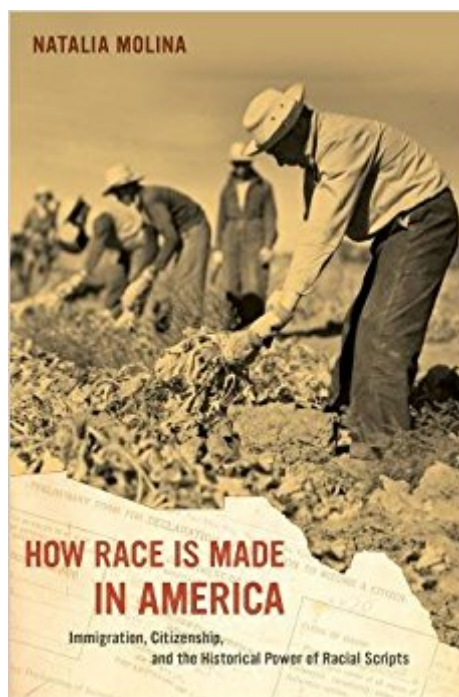




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# How Race Is Made In America: Immigration, Citizenship, And The Historical Power Of Racial Scripts (American Crossroads)



## Synopsis

*How Race Is Made in America* examines Mexican Americans from 1924, when American law drastically reduced immigration into the United States, to 1965, when many quotas were abolished; to understand how broad themes of race and citizenship are constructed. These years shaped the emergence of what Natalia Molina describes as an immigration regime, which defined the racial categories that continue to influence perceptions in the United States about Mexican Americans, race, and ethnicity. Molina demonstrates that despite the multiplicity of influences that help shape our concept of race, common themes prevail. Examining legal, political, social, and cultural sources related to immigration, she advances the theory that our understanding of race is socially constructed in relational ways; that is, in correspondence to other groups. Molina introduces and explains her central theory, racial scripts, which highlights the ways in which the lives of racialized groups are linked across time and space and thereby affect one another. *How Race Is Made in America* also shows that these racial scripts are easily adopted and adapted to apply to different racial groups.

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## Customer Reviews

"Highly recommended." (CHOICE 2014-06-01)"Natalia Molina's examination of racial construction of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans is notable and thorough . . . Terms are well defined, arguments are soundly presented, and commonly known historical events are

explained." (Patrick Lukens American Historical Review 2015-02-01)"Molina has written a formidable and accessible monograph that unravels the process of race-making to show that the question of belonging requires a relational approach. . . Invaluable." (Chantel Rodriguez Western Historical Quarterly 2015-06-12)

"Molina provides a fresh, sophisticated analysis of the powerful racial 'scripts' generated in twentieth-century US political and legal culture, and of the Mexican population's unique vulnerability in the 1920s and after as eminently 'deportable.' This book's importance is sadly substantiated by twenty-first-century headlines about immigration policy, 'papers please' laws, and urban policing. A critical contribution." --Matthew Frye Jacobson, author of *Whiteness of a Different Color* and *Barbarian Virtues* "Bridging Mexican American history and immigration history, *How Race Is Made in America* is a fascinating study of how deeply ingrained prejudices structure institutional and social power." --Monica Perales, author of *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* "A compelling, briskly written, deeply researched, and closely argued book that makes signal contributions on many fronts." --David Roediger, co-author of *The Production of Difference: Race and the Management of Labor in U.S. History*

Wonderful book. Though I found segments of the text to be a bit redundant at times, I appreciated the manner in which the author deliberately brought and kept her framework of racial scripts in the fore. Readers should have gained a deeper appreciation for the relational nature of race and how conceptions of race are constructed and supported culturally and structurally. I would have liked a bit more information about the author's methodological approach in analyzing the data. This lack of detail calls the author's findings into question.

Natalia Molina's second book, *How Race is Made in America*, has taken a great deal of university graduate seminars on Latino and immigrant history by storm in recent years owing to its exploration of Mexican immigrants' fight for access to immigration and naturalization rights let alone full U.S. citizenship rights and inclusion in the U.S. polity amid racial (and often racist) discourses of identity difference. Molina, long-fascinated by the popular U.S. public perception of Mexican immigrants with "illegality" (1), sought to analyze the U.S. citizenship rights of Mexican immigrants in the early 20th Century to assert that the tension between racial discourses, identity and U.S. citizenship can be articulated as "racial scripts." According to Molina, presently a professor at UC San Diego, racial scripts "highlight the ways in

which the lives of racialized groups are linked across time and space and thereby affect one another, even when they do not directly cross paths (6). Put more simply, racial scripts are the roles and expectations imposed upon certain ethnic/racial groups by the white Anglo Protestant-dominant U.S. population. As the term implies, Mexican Americans had to follow and perform the racial scripts given to them on the metaphorical stage of the U.S. polity

In the case of Mexican Americans, their racial script meant that they carried a transitory character as seasonal laborers (‘‘birds of passage’’ (p. 31), were likely low-skilled undocumented entrants and, in any case, not white and therefore excluded from full citizenship rights in an ostensibly white polity. In outlining how Mexican immigrant racial scripts were formed, Molina undertakes a provocative relational analytical approach to document how racial scripts were written through an interplay between different racial/ethnic groups (within parameters and terminologies often dictated by dominant white Anglo Protestants). The expectations inherent in racial scripts, Molina asserts, are formed in the context of the roles that other racial(ized) groups played. Originally eligibility for U.S. citizenship was limited to free white persons by a law enacted by the very first U.S. Congress - the 1790 Naturalization Act. Often glossed over in history courses, the 1790 Naturalization Act explicitly stated that U.S. citizenship was dependent on whiteness (the indigenous peoples of the U.S. were not considered citizens worthy of the Constitution or Bill of Rights protections until 1924; enslaved African people lacked legal standing in the Constitution as per the Supreme Court’s reckoning in the 1857 Dred Scott Decision and citizenship eligibility for free African Americans pre-1868 often depended on one’s state of residence). With the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo’s granting of U.S. citizenship to 70,000-100,000 residents of the Mexican Cession (the first truly non-white opening of the citizenship door) and the enactment of the 14th Amendment granting African Americans citizenship (as well as its universal affirmation of birthright U.S. citizenship) the scope of U.S. citizenship expanded but tensions in consideration of Mexican people as legally white remained and became obvious when Mexican immigration to the U.S. Southwest and beyond increased at the turn of the 20th Century. If a Mexican applied for U.S. citizenship but looked too indigenous the prevailing ‘‘common sense’’ of the early 1900s would dictate that his application be rejected since, in the words of one immigration agent from that time, ‘‘his color would preclude association with whites’’ (47). Indeed, early portions of this book deal with eugenicists, nationalists, and legislators trying to come to grips with how to classify Mexican immigrants for the purposes of immigration law and how to balance immigration enforcement with agricultural needs. In the end Molina’s perusal of

congressional testimony shows how business interests trumped (no pun intended) the desires of immigration restrictionists in the 1920s and 1930s. If Mexican immigration and its seasonal, agricultural benefits were curtailed, boosters like the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce claimed growers would have to rely on Filipino or Puerto Rican laborers; since both groups were U.S. nationals (conquered/liberated people from the 1898 Spanish-American War) they could not be deported and would lead to increased populations of these communities next to respectable white Anglos and their daughters (don't look at me like that - its in the congressional testimony!) Mexicans, on the other hand, often went home at the end of the season and if they didn't they could easily be deported which is what made Mexican labor more appealing. Capitalism!

In further evidence of the relational construction of racial scripts, Molina further points to how key citizenship and immigration legal cases in U.S. history (Plessy vs. Ferguson from 1896 and the landmark 1898 U.S. vs. Wong Kim Ark case) interpreted and redefined who could claim U.S. citizenship. In those cases the citizenship rights of African Americans and Asian Americans were concerned, yet through the use of precedent those cases affected how legal understanding of Mexican immigrant claims to U.S. citizenship were understood by the U.S. government, such as "In Re Rodriguez" (1897) and in the 1935 Andrade case. In the instance of Andrade, racial scripts from post-revolutionary Mexico ("raza csmica" rhetoric) and the 100% Americanism U.S. came into conflict as Timoteo Andrade struggled to defend his right to NATURALIZE as an American citizen. Although he listed his race as white in his naturalization application, Andrade's darker complexion and admission that he had some "Indian blood" in the amount of "maybe 75% or maybe 75%" put him under the legal microscope resulting in a court decision which initially disqualified his naturalization application. After complaints from the Mexican Embassy (and additional testimony from Timoteo's mother Maria Bera Andrade who stressed her son's Spanish lineage) the court changed its decision through an appeal and allowed Timoteo's naturalization (61-63). The relational aspect of the racial scripts paradigm may be the one of the most unique contributions of this book for its succinct acknowledgment of the interplay between different racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. Also the tying of specific legal cases into a larger cross-class, cross-ethnic, cross-racial narrative is one of the most significant aspects of this book when one considers how traditionally cases like the Cable Act (1922) and In re Rodriguez (1897) are often not placed into dialogue by gender, race, immigration, Latino, or borderlands historians. In that vein, a timeline or some type of chart showing these

disparate cases. A relationship would have been helpful in fundamentally altering the silo mentality that often influences these historiographies and their students. HOWEVER, despite the value of the racial script paradigm, not all aspects of the book work as effectively. Perhaps most glaring for me is how often the narrative flow often stops dead in its tracks.

Molina's arguments are most persuasive and insightful when she employs specific case studies that support her theoretical conclusions, yet when reading this book one often gets the sense that Molina could have better reconciled the need for a clear narrative with analysis of a specific moment's historical and legal background. An example of this is on page 36 where, in an analysis of congressional testimony, Molina switches from discussion of the "L.A. Times" publisher's support of Mexican immigration because of their supposed docility to a lengthy paragraph about the history of American Indians in the California mission system during the days of Spanish colonial rule. While not completely tangential, Molina could have transitioned more smoothly and articulated some of those ideas more succinctly without so jarringly interrupting the flow of her writing. Some of the more glaring problems with the overall text emerge rather late in Chapter 5 specifically when Molina analyzes the application of Operation "W.B." in L.A. specifically to test her racial script paradigm's relational nature in a diverse, multiethnic urban setting. Thousands of Mexican immigrants (sometimes even including U.S.-citizen children) were held at a makeshift detention center in Elysian Park (adjacent to today's Dodger Stadium) in June 1954 in plain view of other racialized groups. In the opening of the chapter Molina states that Operation "W.B." was "a racializing force for other groups such as African Americans and Japanese Americans who either became defenders of the detained immigrants or simply passive observers. In reminding readers of these groups' own moments of oppression the implication is made that the targeting of potentially undocumented Mexican immigrants reinforced these groups' sense of their own racial scripts and fostered a feeling of solidarity with the detainees. The evidence provided by Molina in that section is, to be blunt, lacking. A handful of African American witnesses of the Elysian Park detention center are quoted, but no further commentary from black Angelenos is provided despite the heading of that multi-page passage pointing towards its ostensible focus on the "Los Angeles African American Community." In fact, by the close of that section the analysis moves away from black Angelenos altogether without further engagement of Operation "W.B." by that community. This problem is even more pronounced in the next section with its focus on Japanese Americans. A community picnic attended by 10,000 Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants in Elysian

Park, Molina notes, honored two victims of the 1945 Hiroshima atomic bombing who were in attendance but nothing was said in the press by the community about the detention center just next to the park. NO further commentary by the picnickers or other Japanese/Japanese American sources/observers at the picnic or at a later point is included. While it can be surmised many Nikkei COULD have drawn links between the recent Japanese Internment during World War II, the analysis here turns SPECULATIVE and moves away from grounding itself on actual evidence. In the absence of supporting evidence from at least some sources in the Japanese American and Japanese immigrant community this section stands out as a bit of a stretch from a methodological standpoint. While Molina's interpretations of other racialized groups' reactions to Operation "W.B." in this passage may be correct (125-131), they are actually not supported by evidence and should not have been made out as some of the chief pillars of this chapter. This chapter was strongest in its analysis of the relationship between Mexican detainees/deportees and the Committee for the Protection of the Foreign-Born (based in Boyle Heights, not unincorporated East Los Angeles); more emphasis on that story would have strengthened that chapter. One last critique is that the text sometimes suffers from excessive usage of the "racial scripts" term in the sense that in some passages every other sentence uses it. The analytical framework of racial scripts is useful and valid enough that it does not have to be excessively beat over the reader's head in order for the term to gain traction. These critiques aside, "How Race is Made in America" is a valuable book for discussions of race, citizenship, immigration, and identity in the United States. Despite the triumph of recent anti-immigrant, anti-Mexican rhetoric in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election, the book's epilogue is also an unintentionally encouraging coda. Written in 2014 when he seemed invincible, the epilogue focuses on how Arizona's Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio operated under inherited racial scripts in an ostensibly post-racial era to arrest and harass suspected undocumented immigrants. The octogenarian "Arpayaso" (as he is lovingly referred to by the Phoenix, Arizona immigrant rights crowd) was finally defeated for re-election after mounting scandals with civil rights litigation brought against him. As I type this, the infamous Tent City at the Durango Street jail near downtown Phoenix is being disassembled. It will be interesting to see how the racial script paradigm is expanded upon and utilized in future scholarship particularly in light of recent developments in the U.S. immigration and race history.

Went through a timeline of immigration in the U.S. which I really liked because Molina discussed enough of each. Book was not repetitive but rather very informative. Would like to see Molina do a

take on current immigration situations.

Groundbreaking work on the racialization processes of Mexican-origin peoples

Let me say to begin with that I am second-generation Mexican-American. Also let me say that I did not agree with Molina's conclusions before I read her book, but her book is very convincing. The history of our immigration policies are quite interesting by itself. This is a very well written and researched book on how race and racism has driven the immigration policies of the United States from its very beginning shortly after the Revolutionary War. Molina focuses her research on the immigration laws and attitudes toward Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans. Molina goes further by showing that the arguments for controlling immigration by the founders of the U.S. were extremely racist and that those same arguments are being made today. The question of who can become a citizen with all the privileges of citizenship has been an issue since the nation was founded. Molina's research shows that race was made a part of the laws until very recently and today's laws and proposed laws (even without the wording of race) are still put into practice according to one's race. Examples are given to prove this is true. As I stated before, I am second generation and as such it is scary to think that many Americans do not believe that birth citizenship should be the law even though it has been the law since the country was founded. Just as frightening is the idea that citizenship can be limited to certain racial groups. Not only do many Americans believe in denying citizenship to certain racial groups but the government has limited and taken away citizenship to racial groups in the recent past.

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