expressed through various discriminatory practices based on religion, colour, ethnicity or cultural background (often related to national culture), resulting in the racialization of bodies (Grosfoguel, 2016: 11).

6 To read more about my perspectives on the imaginary of Mexicanness, see López García (2021); (2023).

7 Post-racial ideologies refer to the discourse of “racelessness” from David Theo Goldberg (2002) in the context of the U.S. (Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar Tanaka, 2016: 516). Post-racial ideologies are “forms of thought, discourse and action that evade, delegitimise, and seek to eliminate racial differences and their effects from the focus of academic scholarship, activist struggle, public debate, and state policy. Post-racial ideologies operate through racialized forms of power while simultaneously claiming the non-significance of race. They generate fraught understandings of belonging and inclusion that elide racial difference and structural racism in ways that allow the re-articulation rather than the transformation of racial inequalities within national and global developments. Moreover, when deployed as a strategy of power, post-racial ideologies continually seek to depoliticize race, racism, and difference in ways that demobilize anti-racist politics, substantive cultural recognition, and material redistribution” (Da Costa, 2014: 2 as cited in Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar Tanaka, 2016: 517). See also Lentin (2012).

In Mexico, colourist racism certainly exists (see: Mejía Núñez, 2022; Gall, 2016; Tipa, 2020; Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar Tanaka, 2016).⁸ Discrimination is based on people's phenotype, and this is closely linked to the dominant imaginary of coloniality. While the category of race is not expressly used to “legitimise” a supposed essential difference between people and groups, the category of “skin colour” is applied in that sense, although both categories are based on the superficial physical features of a person (Tipa, 2020: 117).⁹

Under the dominant imaginary of coloniality, “white”, has been constructed as a category that involves imaginaries of “superiority”, “beauty” and being “civilised”. Therefore, the discussion is not concerning only skin colour but also a way of being in terms of an imagined *blanquitud* (Echeverría, 2022: 149) (whiteness) which is based on modern, civilisational and capitalist imaginaries, “one does not need to be white-skinned to have *blanquitud* and reproduce the narrative of capitalism” (Carlos Fregoso, 2023: 278) – and, as I suggest, to reproduce coloniality.

3. Exploring Whitexicans’ Narratives

This chapter is based on the analysis of the content of the Instagram account *the_whitexicans*, which has 99,900 followers (at the time of writing). The account has had 2,140 posts, of which 119 posts were analyzed including 108 posts with still images and 11 short videos, chosen for their relevance. The qualitative research combined aspects of netnographic analysis (Kozinets et al. 2014; Kozinets & Gambetti, 2021) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis of themes has been interpreted using critical and hermeneutic interpretation (Kozinets et al. 2014: 270; Schriewer, 2014).

The ethical guidelines of the Association of Internet Researchers (franzke et al., 2020) were followed with some modifications. In the case of the *the_whitexicans* account, it was decided to anonymize all usernames and faces appearing in posts, al-

8 Moreno Figueroa (2016) reflects that the influence of research on racism in the U.S. context has caused confusion when studying racism in Mexico and in other Latin American contexts, by adopting definitions and categories that are alien to the anglophone context.

9 Skin tone is a factor of discrimination that, when combined with other aspects such as social position, age, disability, and gender, creates a complex web of exclusionary experiences. The important role of colourism is identified in the reports and censuses that have been carried out in Mexico. For example, according to Solís et al., (2019), speakers of indigenous languages, those who self-identify as indigenous, black or mulatto, and those with darker skin tones are less likely to attain higher education, higher occupational positions, and the highest wealth status. This in comparison to people who do not speak indigenous languages, with white or mestizo self-ascription, or with lighter skin, which are the characteristics with which more advantageous economic outcomes are associated. (See also Solís et al., 2023).

though it is a public account, and the information can be accessed easily. Some of the posts that appear on *the whitexicans* are already anonymized, while others are not. During the netnographic analysis, it has been observed, that when the person's information details appear in the posts, users go to the profile of the person exposed as *whitexican* to write comments, some of which are aggressive. These practices can be considered as cyberbullying, and it has caused users (whose content is labelled as *whitexican* and being mocked) to change their account from public to private or even close it for some time. However, is beyond the scope of this research to follow every individual practice or to verify the authenticity of each of the posts.

For this chapter, themes concerning links with Europe that encompass banal problems, imagined Europeaness, skin colour and multilingualism are discussed.

3.1 *Whitexican* stuff and the Imagined Europeaness

The hashtag concerning *whitexican* stuff is used to label posts that show practices of privilege and superiority (*blanquitud*). The following posts illustrate the various ways in which links with Europe are addressed, showing how “being European” is imagined.

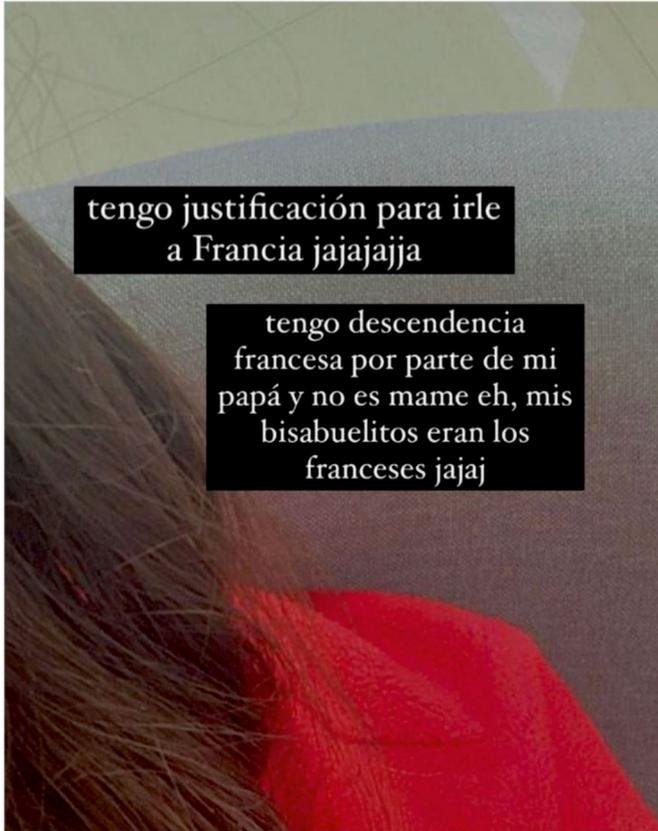
The post (Fig. 2) refers to a football match between Mexico and France and the poster's justification for supporting the French team instead of the Mexican team. The subject of football is a subject where nationalism flows according to loyalty to a certain country (see Lietz & Pereyra in this volume). One of the users responds:

“Their great-grandparents were those Frenchmen who came to invade our country, failed and could not return to their country because they ended up poor, but French, (four emojis laughing and crying).”

The comment alludes to France's attempts to invade Mexico in the mid-19th century¹⁰ and the tone can be interpreted as mocking – in this case the grandparents stayed in Mexico being poor, but French, which suggests a plus. Allusion is made to the symbolic weight that French or European nationality would have in Mexico, regardless of socio-economic circumstances. Furthermore, users ridiculed the error in the post, suggesting that it should have read “ancestry” instead of “descent”. Mocking spelling or content errors is a common practice among those criticizing the (self)attributed superiority of *whitexicans*.

10 See Jaramillo Herrera (2008); Galeana (2011).

Figure 2: Screenshot *whitemexicans descendencia* Source: (*the_whitemexicans*, 21 December.2022)¹¹

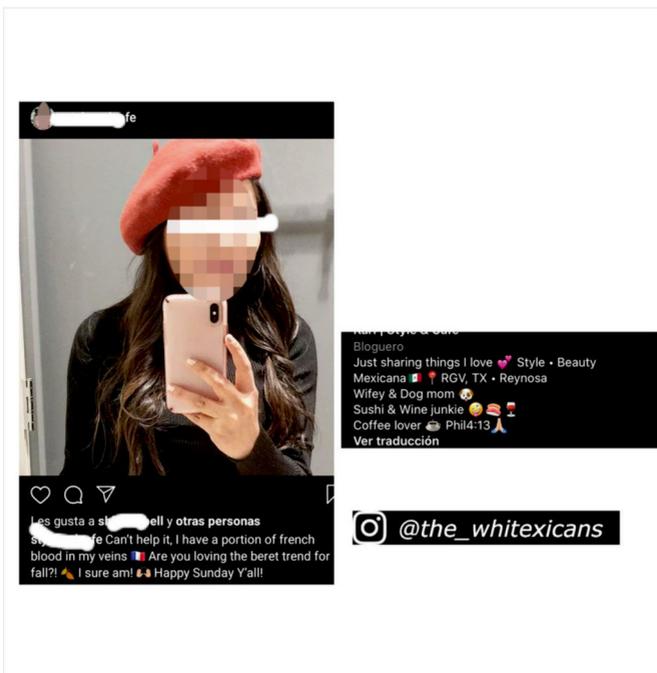


Other posts described “being European”, for example “having a portion of French blood in the veins” (Fig. 3) and showing the person with a beret that corresponds to an object locatable within the dominant imaginary of what is considered to be the “French culture”.

11 Translation: “I’m justified in supporting France hahahahahaha. I have French descent (sic) on my dad’s side and it’s not a joke, my great-grandparents were French”.

The dominant imaginary of coloniality that places the European at the top of the social pyramid can be interpreted from the following anonymous post (see Fig. 4) that asks, “how to get descendants with ‘European genes’”. One of the user comments complains that the post has been picked up and posted on the *whitexicans* account, as the user explains that the question is genuine and was asked in a private group that received serious responses. This post can be interpreted as a racist idea in the sense discussed earlier regarding “improving race” and as also commented on by users under the post, while others defend the freedom to choose with whom one wants to have children.

Figure 3: Screenshot *whitexican* woman with *basque beret*, Source: (*the_whitexicans*, 14 September 2020).¹²



12 Translation: “Can’t help it, I have a portion of French blood in my veins (French flag emoji) Are you loving the beret trend for fall?! (emoji autumn blatt) I sure am! (hands up) Happy Sunday Y’all! [original in English]”.

Figure 4: Screenshot *whitexicans ayuda*, Source: (*the_whitexicans*, 11 September 2023).¹³



The postings that relate to the Europe category also relate to *whitexican* practices which, according to the comments of users, are banal practices that denote privilege. They are criticized because these practices present some cause of stress or concern that cannot be compared to causes considered more serious, for example, suffering from physical abuse, or not having basic resources to live on.

For example, the following image (Fig. 5) shows a woman looking to the horizon.

13 Translation: "Hello, has anyone got pregnant by artificial insemination abroad, or do you know if I can pay for foreign sperm in Mexico? I honestly would like to have a child with European genes!"

Figure 5: Screenshot whitexicans estrés, Source: (the_whitexicans, 22 February 2023).¹⁴

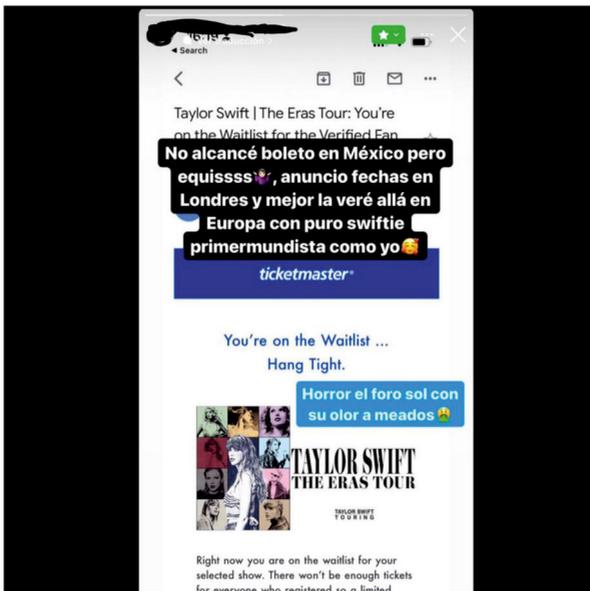


Among the 105 comments that this posting received, some indicated in what is interpreted as a sarcastic tone “that the poor thing suffers a lot, and that we should send good vibes to this brave warrior.” Some other comments agree that it is stressful to organize trips. Others criticize mixing up English words like “trip” instead of “viaje” in Spanish commenting “you couldn’t say: ‘viaje’? [you are] Ridiculous.” In this posting, it is possible to detect practices considered banal by people who have the privilege of travelling to Europe, an issue that causes them stress. For the users who comment, this situation is highly privileged and should not be a cause of stress – as it would be, for example, to live in circumstances of poverty or insecurity. It can also be noted that mixing in English words is criticized, which could be interpreted from the dominant Mexican imaginary as keeping the Spanish language free of Anglicisms.

14 Translation: “I’m organising a 21-day trip to Europe and all this information has me so stressed (three suffering emojis).”

In a very similar tone, there are other postings that complain about what these people must do and “suffer”. The following post reveals that, in the context of a concert that the singer Taylor Swift gave in Mexico, many people could not get a ticket, about which several people posted to complain. Two very similar posts were found to make the decision to travel to another country to see the singer, in one case to the United States and in the other to Europe, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Screenshot whitexicans concierto Swift, Source: (the_whitexicans, 28 August 2023).¹⁵



This post clearly demonstrates the disdain for the concert organized in Mexico and the expression of disgust when referring to the place where the concert would be held in Mexico, which according to the post, “smell(s) of piss”. Although anger is expressed, the post suggests that the person has the resources to go to the concert in London (which however cannot be proven). It also says that in Europe there are “first world swifties” referring to the fandom of the singer, suggesting that in Mexico there are “not first world swifties”.

15 Translation: “I couldn't get a ticket in Mexico but no problemmmmm (emoji never mind), she announced dates in London and I'd better see her there in Europe with pure first world swifties like me (emoji little hearts). Horror at the Foro Sol [location of the concert in Mexico] with its smell of piss (emoji vomiting).”

The following post (Fig. 7) reflects an imaginary suggesting that everything in Europe is better than in Mexico.

In this case, the answers show sarcasm concerning a banal discussion such as in relation to a mango ice-cream. The irony of a fruit, which is harvested in Mexico, but which is said to taste better in places where mangoes are not harvested. It is even said that the ice is better, even though ice (frozen water) would taste the same everywhere. One user replies that “he lives in Europe and he can attest that the ice is very good (I think it comes from where Thor and those Marvel guys live) [...]” responding satirically to the comment.

Figure 7: Screenshot *whitexicans mango*, Source: (*the_whitexicans*, 25 September 2022).¹⁶



In the context of the death of Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022, *the_whitexicans* Instagram account published content referring to publications discussing the matter. The posts offer condolences to the Queen's family, or to the United Kingdom (UK), or express their opinion of the Queen by linking it to a visit to the coun-

16 Translation: “Mango ice cream tastes better in France and Venice nmms [no shit], I don't know if that's because of the European mango or the European ice (cat emoji with heart eyes).”

try or even to Windsor Palace. The following post (Fig. 8) is a way of making European ancestry visible, expressing great affection and admiration felt for the UK. The post also shows that pride in being Mexican is expressed, but the link with Europe is made clear through the surname and the migratory experience of the person's great-grandfather.

Figure 8: Screenshot whitexicans Cardiff, Source: (*the_whitexicans*, 09 September 2022).¹⁷



The post had 284 comments, repeatedly replying that Cardiff is not in England but in Wales and referring to the misspelling of the post (and interest). Others scoffed that they too feel a connection because they use “Worcestershire sauce” in their meals. One comment reply:

“Cardiff is Wales, at least should have said united kingdom (sic), it was no use what dad paid at the Tec (emoji laughing and crying).”

This comment alludes to the private university *Tecnológico de Monterrey* (TEC), which was supposedly paid for by her father but does not prove that the person is educated. As it is unknown whether the person indeed studied at that university, the reference can be interpreted as suggesting that attending a paid elite university does not save

17 Translation: “I am proudly Mexican, but my paternal surname is English. My great-grandfather sailed from Cardiff, England to Mexico in the gold rush. I have always had great affection, interest, and admiration for the UK. RIP Queen Isabel II (white dove, UK flag).”

a person from making mistake-ridden posts. The reference to the university being paid for by the father has to do with a stereotype of dependence on parents who cover all the expenses of children, whose third level education has little effect, implying a certain ignorance on the part of the person. This post alludes also to the supposed superiority of whitexicans discussed in Fig. 2.

3.2 Skin Colour

Figure 9 reflects a controversy surrounding the visiting of Costco grocery store where membership is required to shop. Users complained on SNS about being discriminated against by being asked to show their receipt when leaving the shop to make sure they had not stolen anything. The image reflects who is usually asked for the receipt leaving the store, i.e. people with darker skin tones while people with lighter skin tones are thanked for their purchase.

Figure 9: Screenshot whitexicans ticket, Source: (*the_whitexicans*, 03 March 2023).¹⁸



18 Translation: Thank you for your purchase (lighter colours of the palette used for self-definition) Please show me your ticket (darker colours of the palette).

Figure 10: Screenshot *whitemexicans güero*, Source: (*the_whitemexicans*, 05 June 2022).¹⁹



It is observed that posts dealing with skin colour are very common on *whitemexican* content and usually generate a lot of controversy. The three following postings (Fig. 10, 11, and 12) have in common that the publishers define themselves as white and share the difficulties or challenges of being white in Mexico.

19 Translation: "I am white and I would have liked to be brown and have an ordinary surname. It makes life easier. Being güero in Mexico makes you an easy target."

Figure 11: Screenshot *whitexicans tono mayoritario*, Source: (*the_whitexicans*, 21 April 2023).²⁰



Because of their white skin colour, they claim to be “easy targets” (Fig. 10), or that other people see them in as being ugly because they do not have “the majority (skin-)tone” of the people in Mexico, that of Tenoch Huerta and Yalitza Aparicio (Fig. 12), referring to two actors known for actively defending their dark skin tone.²¹

20 Translation: “Being white in Mexico is a daily challenge, almost everyone sees you ugly for not having the majority (skin-)tone (suffering emoji).”

21 Both actors belong to the movement Poder Prieto (Prieto power) “that seeks to eradicate systemic racism and promote empathy, joy and dignified representation” [original in Spanish] (@poderprieto_mx, 2021). Poder Prieto can be seen as an example of a movement questioning dominant imaginaries aiming to resignificate the meaning of Prieto, see Rodríguez (2021).

Figure 12: Screenshot *whitemexicans desafío*, Source: (*the_whitemexicans*, 12 June 2023).²²



22 Translation: "Being white in Mexico is a challenge. People look at you ugly because you don't have a skin tone like Tenoch Huerta or Yalitza Aparicio (crying emoji)."

Figure 13: Screenshot *whitexicans consejo*, Source: (*the_whitexicans*, 16 July 2022)²³



Being “an easy target” is interpreted as being perceived as a white person, as having certain privileges and a favourable socio-economic position. Therefore, they claim to be charged more in places where one is seen as belonging to a privileged socio-economic class, or as a foreigner – thinking automatically that foreigners who are in Mexico have money. Having an “ordinary” surname can be interpreted in relation to the logic of having a foreign-sounding name which differentiates one and places one as belonging to the deeply ingrained imaginary of imagined elites, such as the colonial social pyramid that automatically places foreigners at the top.

The idea of *blanquitud* as something better can be identified in the following post asking how to make the baby white when the couple is brown-skinned. Note the use of the diminutive in *blanquito* (whitey) and *morenito* (brownie) is a way of softening the language surrounding these racialised categories.

23 Translation: “Hello, I am 3 months pregnant, does anyone know what to do so my baby is born white [blanquito] even though my partner and I are both brown [morenitos].”

Some of the responses from users include sarcastic advice such as eating lots of vanilla ice cream for nine months, putting the baby in rice when it is born, or putting it in chlorine. Another user comments:

“I don't know whether to laugh, cry, get angry or follow the sarcasm of the mmda (sic) [stupidity] you wrote! I could say just as much bullshit, but maybe you take one of these people's sarcastic advice, 'literally', and go make a bigger [stupidity] than your question.”

Another more analytical and thoughtful commentator writes:

“This speaks to how racism is internalized by communities that are marginalized because of their colour, and the only way they think their son or daughter can get ahead is if they are white. That is why it is so common to say marry a girl to improve the race, which is a very racist saying, this should not be mocked.”

In these interactions it can be seen how, as a result of posting, there are interactions in the form of mockery and sarcasm but also how some users share concern and reflect on it – however, these types of comments are a minority.

3.3 Multilingualism

Speaking languages – usually those related to Europe – is a constant theme in the publications of the *whitemexican* practices. From the comments in the chosen posts dealing with languages, it can be interpreted that there is a hint of pride and/or arrogance in speaking languages other than Spanish, and this interpretation is reflected in the users' comments. For example, Figure 14 alludes to the two occasions when the person is in a restaurant thinking in English but answers in French. While we do not know the exact context of these postings, it is perhaps somewhat simplistic to ignore this context and simply criticize these practices. The irony is read in an initial post by *the whitemexicans* asking “Doesn't it happen to you?” alluding to a common practice of everyday life of living between languages, or even the contexts mentioned, such as being in a restaurant or the fact of travelling.

Figure 14: Screenshot *whitexicans creída*, Source: (*the_whitexicans*, 30 January 2021).²⁴



There are other types of comments that also relate multilingual everyday life but are interpreted as more contextualized in terms of families composed of people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, explaining multilingual family dynamics and discussing multiple identities more clearly.

For example, Figure 15 explains that the person was born in France, the father was French and the mother Mexican. The person identifies herself as French-Mexican and relates the difficulty she has in identifying with one or the other and how she sometimes feels more or less of the two nationalities she reports. The publication also highlights mobility, as she lived for years in Europe but now finds herself living in Mexico.

24 Translation: "I'm going to sound very smug (and I'm okay with that) but it's now twice in a restaurant that I'm thinking in English, and it comes out in French when I answer the waiter."

Figure 15: Screenshot whitemexican Montpellier, Source: (*the_whitemexicans*, 13 October 2020).²⁵



The comments on this post are mocking the person for “giving the whole biography”, another criticizes her for not knowing how to write, another comments on “the Pacific”, probably referring to the Atlantic being the ocean that divides Mexico with Europe – although it is not fully clear if the person in the original post is referring to Europe. A more relevant response is:

“She feels more French than Mexican when she is in Mexico, and when she is abroad she feels more Mexican pride than when she is in her own country, except when the national team plays or 16 de sep (sic) [September, anniversary of the Mexican independence].”

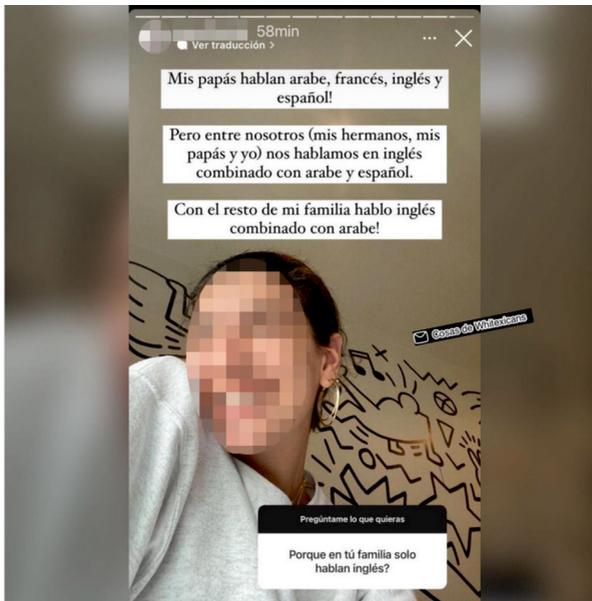
It is precisely this comment that encompasses the imaginary of the so-called whitemexicans, feeling proud to be Mexican abroad, but denying and complaining about Mexicanness while in Mexico. However, this type of commentary is based on the imagi-

25 Translation: Where are you from? [Question on IG] I was born in Montpellier, France, my father was from France and his parents were Spanish and my grandmother was Italian, my mother is Mexican like her parents, and I am French-Mexican, it's hard for me to identify myself, sometimes I feel more French than Mexican and sometimes it's the other way around. Life takes a thousand turns and today I am in Pinotepa although 12 years ago I lived thousands of kilometres away across the Pacific.

nary of Mexicanness, which understands nations as homogeneous closed containers of unique belonging to one entity that would not allow belonging to another, historically seen as having a distrust of having two equal loyalties and deep love for the nation.²⁶ Although diversity is accepted within what is considered Mexican, such as Indigenous diversity, people who have any links with Europeans continue to be viewed with distrust. In other words, from the lens of the imaginary of coloniality, it is seen as a privilege, a form of glamour and added value, and from the imaginary of Mexicanness as a sort of threat to being Mexican.

The following post portrays a content creator who responds on TikTok to the question “why does your family only speak English?” To which she responds by explaining the family dynamics and the languages her parents speak and how they combine languages such as English, Arabic and Spanish.

Figure 16: Screenshot *whitesicans familia multilingue*, Source: (*the_whitesicans*, 29 March 2022).²⁷



26 See Anderson (1983/2006).

27 Translation: “My parents speak Arabic, French, English and Spanish! But between us (my siblings, my parents and me) we speak English combined with Arabic and Spanish. With the rest of my family I speak English combined with Arabic!”

Among the comments made by users, in this case it is not justified that they put the post on the account of *the whitexicans* because it is a question asked to her directly and it is not a post merely with her talking about these issues, and therefore it should not be considered a *whitexican* practice. However, it seems that by speaking multiple languages and combining them with her family, she is already a symbol of privilege and therefore considered *whitexican* by others. For example, one user comments:

“What fucking obsession do whitexicanitos have with languages? Speak whatever the fuck you want; we don’t give a fuck if you speak Swahili to ask for a roll of paper when you’re taking a shit (emoji laughing and crying).”

Other users enter the discussion:

“How many people are burned by the fact that someone speaks more than one language? Wow. When I go to my country to visit, I’m not going to say ‘no way I’m going to be people like you (two emojis laughing and crying) jsjs (sic)’”

to which another user replied:

“It doesn’t matter that I speak it, the problem is that I want to use it to feel superior to others and show it off.”

That is to say that posting about multilingualism is interpreted as a way of feeling superior to others and showing off, therefore, this type of post is considered by some users who comment on *the whitexicans* page as a *whitexican* practice.

On the site there are also videos of people telling their stories about the languages they speak. In this article I will mention one video (Fig. 17) of a young woman, filming herself in an outdoor location, acting out a situation from her everyday life as the daughter of a French father and a Mexican mother. The video is about her acting out a dialogue between the three of them, where she asks her dad for permission to go to her friend’s house to do some teamwork and then she asks her mum the same thing, but in the other language. The account *the whitexicans* takes up this video adding the comment “me at my most schizophrenic”. This title is interpreted to mean that the woman plays each role of her, her father and mother, changing her language, changing her posture to simulate the father and using some accessories such as glasses to simulate the mother.

Figure 17: Screenshot *whitexicans francés-mexicana*, Source: (*the_whitexicans*, 06 February 2023).²⁸



The comments generated by this video are varied in opinion. Some say that “she’s not doing anything wrong”, others say that this video “is not cringe or whitexican with little brains, her dad is French and that’s it”. Others find her French quite good “without an accent”. However, other comments criticize her physical posture, crouching down, others “how stupid she looks doing the video in the street”, and others wonder why she makes these kinds of videos at all.

4. Discussion

The phenomenon of accounts posting *whitexican* content, in the example of the posts presented in this chapter, brings to the forefront the issue of how for some people,

28 Translation: “My life having a French father (French flag) and a Mexican mother (Mexican flag).”

posting content, considered by many to be banal, is part of everyday life in the post-digital field of action. Publishing in public formats becomes a normalized act for some. Others take up those posts considered elitist, privileged, and discriminatory, and post it as *whitexican* stuff aiming to ridicule or even label what seems like real content, from people who have (self-)categorized as *whitexicans*.

The posts analyzed in three thematic areas *whitexican stuff* and imagined Europeanness, skin colour and multilingualism, allow us to observe the persistence of themes that include historical disputes that involve entrenched social inequality, based on dominant imaginaries of coloniality and Mexicanness. These imaginaries have been shaped throughout history, so they are not new phenomena. What is new, however, is how these imaginaries are reconfigured, mediated by the internet, in what is here located as the postdigital field of action. The creation of a neologism “*whitexican*” on SNS, and the practice of creating accounts with this term, posting with hashtags, and having so many people consume content of this type, even searching for posts and sending them to the creators of the account, engaging in conversations about *whitexicans* and their practices, is one way in which meaning is reorganized, reconfiguring social *E*-magnaries.

The results have shown how various posts on the Instagram account of *the_whitexicans* present aspects related to “the European”, being able to observe posts that present practices related to privileges, considered as banal, but also with associations to skin colour, and a way of identifying and cataloguing experiences that have to do with multilingualism and multiple identities.

One can seriously question the need to publish moments of banal everyday life, such as those shown here that range from commenting on the taste of ice-cream, whether a person suffers from stress from planning a trip to Europe, what one apparently “suffers” by being white in Mexico, looking up information on how to have children with “European genes” who are born white, the languages one speaks and when exactly one speaks them.

Although in this research we cannot know the motivations of the people who made the posts, nor it cannot be proven that all posts are “real” and genuinely felt, we can interpret the normality, ease, and immediacy of posting, which is also part of postdigital practice, since it is taken-for-granted to post everyday life on SNS, at least for some people. However, the “normality” of the imaginary of coloniality that is posted is challenged by other users who take up the content and label it as *whitexican* content. This *whitexican* content is criticized, mocked and even incites users to go to the accounts of the creators of the content in question, some of whom have closed their accounts due to the harassment and hatred they have encountered. As can be seen, the reactions to the original posts contain sarcasm but also foul language that is not constructive. However, it was also identified how some users try to offer constructive criticism and awareness regarding some topics.

Social *E*-maginaries are reorganized by reconfiguring meaning and accompanying practices. This reconfiguration aligns with components such as reshaping common sense, creating frames of reference, and the role that algorithmicity plays in the postdigital field of action. In this sense, it is possible to align this understanding with the components of communality, referentiality and algorithmicity (Stalder, 2018). Commenting on and questioning *whitexicans'* attitudes generates communality in a specific field of action. In turn, the referentiality of both recognizing meaning around the *whitexican*, both in terms of the privileges and discriminatory practices denounced, but also in terms of humour and critical references to this phenomenon. Algorithmicity generates a bubble of information that suggests a certain type of content, in this case content concerning *whitexicans*, but ignoring other content showing other lifeworlds.

The content on Europe, travel and even family or language ties allow us to recognize that in the content labelled as *whitexican* there is a certain charm and glamour in what has to do with the European region, or the imaginaries surrounding Europe that correspond in part to what I have identified elsewhere as the “European dream” (López García, 2021) and that can be interpreted as imagining “the European” on a better positioned, civilizing, cultural scale, which corresponds to a gaze influenced by coloniality and aligned with the narratives of *blanquitud*.

However, it seems that the content, while demonstrating a certain social class privilege, also demonstrates stories of people who have grown up in environments where more than two languages are spoken (Fig. 16 and 17). These cases show that for example, if a person is bilingual and posts about their habitus in their field of action, criticism might appear because the person is accused of showing off.

It seems interesting that criticisms are made when content appears that makes people who highlight their multiple belongings, multiple identities, and multilingualism visible, which is attacked and considered a *whitexican* privilege for some. It would be necessary to question whether these criticisms are constructed based on the dominant imaginary of Mexicanness, where pride in belonging to the Mexican nation plays an important role and is somehow threatened by the presence of other languages and multiple identities, which in this case, being related to a European country, are also seen as a form of privilege. Posts raising criticisms concerning multilingualism ignore the real contextual processes that people who speak more than one language or who live in another country, or who are native speakers of more than one language face, such as code-switching or the difficulties of speaking different languages in different contexts.²⁹

29 Research on code-switching, multilingualism and migration has been intensively studied, see Auer (2005); Cantone (2007); Montanari and Quay (2019); Treffers-Daller et al. (2020).

5. Conclusion

This chapter explored how imaginaries of coloniality and Mexicanity are manifested in the content of the Instagram account *the whitexicans*, specifically in the narratives around Europeaness, skin colour and multilingualism.

Although the coloniality of power predates the internet, it is interesting to observe how it is reconfigured in the postdigital field of action, that is, how social *E*-imaginaries are reconfigured. I have argued that the case of *whitexicans* is an emergent social phenomenon because it involves individual practices that reconfigure meaning and postdigital practices themselves in terms of communality, referentiality and algorithmicity, demonstrating the deep intertwining between the online and offline fields of action. In the postdigital context, coloniality-based practices have been transformed through the publication, labelling, and naming of posts concerning privilege and discrimination under the *whitexican* label – yet *whitexican* content continues to be produced by (self)described *whitexicans*. At the same time as the profound and complex actuality of the dominant imaginary of coloniality is exposed, the dominant imaginary of Mexicaness is also re-signified through the negotiation of what is Mexican and what is not, what is showing off and what is not, according to the users. While inequality and colourist racism are not new, what is new is how they are reimagined and practiced in the postdigital age, for instance with the creation of neologism such as *whitexican* and the so-called *whitexicans* stuff.

Much remains to be explored about how, and if, more equitable emergent *E*-imaginaries might be constructed, or whether accounts such as those with *whitexican* content that aim to mock might signify some kind of social consciousness and reflection, or whether practices of cyberbullying and harassment intensify social division.

Beyond the individual attitudes of (self-)described *whitexicans*, one should question the depth of the dominant imaginaries of coloniality and Mexicaness as an instituted imaginary, deeply rooted in the practices and meanings that guide people, but that are systemic and structural. Therefore, following Sara Ahmed (2012, 44), racism should not be reduced to the attitudes of individuals, as this perspective fails to grasp the full extent of the problem and how racism is perpetuated. Focusing on individuals as the sole source of racism perpetuates institutional racism by giving the false impression that removing these individuals will solve the problem. In this case, coloniality is deeply inherent to institutions and therefore normalized in a variety of practices. Removing bad attitudes is not enough. It is crucial to question whether the internet and these practices can generate constructive dialogue that promotes change at a deeper level and within emergent *E*-imaginaries. It seems that changing these imaginaries is more about changing structures of power, which seems difficult, and I am rather pessimistic that it will happen in the near future.

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