



4-1-2016

# Fresas, Nacos y Lo que le Sigue: Towards a Sketch of Two Mexican Emblematic Models of Personhood

Sofía Chaparro  
*University of Pennsylvania*

---

# Fresas, Nacos y Lo que le Sigue: Towards a Sketch of Two Mexican Emblematic Models of Personhood

## **Abstract**

In this paper I sketch out two widely recognized cultural stereotypes in Mexico: *fresas* and *nacos*. Using a linguistic anthropological framework, I describe the semiotic registers of these stereotypical figures, illustrating them through various types of media, including internet images, videos, and popular songs. I then provide a tentative historical account of when these figures emerged and how they became enregistered in the Mexican imaginary. I make the case that these stereotypical figures are tied to a deeply rooted classism and racism in Mexico that are traces of its colonial legacy.

# Fresas, Nacos y Lo que le Sigue: Towards a Sketch of Two Mexican Emblematic Models of Personhood

Sofía Chaparro

*University of Pennsylvania*

In this paper I sketch out two widely recognized cultural stereotypes in Mexico: *fresas* and *nacos*. Using a linguistic anthropological framework, I describe the semiotic registers of these stereotypical figures, illustrating them through various types of media, including internet images, videos, and popular songs. I then provide a tentative historical account of when these figures emerged and how they became enregistered in the Mexican imaginary. I make the case that these stereotypical figures are tied to a deeply rooted classism and racism in Mexico that are traces of its colonial legacy.

In 1994, a regional Mexican music band called *Banda Z* rose to the top of popularity charts in Mexico with their hit song “La Niña Fresa.” The song, in the style of *quebraditas*,<sup>1</sup> is written from the perspective of a man singing about his girlfriend, whom he characterizes as a *niña fresa*, which translates literally to “strawberry girl.” The first half of the song goes as follows:<sup>2,3</sup>

*Y esta va para todas aquellas que son como una  
chica que yo conozco...*

*Una novia yo tengo es muy linda  
y traviesa pero tiene un defecto  
es niña fresa es niña fresa*

*Cuando vamos al baile  
vamos varias parejas  
como ya la conocen  
llega el mesero y todos empiezan:*

CORO:

*Que le sirvan tepache, no no  
que le sirvan cerveza, no no  
que le sirvan refresco, no no  
o un helado sorpresa, no no*

And this one goes out to all of those ladies  
who are like one that I know...

A girlfriend, I have, who's very pretty  
and naughty but she has a flaw  
she's a *niña fresa* a *niña fresa*

When we go out to the dance  
several couples together  
since they already know her  
when the waiter comes they all begin:

CHORUS:

Do they serve her tepache? no no!  
Do they serve her some beer? no no!  
do they serve her a soft drink? no no!  
or an ice cream surprise? no no!

<sup>1</sup> The *Quebradita* is a lively dance style and movement performed by the rhythm of cumbia and Tejano style, associated with bandas sinaloense from the northern Mexican state of Sinaloa.

<sup>2</sup> Spanish lyrics by user |0kltª 18 () (n.d.); to hear the song and watch the music video go to [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i\\_YexVAD9xY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_YexVAD9xY)

<sup>3</sup> My translation on the right.

*Que es lo que quiere la nena  
que va a pedir la princesa  
que se le antoja a la reina  
que quiere la niña fresa*

NIÑA FRESA:

*Ash un banana split en buena onda no?*

*Que les dije*

What is it that the babe wants?  
what will the princess have?  
what is the queen in the mood for?  
what does the niña fresa want?

NIÑA FRESA:

Ash, a banana split *en buena onda* no?

What did I tell you!

The song describes a girl with picky taste who refuses to drink *tepache* (a fermented fruit and corn drink from Mexico), beer, a soft drink, or eat ice cream. Instead, we hear her say that she would like a banana split. The particular choice of words and manner of speaking that the female voice in the song embodies illustrate not only a particular discourse register but more generally a social type that by the mid-90's was widely known in Mexico: that of a *fresa*. In this paper, I will describe the semiotic register (Agha, 2007) of a *fresa* and sketch a general image of this Mexican model of personhood (Agha, 2007) along with its counterpart, a *naco*. Using examples from blogs, TV shows, images and other media, I provide a broad sketch of the discourse register and semiotic markers that could be described as *fresa* or *naco*. I will historicize these phenomena and speculate on their emergence by analyzing selected literary and journalistic writings. I conclude by tying these emblems to processes of racialization and discrimination in Mexico.

It would be impossible—and in fact, beside the point—to describe all the possible/potential semiotic markers that could be described as *fresa* or *naco*. Instead, what I wish to do in this paper is provide a sketch of these figures through a linguistic anthropological lens and point to their potential historical emergence and enregisterment. Although the wide recognition of these stereotypical characters seems to be somewhat recent (emerging in the 50s), a much more detailed historical and literary analysis would be needed to locate the emergence of these figures with more precision—what I present here is but a starting point. *Fresa* and *naco* are widely recognized terms that index emblematic figures of personhood within the Mexican imaginary, and provide material for a wide array of humorous and satiric interpretations and performances. Much of the linguistic and performative creativity and comedic genius of these instances indeed lies in animators' abilities to trope on these widely recognized personae. Analyzing these models of personhood with humor and satire aside however, points to a more disquieting social reality of incredible class differences that fall along racialized lines.

In the following sections, I begin with a discussion of the theoretical frame through which I examine these cultural stereotypes, followed by a sketch of the characterological figures of *fresas* and *nacos*, paying particular attention to the described manner of speaking of both, given that the defining features of both involve speech. I discuss how these concepts have been treated in the academic literature, then provide a sketch of these stereotypes through various media. I then provide a starting point for a discussion of the historical emergence of these figures and their rapid enregisterment and mediatization through literature and the media. I conclude by providing a broad picture of the sociohistorical context of Mexican society, its history of inequality, and how these processes of othering show a disquieting reality.

## Models of Personhood, Speaker Stereotypes, and Characterological Figures

Succinctly, *fresa* is a term used in Mexico that has come to denote a particular type of person: an upper class individual with a distinctive way of speaking and with particular attitudes towards others. In turn, *naco* often refers to the counterpart to *fresa*, someone of lower class with uneducated speech and lack of taste in dress, music, and other preferences. These are, of course, simplified definitions of a fascinating cultural phenomenon: the emergence in the mid-20th century of two distinct stereotypical figures that have evolved and continue to be present in the Mexican imaginary today. I am interested in the concepts of *fresa* and *naco* not as biographical individuals, or identity constructs, but as widely recognized stereotypical figures with an array of identifiable diacritics which comedians, authors, and interlocutors can perform and animate to a variety of interpretable effects. In other words, I examine *fresa* and *naco* as “image[s] of personhood that [are] performable through a semiotic display or enactment (such as an utterance)” (Agha, 2007, p. 177). *Fresas* and *nacos* are characterological figures because they can be enacted through stereotypical discourse registers. Agha (2007) elaborates on this point:

Once performed, the figure is potentially detachable from its current animator in subsequent moments of construal and re-circulation. When the social life of such figures is mediated by speech stereotypes, any animator can inhabit that figure by uttering the form [...] in a way intelligible to others acquainted with the stereotype. (p. 177)

Because these are characterological figures that can be enacted through speech, they are parodied and animated through different performances, media characters, and in everyday interactions through which interlocutors can convey particular footing or stances.

Throughout this analysis I will draw on the concept of semiotic register as a “repertoire of performable signs linked to stereotypic pragmatic effects” (Agha, 2007, p. 80). Registers become widely shared and recognized through the process of enregisterment, “whereby performable signs become recognized (and regrouped) as belonging to distinct, differentially valorized semiotic registers by a population” (p. 81). Furthermore, registers become enregistered within a social domain, or the group of people that recognize and interpret the register as such.

Thus, while the concepts of *fresa* and *naco* are widely shared among the mainstream Mexican society, they are also fluid, and their performance or enactment depends on the co-occurrence of an array of semiotic markers that are interpreted as *fresa* or *naco*. In other words, it does not make sense to describe people as out-group members or in-group members, or to describe someone as *naco* or *fresa* (even though such categorization is common), since aspects of *fresa* and *naco* are detachable, performable, and can take up different meanings in different contexts and when animated by different interlocutors. Not only that, particular interpretations of *naco* and *fresa* have social domains—groups of people acquainted with the stereotype and that will recognize the performance of a *fresa* or *naco* register as such. Furthermore, what one person may qualify as *fresa* or *naco* might differ from what another person would, and is just as indicative of that person’s position in the social hierarchy. The range of what behavior will be

labelled as *fresa* or *naco* and for whom varies not only by geographical location and social class but also by particularities of local contexts and importantly, age. In other words, these figures have changed over time, with new varieties emerging in the last couple of years. While not many scholars have examined this phenomenon in depth or at length, in the following section I review those that have.

### *Fresas and Nacos in the Academic Literature*

The concept of *fresa* has only recently begun to receive attention from scholars in interdisciplinary social scientific fields, some treating it as an identity construct in adolescence (Juárez, 2009; H. Mendoza, 2011); others defining it as a modern “urban tribe” similar to skaters, punks, and other identifiable youth identity groups (Feixa, 1998; Hernández, 2007); and a few linguists investigating it as a particular speech register (Martínez, 2014; H. Mendoza, 2011; Reyes Salinas, 2002).

In the anthropological literature on youth in Mexico, *fresas* appear as another identifiable *urban tribe*, along with many others. Feixa (1998) describes “*chavos fresa*,” (literally “strawberry youth”) as “jóvenes de clase media preocupados por la moda y el consumo, que se congregaban en las discotecas de la Zona Rosa” [middle class youth preoccupied with fashion and consumerism, that would congregate at the discotheques of the Zona Rosa] (p. 56). He defines them in opposition to *chavos banda* [gang youth], and each group, he notes, is located within a completely different social context, has different ways of dressing, taste in music, places of congregation, and type of activity they engage in: while *fresas* study, hang out in discotheques, dress according to the latest fashion, and follow anything considered American; *chavos banda* in contrast work or are unemployed, hang out on the corner of their working class neighborhoods, and reject anything deemed American vehemently. The author dates the emergence of these groups to the beginning of the 1980s. Along with these two social types, Feixa defines many others, including *pachucos*, *cholos*, *jipitecas*, *punketas*, *quinceañeras* and *machinas*—each their own social type. In a more recent article, Hernández (2007) lists some new Mexican youth identities, including *rockabilly*, *punks*, *skinheads*, *darks*, *emos*, among others. Interestingly, his description of *chavos banda* and *chavos fresa* remains the same as Feixa’s description. Also noteworthy is that the term *naco* is absent from Feixa’s (and Hernández’s) work—something I will take up in the section on historical emergence.

More recently, Urteaga and Ortega (2004) study of youth identities at a university campus of Mexico City, conducting an ethnographic exploration of how youth describe and categorize themselves and others around them at the private preparatory and university *Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey* in Mexico City, referred to as *el Tec*. Theorizing identities as fluid, heterogeneous, and specific to social, cultural, and spatio-temporal contexts, the authors examine what it means to be a young person on this campus, and specifically, what it means to be a *fresa* in this context. In particular, the authors find that consumer behavior plays a major role in the construction of youth identity, given that the most defining characteristics of *fresas* is the care they take in their physical appearance and over all, their high-end name brand clothing. Indeed, Urteaga and Ortega write that, “[i]n this superficial world, the clothing makes the person” (p. 127). Clothing of a particular brand marks the access to a certain lifestyle, and signals to others the

belonging to a particular kind of social circle. Along with dress and appearance, one of the most distinguishing features of fresas is their manner of speech, which the authors describe as mixing English and Spanish phrases, excessive use of discourse fillers and superlatives, and speaking as if “having a potato in the mouth” (p. 115). While the fresa identity is one out of several available identities at the Tec, it is hegemonic, in that it is the standard against which other groups define themselves. The authors explain:

“...bajo la etiqueta naco—que los fresas definen como alguien grosero, sin clase, de mal gusto, mal vestido, no combinado, fuera de moda—se esconde una diversidad de estilos juveniles en el Tec—pandros...hippies, oscuros, [...] nerds—con formas de sentir, pensar, vivir, y de imaginar las relaciones humanas y el mundo diferentes y hasta opuesto de los fresas. Esta diversidad minoritaria en el Tec comparte el adoptar selectivamente algunos elementos de la estética de las clases populares o de sectores alternativos para llenarlos de nuevos sentidos y usarlos como estrategia principal de identidad con la que pueden enfrentar en conjunto la violencia simbólica de la estética y estilo fresa.” (p. 127)

[Under the label of naco—that fresas define as someone who is ill mannered, without class, of bad taste, poorly dressed, and out of style—there is a diversity of youth styles at the Tec—pandros, hippies, oscuros [...] nerds—with forms of feeling, thinking, living, and imagining human relations and a world different and even opposite as that of fresas. This diverse minority at the Tec shares the selective adoption of some elements of the aesthetics of the popular classes or alternative sectors to fill them with new meanings and use them as a principal identity strategy with which they together can confront the symbolic violence of the fresa style and aesthetic.]<sup>4</sup>

Not only is the fresa identity hegemonic at the Tec, it is also hegemonic in a wider sense, since fresas at the Tec constitute part of the privileged sector of Mexican society. While this ethnographic study looked only at local constructions of identity of students at a particular private university institution, it is likely that some of the social practices in which students engage to perform and mark their belonging into particular social categories hold true for other spaces—particularly similar spaces, such as private university institutions.

Out of the ethnographic literature on youth culture in Mexico, the Urteaga and Ortega (2004) study is the only—to my knowledge—to focus solely on the construction of a fresa identity. However, a few language scholars have also taken note of the particular fresa register. Reyes Salinas (2002) conducted an exploratory study on identifying fresa and naco registers in Mexico City. Although Reyes Salinas uses the term *register*, he does so following the variationist tradition, understanding it from a different framework from the one I have presented here. In other words, Reyes Salinas seeks to map a particular way of speaking to a group of individuals categorically defined by class or social status. Thus, he uses the term *fresa* to stand for the register of high socioeconomic status individuals and *naco* for lower socioeconomic status individuals. The author does this hesitantly, noting that there is no perfect correlation between class and register, and that the terms *fresa* and *naco* are charged cultural concepts that index particular

<sup>4</sup> All English translations provided in square brackets are my own.

stereotypes. Nonetheless, at a loss for any other terms, the author uses these in his three-part pilot study. In the first part, the author identifies stereotypical *fresa* and *naco* characters on TV and radio shows. The second piece of his pilot includes an elicitation exercise, where fifteen individuals listened to two recordings—one of an individual male of high SES status and another individual male of the same age of lower SES status answering the same question—and responded to a survey asking which of the speakers would most likely engage in particular activities. The third part consisted of a survey associating certain phrases with either a *fresa* or a *naco*, with the phrases being taken from the recordings as well as from the media selections of part 1. While the small number of respondents and the methodology, particularly of the elicitation exercise, are somewhat problematic<sup>5</sup>, the results from the third survey demonstrate a recognition of certain lexicon as unequivocally characterizing *naco* or *fresa* ways of speaking. While no generalization can be made from the responses of only 14 people, at the very least it can be said that they belong to the social domain of individuals that make such associations, and it seems quite plausible that such domain is much larger.

Another linguist who has conducted research into the concept of the *fresa* register is Martínez (2014), who provides an analysis of the metapragmatic descriptions of a *fresa* register found on the internet, particularly as described and performed by those whom she calls “out-group members”. While Martínez provides a clear and meticulous description of the metapragmatic definitions and performances of a *fresa* style (some which I review below), her attribution of negative feelings towards *fresas* misses a larger point. The strong dislike expressed in these sites for *fresas*, Martínez argues, is related to the ways in which *fresas* are perceived to be highly influenced by American culture, not only in their ways of dressing but predominantly in their manner of speech, freely mixing English phrases with Spanish. Martínez attributes this rejection to a purist language ideology in Mexico concerning the use of Spanish and the negative feelings towards language mixing, particularly when the language to be mixed with is the language of the powerful northern neighbor, the United States. While I agree that some of the rejection towards *fresas* comes from a rejection of “a global mainstream and imperialism indexed by the use of English” (p. 9), I believe that the rejection of the *fresa* register is not so much a rejection of a particular style of speaking, but a rejection of a particular type of person—that of a privileged upper class individual, often with derisive attitudes towards others, who is highly influenced by American taste, fashion and music, and who is disdainful towards Mexican culture.

A more nuanced account of the complex nature of the *fresa* phenomenon is found in C. Mendoza’s (2011) sociolinguistic study of language, gender, and identity along the US-Mexico border. As part of her study, Mendoza analyses the most salient speech features of the ways of speaking of a network of middle and upper middle class university females: the discourse marker *así* in their speech; the non-adapted native-like use of English borrowings (using terms like *loser*, *cool*, *tipsy*, etc.); and the particular intonation patterns of these women. I quote Mendoza at length here for her incisive analysis of the *fresa* stereotype in relation to the

<sup>5</sup> The results of the TV / radio analysis are not presented in the text of the article, and the reasoning for choosing those particular TV and radio shows are not explained. There was also no explanation behind the questions chosen for the elicitation exercise, which at best, seemed to be a way to confirm the behavior stereotypes associated with working class and upper class individuals, as recognized by their way of speaking.

ways in which the young women in her study marked belonging and produced identities in fluid, multifarious, and complex ways:

The *niña fresa's* subjectivities involve not only gender but class and race as part of a model imposed by privileged social groups[...]Moreover, I suggest here that this current *fresa* identity differs from others conceived as hybrid, since this term connotes that there is an essentialized identity that originates from different predecessors. On the contrary, there seems to be a continuous formation and recreation of *identities of distinctiveness (fresa)* produced as performances combining particular elements; yet, each one of these identities get to be produced as a unique instance according to the combination of elements disposable at its particular moment of production. Thus, an individual might adopt some linguistic elements as well as other communicative devices (visual, aesthetic, body language, etc.), at a particular moment producing a particular identity act, and he/she could add a slight variant (or many) in his/her next intervention. (C. Mendoza, 2011, p. 155, emphasis in original)

Noteworthy here is the similarity with which C. Mendoza (2011) and I have described the ways in which people, in the course of interaction, can choose to embody elements that index particular personae—which is not necessarily limited to indexing only one social type. Furthermore, her term *identities of distinctiveness* is apt to describe the ways in which individuals semiotically mark belonging to an exclusive class. Thus the stereotypical image of a *fresa*, for which the marked manner of speaking is only part of a semiotic array, is part of a process of othering, of marking distances and approximations to others in a society of unequals.

Similar phenomena have been documented by Moore (2011) and Reyes (2012) in very different parts of the world: Ireland and the Philippines. The similarities between the social personae and speaker registers that they document to that of *fresas* and *nacos* are not only worth mentioning, but also point to social processes that might be occurring in similar ways in parts of the world with very different histories and sociocultural contexts. As part of a larger study on Irish accent culture, Moore analyzed the so-called D4 accent, one associated with upper class Dublin youth that derives its name from the zip code of an upper class residential zone. D4 accent is characterized as posh, snobbish, and as an attempt to sound more American-like. It is also an accent of second-order avoidance—one that was first born out of a desire to differentiate a speaker from rural and lower-class Irish speakers, but that is now avoided in its own right. Moore analyzes D4 as an ideological construct, using data of report, in both verbal and written form, looking at data from various textual and online sites devoted exclusively to reporting on people's speech, since "D4 is an accent that no one in Ireland would claim as their own" (p. 42). The emergence of the D4 accent is perceived as a phenomenon that went hand in hand with the economic growth Dublin experienced at the end of the 20th Century and beginning of the 21st. Because it is seen as a rejection of some forms of Irishness, and because it is associated with Western/American styles, much of the "moral panic" surrounding the D4 accent raises "fundamental questions about concepts of Irish personhood and the place in them of values of authenticity" (p. 50). This rejection of a national culture in favor of an American style is echoed in the *fresa/naco* antagonistic dichotomy.

Authenticity is also a central theme in Reyes's (2012) analysis of the anxieties surrounding a particular model of personhood in the Philippines, referred to as *conyo*, that, like *fresas* and *D4s*, is characterized by a particular way of speaking associated with young members of the upper class. Countless videos and parodies of *conyos* can be found on the internet, as it is a widely recognized form—as well as of *paconyos*, the term used for *conyo* wannabes. Reyes's analysis focuses on *the listening subject*, following Inoue (2006, as described in Reyes, 2012), and in the ways in which *conyos* are portrayed and stereotyped by an *excessiveness* and a *mixedness*, reflected in performances of *conyo* speech as a mixing of English and Tagalog, and an excessive use of discourse fillers, redundancies, and vowel elongations. Thus, Reyes attributes these “iconizations of ‘mixedness’ and ‘excessiveness’” to “a range of listener anxieties about nation, modernity, class and race” (p. 4, emphasis in original). One cannot miss the obvious similarities between the figures of *D4*, *conyos* and *fresas*: association with affluence and a way of speaking marking a distance from registers associated with lower classes; an association with westernization/ Americaness; something that is inauthentic and constructed, i.e., never labelled as a real or native accent; and something that is avoided, mocked, and mediatized. Moreover, *conyo* and *fresa* denote similar characteristics of excessiveness and mixedness in speech, as well as being racialized as white figures. That both the Philippines and Mexico were former Spanish colonies, and thus both share a colonial past, is another important similarity between these characterological figures. As Reyes states, “figures exist neither apart from listeners nor apart from the colonial histories, modern anxieties and racializing discourses that motivate such figures to be imagined in the first place” (p. 10). A deeper examination on the similarities between these separate geographical phenomena is indeed called for.

It is significant to note that at this point, very little attention has been paid to examining the *naco* cultural stereotype. Yet, there is a simple explanation to this: *nacos* can only be defined in opposition to *fresas*—and indeed, are defined *by* *fresas*. Often, a diacritic indexing *fresaness* is the simple use of the descriptor *naco*—as the term connotes a demeaning attitude, and a description of anything inferior to the superiority of the speaker. Thus, in a way, *naco* subsumes many other identity labels, as Urteaga and Ortega (2014) described—and can only exist in relation and opposition to *fresa*. Nonetheless, *nacos*—just like *fresas*—are extensively described, performed, and parodied all over the internet. In fact, Carlos Monsiváis, an important literary figure and journalist in Mexico, wrote about and had strong opinions on the concept of *nacos*, as I will review later in the paper. In the following section, I provide a sketch of *fresas* and *nacos* using material found online. The search was conducted in the spring of 2013. While there is an overwhelming and quite amusing amount of material found online on *fresas* and *nacos*, I chose to focus on definitions from sites that are based on user participation (such as *Wikipedia*, *Urban Dictionary*, etc.), as well as sites that give rich multimodal examples of these stereotypical figures.

### Fresas

In the lyrics from the song presented in the introduction, the *niña fresa* begins her sentence with “Ash,” which conveys annoyance and can be roughly

equivalent to *ugh* in English, and ends her request for a banana split with the expression “en buena onda, no?” The latter phrase is an idiomatic expression in Spanish that is polysemous. Literally “buena onda” translates to *good wave* and can mean something that is cool or that has a good vibe. It can describe a person or a situation, but it is also often used as a discourse marker without any particular denotational meaning, as in the case above. The girl who is asking for a banana split ends her request with this phrase as an indexical link to the emblem of a *niña fresa*. The rest of the verses of the *niña fresa* song provide more information on the various linguistic and non-linguistic markers that make up this social type:

NIÑA FRESA:

*Entonces un ice cream de perdida no?  
ash como me chocan estos lugares*

(CORO)

UN TEPACHITO

NIÑA FRESA:

*Tepache yo? que te pasa? para nada,  
uy que piñata  
y conste que no quiero  
hacer un oso ok?*

NIÑA FRESA:

*Then, an ice cream at least, ok?  
ugh, how I hate these places*

(CHORUS)

A TEPACHITO?

NIÑA FRESA:

*Me? Get a tepache? Of course not!  
wow what a piñata  
and take note that I don't  
want to make a scene, ok?*

In the first of the two verses above, the *niña fresa* goes on to order ice cream, using the English word “ice cream” instead of the Spanish word for it (*helado*). It is understood that a banana split was not available, thus her use of the phrase “de perdida no?” (understood as saying “at least, ok?”). There is a second instance of the filler “ash” to express annoyance at being at “these [sorts of] places”, conveying a tone of arrogance and haughtiness. In the final verse of the song, the *niña fresa* is offered the Mexican drink *tepache* (in the diminutive form *tepachito*), to which she vehemently refuses. In the last line of the verse there is another idiomatic expression that is often associated with *fresas*: saying “un oso,” which literally means *a bear*, to mean an embarrassing situation (which in this case I have translated as “making a scene”). The beginning utterance to express annoyance “Ash,” the phrases “en buena onda, no?”, “hacer un oso [how embarrassing],” *de perdida* [at least], “que te pasa [what’s wrong with you],” and the distinctive phonological and prosodic elements of the way these utterances are produced together have the composite effect of indexing the *fresa* social type. This song illustrates that by the mid 1990s, *fresa* had become a social type widely recognized by her manner of speaking. But not only that; the register also conveys a series of attitudes or dispositions, namely, that of a person who is arrogant towards particular types of people and places (most commonly these types of people are *nacos*, explained below), who speaks with a distinctive intonation and with specific recognizable discourse markers, who uses English phrases and American English pronunciation, and who prefers a foreign or American product (the banana split) over a Mexican one (*tepache*).

Even though this song was popular in the ‘90s, the dispositions and ways of speaking embodied by the *niña fresa* still hold for general understandings of the term today, even though there is great variability in how the behaviors that

come to be typified as *fresa* have evolved over time and in specific regions. In the terminology used by Agha (2007), *fresa* has become a *meta-sign*, or a sign that encompasses other signs, “which motivates a likeness among objects within its semiotic range” (p. 22). Thus, these “objects” or *object-signs* can include anything from gestures, to ways of speaking, to using certain jargon, to wearing certain clothes, etc. The types of object-signs that have come to typify the social persona of a *fresa* are very diverse, which include but are not limited to speech, dress, musical and artistic tastes, possessions and consumer behavior, frequenting particular places for entertainment and leisure, playing certain sports, attending certain schools, having attitudes towards others and more. Thus, the semiotic range of the object-signs grouped under the meta-sign *fresa* is quite wide.

The most common association with the social persona typified as *fresa* is high social class or economic status and the privileges that accompany this social position; for example, attending private schooling institutions, driving expensive cars, wearing expensive clothing, owning vacation homes, extensive international travel, being fluent in English and other languages, etc. The specifics within each of these categories will vary depending on the generation or age group and locale; yet there are some that seem to remain constant over time and across places—for example, institutions of higher education such as El Tecnológico de Monterrey and La Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City. One of the most famous TV comedic characters from the 1980s was El Pirruris, personified by the well-known comedian Luis de Alba in his TV variety show, where he played a variety of other characters. El Pirruris was *El chico de la Ibero* [the young man from the Ibero]—referring to the private and expensive Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City. He epitomizes the *junior*, an earlier variant of the *fresa* which refers to the wealthy young boy living off of his father’s wealth. El Pirruris speaks like a *fresa*, with the typical intonation patterns (like having a potato in your mouth), discourse markers (using *osea*, *ves*, etc.), and most importantly, has a derogatory attitude towards anyone or anything deemed *naco*. Thus, as a character, El Pirruris embodies the most extreme aspects of the *fresa* emblem of personhood, and indeed the term *Pirrirus* itself has become a meta-sign of its own to denote similar object-signs subsumed under the term *fresa*. I will return to a discussion of this famous comedian towards the conclusion, when I touch upon issues of classism and racism in Mexico.

Aside from the embodiment of a *fresa* in the character of El Pirruris, there is a plethora of definitions and satiric depictions of *fresas* that abound on the Internet, on both English and Spanish language sites. There were 17 definitions for the concept of *fresa* in *Urban Dictionary* (as of 2013), a site that allows users to provide definitions that are voted by others with a thumbs up or down. Below are the first two:

1. *fresa*  
preppy prep conceited rich stuck up
  1. a preppy person called “Fresa” is a social term used in Mexico, not all latin america. It is “Mexican slang”.
  2. Fresa’s are usually stuck up, have expensive clothes, cars, are usually middle high or high class, and talk different than everyone else. Like in every other country there are pseudo-fresas, those who pretend to be preppy but aren’t.

3. Anyone above middle class in Mexican society is born cursed to be a Fresa

4. Fresa also means Strawberry in Spanish

(Ally, 2005)

2. fresa

opposite of *naco*; a Mexican slang word used to describe disgustingly rich, preppy stuck up Mexicans with blonde highlights who usually are the offspring of rich Mexican political figures; *fresas* like to start each sentence with “*osea guey*”; *fresas* take over San Antonio, TX during Easter and Christmas and make a mess at all of the malls and Ross stores.

(Lissymtzip, 2008)

Thus, in these two definitions not only is social class apparent, but a particular attitude, that of being stuck up, seems to be a prominent aspect. *Wikipedia* defines *fresa* as

a slang term often used in Mexico to describe a cultural stereotype of superficial youngsters who many come from a high class and educated family. The word was originally and highly used by teenagers and young adults between the ages of 13 and 20, but nowadays is used by people of all ages (up to their 60's). (Fresa, n.d.c)

While the entries in *Urban Dictionary* seem to be describing actual people, the *Wikipedia* entry makes explicit the description as a cultural stereotype. The *Wikipedia* entry also offers an analysis of sociolinguistic use as well as examples of *fresas* as portrayed in Mexican popular media, including characters in *telenovelas* (soap operas) and films. Two spoofs on *Wikipedia* in Spanish, titled *Inciclopedia* and *Frikipedia*, also have substantial accounts of *fresas*. Similar to the *Wikipedia* article, these sites go on at length to describe different aspects of the social persona of a *fresa*, including a list of common phrases, popular brands, leisure activities, etc. In line with the tone of the sites, these articles are written in satire and often appropriate some of the *fresa* forms of speaking. One of these entries begins with the following quote:

*O sea, me caen mal, ¿qué te pasa we? O sea, Jeloouuuuu, no puedo soportar a esas personas llamadas fresas, que pinten un bosque y se pierdan ¿nooooo?*

— Fresa sobre Los Fresas

[I mean, like I don't like them, what's wrong with you, dude? I mean, helllooooo, I can't stand those people called *fresas*, they can go paint a forest and get lost, no?

— A Fresa on Fresas]

(Fresa, n.d.b)

The humor of this quote comes from its embodiment of a *fresa* register while claiming to not be able to stand ‘such people called *fresas*’. Because the term *fresa*

could be used to negatively evaluate someone's behavior or attitude as snobbish, it is not unusual to try to deny such a label, in a similar fashion in which D4 accent in Dublin is avoided, even while paradoxically embodying it in the utterance of avoidance, as described by Moore (2011). This quote also illustrates the important role this manner of speaking plays in the marking of a *fresa* identity; in other words, even though ways of speaking are a fragment of a larger semiotic array that indexes this persona, discursive behavior or speech is the most important indexical of the *fresa* emblem. The manner of speaking of a *fresa* has been colloquially described as having a "potato in your mouth," and includes elongating the vowels in the last syllable of certain words.

A good example of a *fresa* manner of speaking is illustrated in the *fresa* version of the Catholic prayer of Our Father, posted by YouTube user kld847 (2006). The same distinctive discourse markers previously listed for the *fresa* register appear prominently in this prayer, including "osea [like]," "nada que ver [of course not]," "¿que te pasa? [what's wrong with you?]," "vales mil [you're worth a ton/a million]," "que oso [what bear?/how embarrassing!]," and phrases in English such as "losers" and "never change." More exhaustive lists of common words and phrases are also found online. Much like in the *niña fresa* song, an arrogant attitude towards others is also conveyed in the Our Father prayer, as the following excerpts illustrate:<sup>6</sup>

1. *Bendice a mi projimo, a mi papi, a mi mami, a los malacopa, al niño que me gusta, a los mataditos, y a todo el proletariado, nacos, cholos, feos, pelusa, gatiza, chusma, perrada e indiada, etc. etc. ¡que me rodean!!!*

[Bless my neighbor, my daddy, my mommy, the drunkies, the boy that I have a crush on, the little nerds, and all the rest of the proletariat: *nacos*, *cholos*, the ugly, *pelusa*, *gatiza*, *chusma*, *perrada*, and *indiada*, etc. etc. that surround me!!!]

2. *Para nada dejes, osea, porfis porfis que se me pegue lo naco, enseñame a ser tan nice como tu!!!*

[Please pretty please do not for anything let the *naco* rub off on me, show me how to be so nice/cool like you!!!]

In the first excerpt, the *niña fresa* specifically prays for important people in her life, and in the end includes the "proletariat" and goes on to list the social groups that constitute it, the first of which is, of course, the *nacos*. All the other terms in that list are idiomatic expressions to arrogantly denote a group of people that is below the speaker. In the last excerpt, the *niña fresa* prays that above all, she does not want the *naco* to rub off on her.

### Nacos

As is illustrated in the examples above, a majority of the metapragmatic descriptions and satiric performances of the image of a *fresa* describe it as the opposite to the persona of the *naco*. In fact, parodies of these social types are often found to co-exist, as in the online cartoon animation "Naco y Fresa," created in 2006 by YouTube user *nacoyfresa*. It consists of four short episodes depicting

<sup>6</sup> For a full transcript see Appendix A.

two young men, one *naco* and one *fresa*, talking about the same topic or activity. The first episode, titled “El i-Pos,” is about the iPod of both characters. The *fresa* describes how his “daddy” recently bought him the newest model, after which he promptly threw away the old one. Then the *naco* continues the story by saying he found an iPod nano (*nano* refers to a particular model of the iPod) in the trash, and relates how at first he was unfamiliar with the device but then with the help of his “compadre”<sup>7</sup> was able to figure it out. The title “El i-Pos” is both a play on words and the way the *naco* refers to the iPod. Part of the stereotype of the *naco* persona involves not speaking or pronouncing Spanish correctly. At the same time, part of the *naco* register is pronouncing words such as “pues” (translated as *then, well*, or a discourse filler such as *um*) as “pos,” which is also characterized as an uneducated way of speaking. Thus, the title “El i-Pos” is both an illustration of the *naco*’s poor Spanish and mirrors how a *naco* would pronounce the words “y pues [and then].” Not only that, the *naco* character pronounces the words iPod nano as “ipos enano”—adding the Spanish vowel *e* to *nano*, forming the word *enano*, meaning midget. Below is a transcript of the first part of the dialogue:

The *fresa*:

Ósea que onda? yo súper vess, ósea papi me acaba de comprar el nuevo iPod con video, y ósea, no inventes! Esta súper mega fashion, vess? ósea, ahora además de que yo pueda oír a Mickey, ósea a Luis Miguel como le dicen los nacos, no? uff ósea también puedo ver sus videos. no> ósea buena onda. lo único que si hice fue tirar a la basura inmediatamente el iPod nano que tenía ves? ósea imagínate llegar con mis amigos, y que me vean con un modelo anterior, ósea uff que oso. es un modelo que había salido ya hace dos semanas. **That’s so yesterday** vesss?

[Like, what’s up? I’m super, like, my daddy just bought me the new iPod with video, and like, no joke! Its super mega fashion, riight? Like, now, aside from being able to listen to Mickey, or Luis Miguel like the *nacos* say, like I can also see his videos! Like super cool. The only thing I did right away was to throw my iPod nano in the trash, riight? Like can you imagine going up to my friends and have them see me with the old model? Uff, that’s so embarrassing, I mean that model was from two weeks ago. **That’s soo yesterday, riight?**]

The *naco*:

no pos yo ya tengo el nuevo ipos enano, ta bien boniito, pues es, al principio yo, pues yo no sabia que era, porque me lo encontré en un bote de basura entonces dije ah pos mira es el nuevo nientiendo, no, que chiiido, ahora si ya voy a poder jugar al super bro’s. y todo eso no, pero me dice mi compadre que no, que no es el super bros, que es el iPos, que para escuchar música digital, y le digo ay que chiiido, no, para poder escuchar ahora si a banda machos y a Rigo Tovar y la banda azul.

[no well, I have the new ‘ipos midget’, is real preeetty, well, is, in the beginning I, well, I didn’t know what it was, because I found it in the trash then I said, ohhh well look is the new nintendo, no hooow cool, now I can go play super [mario] bro’s and all that. But no, my compadre says that no, its not for super bros, that is for listening to digital music, and I

<sup>7</sup> *Compadre* is a kinship term in Spanish used in Mexico to denote the person who is the godfather of one’s children, but could also be used to refer to a very close friend.

say ohhhh how cool, no, well so I can now go listen to Banda Machos and Rigo Tovar and the Blue Band]



Figure 1. A still from the Naco y Fresa episode “El i-Pos” (nacoyfresa, 2006).

In Figure 1, the young man on the right illustrates many features of the *fresa* register that have been described above. The character that personifies the *naco* register, on the other hand, is often metapragmatically described as low class and uneducated, particularly in his way of speaking. This excerpt illustrates some of the discourse markers and phrases of a *naco* register:

- Adding *-s* to end of verbs conjugated in 2nd-person singular when there is none, for example, *entendistes* instead of *entendiste* (did you understand)
- Omitting the first letter in certain words, as in *'ira* instead of *mira* (look)
- Pronouncing words with an initial *f* with the consonant *j*, particularly for the conjugated forms of the verb *ir* [to go] (*fui* → *juí* [I went], *fuimos* → *juimos* [we went] etc)
- Not pronouncing all the vowels in certain words, for example saying *pos* for the word *pues* [then]
- Using phrases such as *que chido* [how cool], *ansina* [like this], among others

Not only are the ways of speaking of these two cartoons different, but also their ways of dressing, the music they listen to, and other semiotic accompaniments. For example, the *naco* character is portrayed as wearing a backwards cap, a soccer jersey, having slight traces of facial hair, and with a poster of a fictional *ranchera* band (but alluding to the real band Banda Machos). The *fresa* is wearing sunglasses, a buttoned down collar shirt, a blazer, and sunglasses. He wears his new iPod and is standing in front of a poster depicting a rock musical group, most likely alluding to Maná. The *naco* in the storyline is the one who picks up the *fresa*'s old iPod from the trash and doesn't seem to understand how to use it or what it is for.

Like the concept of *fresa*, *naco* as a meta-sign has come to typify a wide range of perceivable objects and behaviors. These include being low class, speaking Spanish in ways that are deemed incorrect and incorporate many of the phrases listed above, unfamiliarity with technology, inability to speak or pronounce English correctly, a preference for Mexican products, music, food, and entertainment, among others. Some of the ways *nacos* are metapragmatically defined online are the following:

Naco (fmn. naca) is a pejorative word often used in [Mexican Spanish](#) to describe the bad-mannered and poorly educated people of lower social classes. It doesn't have a direct equivalent in American English and culture, although the term 'redneck' is somewhat similar.[1]A naco is usually associated with lower socio-economic classes and/or the [indigenous](#), but it also includes the [nouveau-riche](#).

(Naco, n.d.b)

1. naco  
[Mexico](#)-Maybe from "Totonaca", a Mexican tribe of the Pre-Columbian era-  
 Classless, pretentious, obtrusive, the Mexican version of white trash. Mostly blue-collar undereducated people, but can be applied even to a wealthier crowd (nouveaux riches, snob). They're characterized for having no respect for others. Their only source of information is television. Males usually are truly soccer fans and females are telenovelas (soaps) fans. Most *nacos* like to name their sons with anglo-saxon names. It may be used as an adjective for both persons and objects.  
 "El Kevin cree que poniendole neon a su coche va a ser mas rapido, se ve bien naco."  
 "Kevin thinks that neon lights on his car will make it faster, it looks so naco."

(smpdigital, 2004)

In fact, there are several websites dedicated to depicting *nacos* (for example [www.nacos.com](#) and [www.quenaco.com](#)). Just a brief glance at these websites illustrates the indefinite amount of diacritics that are grouped under the term *naco*. Figure 2, for example, even provides an analysis of the ways in which the man portrayed in the picture is a *naco*. The caption under this picture reads (my translation):

This character was traveling on public transportation while wearing his entire collection of jewelry, which he got from a cereal box, and not content with that, he was also carrying the keys and alarm for his Volkswagen (which if he had why was he on public transport?) and as if that wasn't enough he was showing off his two cell phones from the dollar store. ([www.quenacos.com](#))

Table 1 sketches and summarizes these emblematic models of personhood in Mexico. The specific diacritics that may co-occur in text to index this social persona will vary from locale to locale and from generation to generation; nonetheless, the general concept has remained fairly stable across a very wide social domain.



Figure 2. Image illustrating an example of a *naco* with explanations for various accessories and articles of clothing he is wearing.<sup>8</sup>

### Historicizing the *Naco* and *Fresa* Emblems

In the dictionary of the *Real Academia Española*, the word *fresa* appears defined only in terms of its reference to the fruit. The word *naco*, on the other hand, is defined as an adjective used in Mexico which means “Indio or indígena [Indian or indigenous person],” and in parenthesis it is indicated to perhaps come from the word *Totonaco*, the name for a pre-Columbian indigenous group (*Naco*, n.d.a). In Alisky’s (2008) *Historical Dictionary of Mexico*, *naco* appears defined as “a slang term with a connotation similar to that of *lepero*” (p. 360). In turn, *lepero* is defined as “a slang term applied to someone who is uncouth and vulgar (or, in the many jokes of which *lepero* is the butt, merely stupid)” (p. 301). In fact, written record of the term *naco* dates back to 1895, when it appeared in a document titled *Diccionario de Mejianismos* [Dictionary of Mexican sayings]. This document defines *naco* as a term from Tlaxcala (a southern Mexican State) meaning “Indio vestido de algodón azul, calzoncillos blancos i guaraches. Naco, en otomí, significa cuñado. [Indian dressed in blue cotton, white underpants/pants and sandals. Naco, in otomí, means brother-in-law]” (Ramos I Duarte, 1895).

The fact that *naco* originates as a word denoting an indigenous person and has become enregistered to mean someone of low-class is no accident. Instead, I claim that it is part of the legacy of colonialism and the sociohistorical process of domination that have unfolded in Mexico for the past two centuries. In a piercingly critical article on racism in Mexico, Carlos Monsiváis (1998), one of the most prominent writers, critics, and intellectuals in Mexico and Latin America, places the *naco* as the successor of the *pelado* and *lépero*, another two derogatory terms used in Mexico City in the 19th and first half of the 20th Century. Monsiváis locates the term *lépero* as the first racist stereotype that originated in Mexico City in the 19th century to describe indigenous people who would wander the city streets “with his half-nakedness and ignorance” (1998, p. xvii). This is consistent with the definition given by Alinsky (2008). He places the *pelado* as its successor or coeval, then describes how this character was transformed to a comic characterological

<sup>8</sup> Image retrieved from [www.quenacos.com](http://www.quenacos.com)

Table 1  
Selected Features of Fresa and Naco Discourse Registers and Stereotypes

		Discourse Register				
	Metapragmatic descriptions of speech style	Lexicon/ common phrases	Prosodic features	Other features of discourse	Speaker Stereotypes	Associated Terms
<i>fresa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Speaking with a potato in your mouth" (colloquial expression)</li> <li>• "Sing songy" (colloquial expression)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>que onda</i></li> <li>• <i>osea</i></li> <li>• <i>güey</i></li> <li>• <i>si sabes</i></li> <li>• <i>super cool</i></li> <li>• <i>fashion</i></li> <li>• <i>vales mil</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elongating vowels and consonants at the end of words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using English phrases</li> <li>• Pronouncing English with an American accent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snobbish attitude towards others</li> <li>• Arrogant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>junior (m)</i></li> <li>• <i>pirruris (m)</i></li> <li>• <i>mirrey (m)</i></li> <li>• <i>lobuki (f)</i></li> </ul>
<i>naco</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uneducated speech</li> <li>• Incorrect pronunciations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>que chido</i></li> <li>• <i>no manches</i></li> <li>• <i>ansina</i></li> <li>• <i>ira</i></li> <li>• <i>chale</i></li> <li>• <i>carnal</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elongation of syllables at the beginning of the word or phrase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not using English correctly or using heavily accented Spanish pronunciation</li> <li>• Adding -s to 2nd-person singular verb endings</li> <li>• Omitting or modifying the first consonant in certain words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low class, uneducated, poor</li> <li>• Ignorant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>indio/a</i></li> <li>• <i>pelado (m)</i></li> <li>• <i>lépero (m)</i></li> </ul>

figure through the character of *Cantinflas*, one of the most loved and well-known cultural symbols of Mexican folklore and humor. Monsiváis claims the term *naco* to have already been circulating by the 1950's in Mexico City, as a term to allude to those people with indigenous phenotypical features "which the mixtures [alluding to the mestizos as mixtures of Spanish and Indigenous] don't seem to dissipate" (1998, p. vxiii, my translation).

In fact, in his 1969 chronicle of a concert of three well-known pop bands of the time (Union Gap, the Byrds, and los Hermanos Castro), Monsiváis (1973) already includes *nacos* and *fresas* in his description of three distinct groups of young people: *La Onda*, *La Naquiza*<sup>9</sup>, and *Los Fresas*. *La Onda* he describes as the hippies, dressed in jeans and admirers of rock 'n' roll. He describes *nacos* in the following way:

*Naco, dentro de este lenguaje de discriminación a la mexicana, equivale a proletario, lumpenproletario, pobre, sudoroso, el pelo grasiento y el copete alto, el perfil de cabeza de Palenque, vestido a la moda de hace seis meses, vestido fuera de moda o simplemente cubierto con cruces al cuello o maos de doscientos pesos.* (Monsiváis, 1973, p. 120)

[*Naco*, within that language of discrimination Mexican style, is equal to the proletariat, the lumpenproletariat, poor, sweaty, greasy hair and tall bangs, profile of a Palenque head, dressed to the fashion of six months ago, dressed out of style or simply covered with cheap crosses or maos hanging from his neck.]

To this description, which goes on for several more lines, he adds that "*Naco es el insulto que una clase dirige a otra* [*Naco* is an insult that one class directs at another]" yet that no one believes applies to them. In fact, in subsequent writings Monsiváis speculates why people in Mexico City begin to love the character of El Pirruris, mentioned above. El Pirruris, even though he personifies a *junior*, a version of the ultimate *fresa* boy that lives off his father's fortune, makes *nacos* the butt of all his jokes. El Pirruris often refers to himself as an anthropologist of *nacos* who studies their ways of life, and hosts TV shows titled "*Naconal Geographic*" and "*Nacoverly Channel*" as spoofs of *National Geographic* and *Discovery Channel*. A complete analysis of this character's discourse is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to mention, especially when considering the following excerpts from Monsiváis' chronicle of a *Pirruris* show in Mexico City:

*¿Por qué es tan eficaz este humor violento? ¿De dónde viene la risa unánime de los presentes y millones de ausentes? [...] Del poder paralizante de la voz naco que en última y primera instancia no designa conducta sino fisonomía? [...] Lo que son las cosas en este país de la igualdad: la parodia del niño bien no recae sobre él sino sobre su víctima.* (Monsiváis, 1988, p. 340)

[Why is this violent humor so effective? Where is the unanimous laughter of all those present and the million absent come from? [...] From the paralyzing power of the *naco* voice that in the first and last instance doesn't designate conduct but instead physical appearance? [...] How things are in this country of equality: the parody of the *preppy boy* doesn't fall on himself but on his victim]

<sup>9</sup> *La Naquiza* refers to a large group gathering of people who could be considered *nacos*.

Indeed, Monsiváis points to something that quickly becomes obvious when sifting through images of people that have been characterized as *fresas* or *nacos*: *fresas* phenotypically are depicted as light-skin and European descendant, while *nacos* are darker skinned, closer to indigenous phenotypes. Monsiváis succinctly and poignantly states why parodies of these cultural types not only go hand in hand, but are troubling: “La parodia del niño bien no recae sobre él sino sobre su víctima [the parody of the *preppy boy* doesn’t fall on himself but on his victim].” In other words, the parody of a *junior*, in the case the character Pirruris, becomes a vehicle for making fun of whomever or whatever this character deems *naco*. Given the social disparities that exist in Mexico, and the assumptions about who is or can be—and who is not and cannot be—*fresa* or *naco*, this is a troubling situation. I will return to this important distinction in the concluding section.

Even though Monsiváis is one of the few literary-journalistic figures of the time who explicitly writes about the images of personhood that *naco* and *fresa* denote, these emblems were already present in literature of the late 60s and 70s. In fact, the literary movement that has come to be known as *La Onda*, the same term Monsiváis uses to describe the young hippies of Mexico City, emerged around that same time. Indeed, the young group of men described to belong to this literary wave would have been considered hippies, and their writing style has been compared to the Beat writers. Explicit references to *nacos* and *fresas* do appear in the works of certain writers of *La Onda*. For example, Parménides García Saldaña explicitly mocks *fresas* in his work *Pasto Verde* (1968/2011) by describing them eating dinner with white gloves. At the same time in his writings emerge characters from middle class backgrounds that speak in ways that I have described as distinctive of the *fresa* register. For example, in one of the short stories in *El Rey Criollo* (1987/1997), one girl talks to her boyfriend over the phone as follows: “Aich, oye así hablo, como quieres que hable? [Ugh, that’s the way I talk how do you want me to speak?]” (p. 18). As noted above, “Aich” is the same realization of what was aforementioned as “Ash,” conveying a tone of annoyance.

These cursory remarks on how these models of personhood were already emerging in the literature of the 60s and 70s are to illustrate the processes of enregisterment that were underway at the time. Additionally, they show how these highly classed social persona are emerging in the writings of those who are most critical of these social asymmetries in society. Paradoxically, however, the fact that these young writers controlled both registers of speech and were able to embody it in their literary works reveals their own social position: in other words, for one to be able to personify either a *fresa* or *naco* register, one must already occupy at least a middle class position in society in order to be fluent, so to speak, and be able to command the registers at opposite ends of the social spectrum (Agha, 2007).

In fact, part of the defining characteristic of the writers of *La Onda* was their desire to break away from the traditional norms of literature of the time through using language in distinctive ways, and also sought to provide a critique of the society around them through their use of language (Glantz, 1976). Nonetheless, as critic Glantz points out:

*El lenguaje de la onda implica una crítica social, pero la posición de quienes la ejercen demuestra claramente que la clase social de los jóvenes es ambigua como tal y que las diferencias de clase siguen marcándose. ¿Podría ser de otro modo?*

*La pertenencia a un grupo mundial los identifica. La pertenencia a una clase específica los desidentifica...[...]El albur ha pasado a la onda, se ha extendido, pero la clase social que lo produjo permanece en Tepito, en el barrio marginado, y las contradicciones sociales no se borran al adoptar el idioma. (p. 102)*

[The language of *la onda* implies a social critique, but the position of those who bring it about clearly demonstrates that social class in itself is ambiguous and that class differences continue to be marked. Could it be any other way? Belonging to a worldwide group identifies them. Belonging to a specific social class misidentifies them...[...]The pun has passed to *la onda*, it has been extended, but the class that produced it remains in *Tepito*<sup>10</sup>, in the marginalized barrio, and the social contradictions are not erased just by adopting the language]

A more extensive literary analysis of the writings of that time would reveal a more complete picture of the social personae that were emerging and could provide interesting opportunities to theorize the enregisterment and wide circulation through mass media of these characterological figures of personhood, processes in which radio and television no doubt played a major role. While I focused more attention on the emergence of the term *naco*, the emergence of the characterological figures of *naco* and *fresa* necessarily go hand in hand. Popular media such as radio shows, TV shows, and telenovelas, as well as literary and journalistic texts of the last half of the 20th century, provide rich, vast material for anyone interested in tracing the emergence, development, and increasing diversity in the performance of these two stereotypical figures. Not only is this analysis but a brief glimpse<sup>11</sup> of a rich yet largely unexamined cultural phenomenon, it is already dated—new versions of these cultural stereotypes have emerged, and with them, countless parodies. The most recent version of the ultimate male *fresa*, the ultimate *junior*, product of elitist reproduction of class and political privilege, is the *mirrey*. Already portrayed in recent Mexican films, and with several journalistic articles and satires circulating the internet, the *mirrey* figure has defined ways of dressing, acting, and speaking. In fact, current Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto, is considered the ultimate *mirrey*—along with Mexican telenovela heartthrob from the 1980s, Roberto Palazuelos, and superstar singer Luis Miguel. The *mirrey*, however, would require an analysis in its own right.

## Conclusion

The terms *fresa* and *naco* as meta-signs can be used as adjectives to describe things, behaviors, people, or dispositions. At the same time, they can also be used as nouns to denote an image of a social type. As I have shown in this paper, they provide an infinite amount of material to be parodied that is done quite successfully in the hands of many creative authors and savvy-improvising interlocutors. Not all instances or enactments of the detachable pieces of this semiotic register will necessarily index or highlight the stereotypical racialized persona that Monsiváis so forcefully critiqued. Nonetheless, the stereotypical images of *fresas* and *nacos* are highly racialized and classified, and they point to a disturbing reality in Mexico,

<sup>10</sup> A lower class well-known neighborhood in Mexico City

<sup>11</sup> Another important source for the analysis, particularly of the emergence of the figures of *fresas*, is journalist Guadalupe Loaeza's best-selling novels, *Las Niñas Bien*, [The Nice Girls] published in 1985 and *Las Reinas de Polanco* [The Queens of Polanco], published in 1986.

a country of consistent and wide-ranging inequalities. Consider the following facts, from a recent Oxfam México (2015) report:

- Mexico is among the top 25% of countries in the world with widest inequality, and of the among the top two with the highest inequality of the OECD countries
- The top 1% of the population of Mexico earns 21% of its total income, compared to other countries, where the top 1% of earners' income stay at around 10% of total income
- In 2002, the fortune of the four richest Mexicans represented 2% of the GDP; by 2014, that number rose to 9%
- 10% of people in Mexico concentrate about 65% of the country's total wealth; while 53.3 million people live in poverty
- The indigenous populations have a poverty rate four times higher than the general rate: 38% of the indigenous population live in extreme poverty, compared to 10% of the total population living in extreme poverty

In other words, over the last decade, in Mexico, the richer are getting richer, and the poorer are getting poorer. The Oxfam report attributes this widening inequality to poor and ineffective social policies, to fiscal policies that privilege the already privileged, to the lack of educational and labor opportunities, and especially in the case of women and indigenous populations, to discrimination and violence caused by marginalization. Given this stark reality, the raced, classed, and gendered figures of *fresa* and *naco*, and their derivatives, form part of a process of interactional othering, of marking belonging to or exclusion from elitist sectors of a highly unequal society. Consider Figure 3, an image which appeared in parodist supplement to the journal *El Milenio*, titled “El Pasón”:



Figure 3. Satiric image from El Pasón that circulates in various blogs.

The caption reads: “In Mexico there is no racism. Said this *pinche*<sup>12</sup> *naco*.” This image is simultaneously uproarious and critical of Mexican society. It circulates on the Internet through various blogs (I found it in at least ten), yet its provenance is mentioned in only one, written by a Mexican journalist. On this image she had the following commentary:

*Hace una década, el escritor, guionista, locutor de radio, periodista y pionero de la movida tapatía Luis Usabiaga, realizó un performance gráfico en la sección “El Pasón, periodismo fumable” publicada los viernes en el Diario Milenio. Lo notable del performance, consistía en mostrar una foto de un hombre con marcado aspecto indígena y bigote estilo “Cantinflas”, bajo el siguiente titular: “En México no existe el racismo, comentó este pinche naco”. Usabiaga había bosquejado con diez palabras, la maqueta de la discriminación imperante en nuestra chabacana cultura popular, que aunque se niegue, la mayoría de nosotros practica. (Pacheco, 2011)*

[More than a decade ago, the writer, screenwriter, radio host, journalist and pioneer of the Tapatia move Luis Ubiaga realized a graphic performance in the Friday section of the Diario Milenio, “El Pasón, journalistic satire”. What was notable about this performance consisted in showing a photograph of a man with marked indigenous features and mustache *Cantinflas* style, under the caption: “In Mexico there is no racism, commented this *pinche naco*”. Usabiaga had sketched with ten words, the landscape of discrimination that rules our popular culture, that even when it is denied, the majority of us practice.]

Most people cannot help but laugh at the irony of this image—yet discomfort soon settles in the place of laughter. In Mexico there is a saying that goes, “entre broma y broma, la verdad se asoma” [in between jokes the truth rears its head]. This saying seems applicable not only to the image above, but also to the many comic instances described in this paper.

### *Acknowledgements*

I would like to thank Heejin Kim for her feedback, her patience, and her enthusiasm while helping me edit this paper, the anonymous reviewer for her helpful feedback and suggestions, as well as Mark Lewis for his careful ojo and insightful comentarios. Osea, gracias Mark. I am also indebted to Rob Moore for his excitement and encouragement to begin developing these ideas back in 2013 during his sociolinguistics course, and to Angie Reyes for giving such a rich, illuminating talk on *conyos* at AAAL in 2013, where the idea to write about *fresas* was first born. To all my ELX friends and colleagues, simply for being the cool people I get to share my ideas with, and finally—Estimado, porque las platicas con uste siempre son iluminadoras. All shortcomings in this paper are mine alone.

Sofía Chaparro ([sofiach@gse.upenn.edu](mailto:sofiach@gse.upenn.edu)) is a doctoral student in educational linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania. Originally from the border between United States and Mexico, her researcher interests converge around language practices and language ideologies in bi- and multilingual educational settings.

<sup>12</sup> An offensive word meaning *stupid*

## References

- l(ò)k!tª 18. (n.d.). Letra 'La Niña Fresa' [Lyrics for 'La Niña Fresa']. In *Musica.com*. Retrieved April 16, 2016 from <http://www.musica.com/letras.asp?letra=849686>
- Agha, A. (2007). *Language and social relations*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Alisky, M. (2008). *Historical dictionary of Mexico*. Lanham, MA: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- Ally. (2005, January 5). fresa. In *Urban Dictionary*. Retrieved April 30, 2013 from <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=fresa>
- Feixa, C. (1998). El reloj de arena: Culturas juveniles en México [The hourglass: Youth cultures in Mexico]. Mexico City, Mexico: SEP, Causa Joven.
- Fresa. (n.d.a). In *Inciopedia*. Retrieved May 2, 2013 from <http://inciopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Fresa>
- Fresa. (n.d.b). In *La Frikipedia*. Retrieved May 1, 2013 from [http://www.frikipedia.es/friki/Fresa\\_%28tribu\\_urbana%29](http://www.frikipedia.es/friki/Fresa_%28tribu_urbana%29)
- Fresa. (n.d.c). In *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved April 30, 2013 from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fresa>
- García Saldaña, P. (1997). *El rey criollo* [The criollo king]. Mexico City, Mexico: Editorial Joaquín Moritz. (Original work published 1987)
- García Saldaña, P. (2011). *Pasto verde* [Green pasture]. Mexico City, Mexico: Jus. (Original work published 1968)
- Glantz, M. (1976). "La Onda diez años después: ¿Epitafio o revalorización?" [The Wave ten years later: Epitaph or revalorization?]. *Texto Crítico*, 5, 88–102.
- Hernández, P. (2007). Tribus modernas: Nuevas identidades juveniles en México [Modern tribes: New youth identities in Mexico]. *Jóvenes, revista de estudios sobre juventud*, 27.
- Juárez, A. R. (2009). La escuela secundaria como espacio de construcción de identidades juveniles [High school as a space for construction of youth identities]. *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa*, 14(40), 147–174.
- kld847. (2006, October 21). *la niña fresa* [the fresa girl] [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vldBEZIZBRM>
- lissyntzp. (2008, January 9). fresa. In *Urban Dictionary*. Retrieved April 30, 2013 from <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=fresa>
- Martínez, R. (2014). Language ideology in Mexico: The case of fresa style in Mexican Spanish. *Texas Linguistic Forum*, 57.
- Mendoza, C. H. (2011). *Language, gender, and identity construction: Sociolinguistic dynamics in the borderlands* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Accession number 3496320)
- Mendoza, H. (2011). Los estudios sobre la juventud en México [Studies on youth in Mexico]. *Espiral, Estudios Sobre Estado y Sociedad*, 18(52), 193–224.
- Monsiváis, C. (1973). *Días de guardar* [Days of observance]. Mexico City, Mexico: Ediciones Era, S.A. de C.V.
- Monsiváis, C. (1988). *Escenas de pudor y liviandad* [Scenes of modesty and frivolity]. Mexico City, Mexico: Editorial Grijalbo.
- Monsiváis, C. (1998). Eres prieto, y sobre esa piedra nada crece: Del racismo nacional [You're dark-skinned, and atop that rock nothing grows: On national racism]. *Equis: Cultura y Sociedad*, Número I. xvii–xx.

- Moore, R. (2011). "If I actually talked like that, I'd pull a gun on myself": Accent, avoidance, and moral panic in Irish English. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 84(1), 41–64.
- Naco. (n.d.a). In *Real Academia Española* [Royal Spanish Academy]. Retrieved May 2, 2013 from <http://lema.rae.es/drae/?val=naco>
- Naco. (n.d.b). In *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved May 1, 2013 from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naco\\_%28slang%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naco_%28slang%29)
- nacoyfresa. (2006, July 1). *Naco y Fresa - Episodio 1 : El i-Pos* [Naco and Fresa - Episode 1 : The iPod] [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0Tt7Nr8NXM>
- Oxfam México (2015). *Desigualdad extrema en México: Concentración del poder económico y político* [Extreme poverty in Mexico: Concentration of economic and political power]. Mexico City, Mexico: G. Esquivel Hernández.
- Pacheco, A. (2011, December 23). Guess who's coming to dinner.... In *Pluma, Lápiz, y Cicuta*. Retrieved from <http://www.animalpolitico.com/blogeros-pluma-lapiz-y-cicuta/2011/12/23/guess-whos-coming-to-dinner/>
- Ramos I Duarte, F. (1895). *Diccionario de Mejicanismos: Coleccion de locuciones i frases viciosas* [Dictionary of Mexicanisms: Collection of depraved phrases and expressions]. Mexico City, Mexico: Imprenta de Eduardo Dublan. Retrieved from <http://www.dloc.com/UF00086623/00001>
- Reyes, A. (2012, November). *Conyo as shifting racial and linguistic figure in the Philippines*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association. San Francisco, CA.
- Reyes Salinas, J. Á. (2002). Estudio exploratorio de los registros "fresa" y "naco" en jóvenes universitarios de México D.F. [Exploratory study of "fresa" and "naco" registers in university students from Mexico City]. *Fuentes Humanísticas*, 32, 115–130.
- smpdigital. (2004, June 4). Naco. In *Urban Dictionary*. Retrieved April 30, 2013 from <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=naco>
- Urteaga, M., & Ortega, E. (2004). Identidades en disputa: Fresas, wannabes, pandros, alternos y nacos [Identities in dispute: Fresas, wannabes, pandros, alternatives, and nacos]. In R. Reguillo, C. Feixa, M. Valdez, G. C. Gomez, & J. A. Pérez Islas (Eds.), *Tiempo de híbridos: Entresiglos. Jóvenes. México-Cataluña* [Time of hybrids: Among centuries. Youth. Mexico-Catalonia] (pp. 114–132). Mexico City, Mexico: SEP/IMJ/Secretaría General de Joventut/Consorci Institut d'Infància i Món Urba.

List of blogs and websites consulted for this paper:

[www.nacoyfresa.net](http://www.nacoyfresa.net)  
[www.naquisimo.com](http://www.naquisimo.com)  
[www.quenacos.com](http://www.quenacos.com)  
[www.nacos.mx](http://www.nacos.mx)  
[www.mirrreybook.com](http://www.mirrreybook.com)  
[www.inciclopedia.com](http://www.inciclopedia.com)  
[www.frikipedia.com](http://www.frikipedia.com)  
[www.animalpolitico.com](http://www.animalpolitico.com)  
[www.mexadas.com](http://www.mexadas.com)  
[memexico.tumblr.com/post/3258773278](http://memexico.tumblr.com/post/3258773278)  
[mischingones.blogspot.com/2010/05/en-mexico-no-hay-racismo.html](http://mischingones.blogspot.com/2010/05/en-mexico-no-hay-racismo.html)  
[elangeldelaguada.wordpress.com/2010/06/](http://elangeldelaguada.wordpress.com/2010/06/)  
[www.animalpolitico.com/blogueros-pluma-lapiz-y-cicuta/2011/12/23/guess-whos-coming-to-dinner/](http://www.animalpolitico.com/blogueros-pluma-lapiz-y-cicuta/2011/12/23/guess-whos-coming-to-dinner/)  
[us.fotolog.com/puppet\\_akuma/21741832/](http://us.fotolog.com/puppet_akuma/21741832/)  
[sonofabicho.blogspot.com/2008/03/en-mxico-no-hay-racismo.html](http://sonofabicho.blogspot.com/2008/03/en-mxico-no-hay-racismo.html)  
[carlosmiguel.wordpress.com/2012/01/06/no-hay-racismo-en-mexico/](http://carlosmiguel.wordpress.com/2012/01/06/no-hay-racismo-en-mexico/)  
[www.somosche.com/en\\_mexico\\_no\\_hay\\_racismo-fotos\\_del\\_valencia-igfpo-3027.htm](http://www.somosche.com/en_mexico_no_hay_racismo-fotos_del_valencia-igfpo-3027.htm)

## Appendix A

*Padre Nuestro de una niña fresa* – the Our Father from a fresa girl

Bolded type indicates discourse markers distinctive of a *fresa* register. My translation on the right.

Padre Nuestro de una niña fresa	Our Father from a fresa girl
<b>PAPI MIO QUE ESTAS EN LOS SUPER CIELOS</b>	My Daddy who is in the super heavens
SANTIFICADISIMO MIL VECES SEA TU NOMBRE	A thousand times hallowed is your name
VENGA TU REINO A NOSOTROS	your kingdom come
¿POR QUE SI ES TUYO, VERDAD?	because it is yours, right?
HAS TU VOLUNTAD, <b>O SEA</b> ASI COMO EN EL CIELO,	your will be done, like on Earth
<b>IGUAL</b> EN LA TIERRA ¿SABES COMO NO?	just like in heaven, you know what I mean right?
PERDONAME POR ESAS COSAS QUE A VECES HAGO	Please forgive me for those things that I sometimes do
<b>QUE O SEA, NOOO!!! PERDOON!!!!</b>	I meeeeaan, nooo, I'm so sorry!!
<b>NADA QUE VER CONMIGO, NO SE QUE ME PASA</b>	I don't know what happens to me
<b>UN MAL VIAJE, OSEA QUE OSO WEY!!!!</b>	a bad trip, like, like, how embarrassing!
ASI COMO YO PERDONO A LOS QUE ME HACEN COSAS	Just like I forgive those who do things to me

**EN MAL PLAN Y CON TODA LA ENVIDIA  
DEL MUNDO**

that are not cool and they do with all the envy  
in the world

**OSEA, BOLA DE LOSSERRSSS!!!!**

I mean, what a bunch of lossseeeers!!

**BENDICE A MI PROJIMO, A MI PAPI, A MI  
MAMI, A LOS**

Bless my neighbor, my daddy, my mommy,

**MALACOPA, AL NIÑO QUE ME GUSTA, A  
LOS MATADITOS**

the drunkies, the boy that I have a crush on, the  
little nerds,

**Y A TODO EL PROLETARIADO, NACOS,  
CHOLOS, FEOS,**

and all the rest of the proletariat: *nacos, cholos,*  
the ugly.

**PELUSA, GATIZA, CHUSMA, PERRADA E  
INDIADA, ETC. ETC.**

*pelusa, gatiza, chusma, perrada, and indiada, etc.*  
etc

**QUE ME RODEAN!!!!**

that surround me!!!

**NO DEJES QUE CAIGA EN TENTACION**

Don't let me fall into temptation

**PORQUE OSEA, TU SABES QUE EL DIABLO,  
ES MALISIMA ONDA**

because like, you know that the devil is so not  
cool

**Y ME QUIERE HACER COSAS QUE YO NI AL  
CASO,**

and he wants to do things, that like, whatever

**PERO LA CARNE ES DEBIL, NOOO??**

but the flesh is weak, riiight?

**PARA NADA DEJES, OSEA, PORFIS PORFIS  
QUE SE ME PEGUE**

Please pretty please do not for anything let

**LO NACO,**

the *naco* rub off on me,

**ENSEÑAME A SER TAN NICE COMO TU!!!**

show me how to be so nice/cool like you!!

**PORQUE TUYO ES EL REINO, EL PODER Y  
LA GLORIA,**

Because yours is the kingdom, the power and  
the glory,

**PORQUE SI ES TUYO VERDAD???**

because it is yours riiight??

**OSEA, ERES DE OTRO NIVEL, TU AQUÍ Y EL  
SATAN POR HAYA**

I mean, you are at another level, you are here  
and the devil is over there,

**Y ADEMAS ERES HIPERCOOL!!!**

besides, you are super cool!!!

**OSEA SI ME ENTIENDES, NO??**

you know what I mean, right?

**POCA MADRE, CONTIGO TODO FRESH**

Awesome, badass, with you everything is fresh

**GRACIAS POR TODO, VALES MIL**

Thanks for everything, you're super worth it

**ERES SUPER BUENA ONDA, SIEMPRE  
ESTAS IN,**

You are super cool, you're always in

**NEVER CHANGE,**

Never Change

**SANTO ERES POR SIEMPRE, AMEN ¿OK?**

Holy you are forever, Amen, ok?

**SALE BYE, BESITOS, TE CUIDAAAAS,**

Ok Bye, kisses, take care.

**EN EL NOMBRE DEL PAPI, DEL JUNIOR**

In the name of the daddy, the junior,

**PALOMITA BUENA ONDA, AMEN.**

and the super cool little dove, Amen.