

Understanding Latin American Beliefs about Racial Inequality¹

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Scholars argue that Latin American ideologies of *mestizaje*, or racial mixing, mask ethnoracial discrimination. We examine popular explanations for indigenous or Afrodescendant disadvantage in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru using the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey. Findings show that numerical majorities across all countries endorse structural-disadvantage explanations and reject victim-blaming stances; in seven of eight countries, they specifically recognize discrimination against ethnoracial minorities. Brazilians most point to structural causes, while Bolivians are least likely to recognize discrimination. While educational status differences tend to be sizable, dominant and minority explanations are similar. Both are comparable to African-American views and contrast with those of U.S. whites.

As a region, Latin America has a diverse racial and ethnic composition and, like the United States, a history of European colonization of indigenous peoples and the subsequent importation of millions of Africans as slaves. Of Latin America's roughly 500 million people today, indigenous peoples account for 40 million or more, and Afrodescendants are at least

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120 million (Del Popolo and Oyarce 2006; Antón et al. 2009).² At the same time, Latin America has the highest level of income inequality among world regions (World Bank 2004). Even more than in the United States, indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples are concentrated at the bottom of the region's highly uneven class structure (Psachoropolous and Patrinos 2004; Paschel and Sawyer 2008), and racial and ethnic discrimination continue to significantly structure the life chances of Latin Americans (Flórez, Medina, and Urrea 2001; Ñopo, Saavedra, and Torero 2007; Villarreal 2010).

Although racial hierarchies in Latin America and the United States are roughly similar, Latin American national projects of *mestizaje*, or racial and cultural mixing, stand in stark contrast to the United States' historic emphasis on segregation and white racial "purity" (Davis 1991; De la Cadena 2005; Wade 2005).³ Historically, these ideas of *mestizaje* often began as elite-led projects to unite the frequently divided and scattered black, indigenous, white, and mixed-race populations during the nation-making periods throughout the 19th and into the 20th centuries. In many contexts, especially in Mexico and Brazil, the mixed-race individual was heralded as the symbol of the nation and the hope of its future (Skidmore 1974; Knight 1990). These myths replaced earlier emphases on whitening; today they are often credited with blurring racial distinctions and thus softening relations among people of different colors. Higher rates of intermarriage and residential proximity, and the integration of African and indigenous cultural elements into national folklore and culture, also offer evidence of greater racial tolerance in Latin America as compared with the United States (Telles 2004; Wade 2009). In sum, the racial common sense in Latin America, presumably guided by ideas of *mestizaje*, has been very distinct from that in the United States.

However, although seemingly progressive in contrast to the historic U.S. ideology, *mestizaje* has also been roundly criticized. Scholars point to its role in encouraging mixture to further whitening (Mallon 1992; Wade 2005), in denying black and indigenous identities and cultures by homogenizing the nation (Nascimento 1979; Bonfil Batalla [1987] 1996), in weakening racial and ethnic distinctions necessary for antiracist mobilization (Telles 2004; Paschel 2010), in masking persistent racial discrimination and underlying racial hierarchies (Paschel and Sawyer 2008; Beck, Misjeski, and Stark

² These figures are based on the cited sources that we update using new census figures available since the time of their publication. Where census data are not available, we include estimates based on the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey.

³ We use here the Spanish Latin American term *mestizaje* to also represent the Portuguese Latin American notions of *mistura* and *mestiçagem*. While recognizing these notions differ somewhat due to contextual and historical particularities, their similarities allow a careful bridging. See French (2004) and Alonso (2005).

2011), and, as in the Dominican Republic, in romanticizing mixture with indigenous populations to the detriment of African people (Howard 2001; Hooker 2005). From this perspective, state- and elite-promoted ideologies of *mestizaje*, far from being progressive, may serve to further the advantage of white and mestizo elites, thus preserving the racial and ethnic status quo (Holt 2003).

In the past two decades, many Latin American nations have undergone a shift in terms of state approaches to racial and ethnic diversity (Andrews 2004; Telles 2004; Hooker 2005), which may have further altered the racial common sense. Nearly all Latin American countries have at least basic democratization, often accompanied by domestic black and indigenous social movements and an expanding international human rights regime; more recently, many Latin American countries have declared themselves “multicultural” or “plurinational,” especially with regard to indigenous populations (Van Cott 2000; Yashar 2005; Paschel and Sawyer 2008; Schilling-Vacaflor 2011).⁴ This shift to multiculturalism includes constitutional recognitions of indigenous and, sometimes, Afrodescendant peoples and indigenous forms of organization,⁵ data collection on indigenous people and Afrodescendants in national censuses,⁶ and stated intentions of racial reform. However, this multiculturalism has not yet led to significant public policies to redress minority disadvantage, except perhaps in Brazil and Bolivia.

An expanding literature on the relationship between public policy and ideology suggests that public support for policies to combat inequality may depend in part on how the public understands the causes of inequality (Kluegel and Smith 1986; Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000; Hunt and Wilson 2011; Bobo et al. 2012). Although the existing literature mostly concerns the U.S. case, it provides clear evidence of an association between support for anti-inequality strategies and “stratification beliefs” (Kluegel and Smith 1986). These beliefs generally fall into two broad categories: structuralist and individualist accounts. The former locates the root of inequality in features of the broader social structure, such as discrimination and poor educational systems; the latter looks to individuals themselves, for

⁴ Plurinationality, emergent, e.g., in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, attempts to overcome some perceived deficiencies of previous “neoliberal multiculturalism”; it seeks “robust redistributive social rights rooted in a strong state alongside equally robust indigenous rights” (Gustafson 2009, p. 991; Schilling-Vacaflor 2011).

⁵ As of 2005, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela had adopted ethnoracial collective rights in statutory or constitutional law, especially regarding indigenous people (Hooker 2005).

⁶ In their most recent national censuses, all countries but Cuba and the Dominican Republic identify indigenous peoples and most now identify Afrodescendants (Schkolnik and del Popolo 2008; Antón et al. 2009).

instance, to a lack of motivation or cultural deficiencies. Research on the United States reveals that individuals holding structural accounts are more likely to express support for anti-inequality public policy than those who attribute minority disadvantage to individual causes (Kluegel 1990; Bobo and Kluegel 1993).

Moreover, an individual's racial identification strongly influences his or her stratification beliefs (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Tuch and Hughes 2011). Where there is racial inequality, dominant and disadvantaged racial populations may be expected to differ in explaining that inequality, the former offering individualist accounts and the latter structuralist accounts (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Hunt 2007). These conflicting attitudinal stances set the stage for minority challenges to the status quo (Bobo and Hutchings 1996). However, where ideological hegemony is firmly established, as may be the case in Latin America (Hanchard 1994; Sidanius, Peña, and Sawyer 2001; Wade 2005), members of dominant and disadvantaged racial populations may both support individualist accounts, thereby furthering the status quo (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). It follows that understanding stratification beliefs in a given society could help gauge that context's ripeness for possible challenges to the status quo and provide some insight as to why public policy initiatives have or have not occurred (Tuch and Hughes 2011).

In Latin America, public opinion survey research on racial ideologies has been scant, with few exceptions (e.g., Bailey 2002, 2004, 2009; Beck et al. 2011). Thus, ironically, we do not know if the changes associated with recent democratization in the region, such as declarations of multiculturalism, really reflect or resonate with public opinion. In particular, we know very little about how official and elite-led race ideologies filter down to the general population. How do Latin Americans, socialized in hegemonic *mestizaje* understandings of race and indigeneity, understand racial inequality in their countries? To address that knowledge gap, we examine the ways Latin Americans in eight multiracial countries explain racial stratification. Using novel data from nationally representative surveys conducted in 2010, we explore the determinants of those explanations, placing special emphasis on differences between racial/ethnic minority and dominant populations within and among countries.

MESTIZAJE IN LATIN AMERICA

In the early 20th century, *mestizaje* ideologies were successfully used to promote national unification in several Latin American nations. *Mestizaje's* centrality to the Latin American "political imaginary" (Alonso 2005) stands in contrast to its absence as a trope for early nation building in the United States (Holt 2003; Wade 2005), where group-based exploitation and segregation were written into the country's very Constitution and policies

(Nobles 2000). The ideological contrast is sometimes attributed to their respective interpretations of contemporary scientific trends. In the United States, elites favored a combination of Mendelian genetics and eugenics that suggested that racial mixing between whites and blacks created a degenerate stock of hybrids or mulattos, thus providing partial scientific support for systematic nonwhite exclusion and the policing of interracial mixing (Stepan 1991; Nobles 2000; Zuberi 2003).

While also understanding blacks, indigenous, and mulattos as inferior or degenerative, Latin American elites mostly embraced the French-led neo-Lamarckian theories of heredity, which posited that the environment, and thus human action, could mediate the effect of genetic inheritance (Stepan 1991; Zuberi 2003). Accepting these neo-Lamarckian ideas, rather than the implication that their mostly nonwhite populations were condemned to backwardness, also allowed these largely nonwhite countries to promote whitening through mixture (Skidmore 1974). By proposing “constructive miscegenation,” they could effectively reverse antihybrid arguments (De la Cadena 2001, p. 17; see also Stepan 1991; Holt 2003).

By the 1930s, as scientifically endorsed ideas of nonwhite inferiority and degeneracy were becoming discredited, Latin American elites would turn mixture into a positive symbol of their nations, making them unique and morally superior to the United States and similar systems (Skidmore 1974; De la Cadena 2001). *Mestizaje* as central to nation building generally took the following form: “Latin American states developed a mode of governance based on a unitary package of citizenship rights and a tendentious premise that people could enjoy these rights only by conforming to a homogenous *mestizo* cultural ideal. This ideal appropriated important aspects of Indian culture—and of black culture in Brazil and the Caribbean—to give it ‘authenticity’ and roots, but European stock provided the guarantee that it would be modern and forward-looking” (Hale 2004, pp. 16–17). Hence, although seemingly progressive in reversing the “thesis of racial degeneration” (Hale 2004, p. 17), *mestizaje* ideologies in reality constituted a “racial project” (Omi and Winant 1994) that forced the assimilation of indigenous populations, and the marginalization of all those who refused, and that ignored formerly enslaved Afrodescendants.

It is important, however, to recognize differences in the development and outcome of these projects across Latin America. Elites in countries like Argentina, for example, largely rejected *mestizaje* and explicitly pursued whiteness, longer than others in the region through massive European immigration, although recently they have declared themselves multicultural (Helg 1990; Hooker 2005). Despite Guatemala’s large mixed-race and indigenous populations, elites there generally opposed *mestizaje* and promoted the idea of two nations, one Ladino and another Maya (indigenous), although ideas of *mestizaje* have also emerged in that country recently

(Grandin 2000; Hale 2006). Even though they tended to disfavor notions of white racial superiority, elites in some Andean countries developed ideas of cultural and biological *mestizaje* that were clearly mixed with earlier ideas of whitening (Mallon 1992; Wade 1993; Larson 2004; Beck et al. 2011). Dominican elites promoted the idea that Dominicans could hail their indigenous, and especially Spanish, ancestors proudly, although they tended to purge Africans—arguably the largest ancestral component—from national origin narratives due to their negative association with neighboring Haiti (Candelario 2007).

Perhaps the strongest *mestizaje* ideologies emerged in 1920s and 1930s postrevolutionary Mexico and Vargas-era Brazil, where progressive elites designed and promoted “the cosmic race” and “racial democracy.” In Mexico’s version, José Vasconcelos (1925) saw spiritual redemption through a *mestizaje* that would improve humanity. In Brazil’s adaptation, Gilberto Freyre (1933) claimed that Brazilians of all colors and races were birthing a new people, a meta-race of *moreno* or mixed populations that would constitute the nation’s strength and ensure its future place as a modern nation. Vasconcelos and Freyre’s homogenizing racial visions were later incorporated into ideologies of national identity, although they are inconsistent with persistent racial inequality and discrimination in their countries (Knight 1990; Telles 2004). In Mexico and Brazil, whitening ideas were generally muted in official *mestizaje* narratives and these two states had greater capacity to disseminate these narratives through cultural and educational campaigns (Vasconcelos 1925; Freyre 1933; Knight 1990; Telles 2004).

A Turn to Multiculturalism

Although divergent racial ideologies in the United States and Latin America supported contrasting nation-building projects, both contexts began to shift dramatically in the second half of the 20th century. At that time, the United States was still embroiled in de jure discrimination and segregation. However, the harsh racial climate and the “bright” racial boundaries (Alba 2005) stimulated ethnoracial mobilization that challenged state oppression, perhaps most significantly resulting in the Civil Rights movement and red power protests (e.g., Marx 1998). In Latin America meanwhile, ethnoracial mobilization, as such, was more sporadic even though racial inequality and black and indigenous marginalization were pervasive.⁷ Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, however, significant indigenous mobilization occurred throughout the region (Van Cott 2000; Yashar 2005), while

⁷ Social movements involving indigenous peoples were often expressed as peasant (*campesino*) movements (Knight 1990; Yashar 2005).

Afro Latin American social movements also emerged in countries like Brazil and Colombia (Andrews 2004; Telles 2004; Paschel 2010).

Today, the idea of ethnoracial group-based identities and rights are part of official discourse throughout most of Latin America. As noted, the Latin American shift from official ideologies of *mestizaje* to multiculturalism and ethnoracial group rights likely emerged from a combination of sources linked to the recent formal democratization throughout the region. Several scholars have documented how indigenous movements, in the face of neo-liberal economic and political reforms and aided by an international human rights regime, have been able to pressure governments to institute multicultural reforms (Van Cott 2000; Safa 2005; Yashar 2005). In Brazil and Colombia, small but very effective black organizations working as political interest groups were essential to the recognition of ethnoracial rights (Telles 2004; Paschel and Sawyer 2008; Paschel 2010). In all of these national contexts, international organizations such as the World Bank and international funding agencies, as well as a growing international human rights infrastructure supported by the United Nations,⁸ were important for promoting indigenous and black rights and recognition (Brysk 2000; Van Cott 2000; Telles 2004). Taking a different view, Hale (2004) and Safa (2005) claim that multiculturalist reforms were largely aimed at co-opting identity politics. In any case, the multicultural reforms, for which many civil society organizations and minority social movements struggled, are arguably more popular and democratic in contrast to the earlier elite-led *mestizaje* projects.

Effects of The Myth of *Mestizaje*

Although the tide may be turning toward multicultural affirmation in much of Latin America, some scholars have suggested that the hegemony of the *mestizaje* myth has been central to retarding ethnoracial mobilization and challenges to the racial status quo, both in the past and today (Hanchard 1994; Paschel 2010). As illustration, Wade (2003, p. 275) writes: "So long as *mestizaje* discourse is prevalent, it will be hard to link racial identity to citizenship and rights" in Latin America. In a similar vein, Safa (2005, p. 317) remarks: "Because of the co-optive strategy of *mestizaje*, which convinced mulattos they were more like whites than like their black brothers, there is also a reluctance to create [in Latin America] confrontational racial blocs such as exist in the U.S." The fact that many Afrodescendants and indigenous peoples were gradually absorbed into amorphous national *mestizo* populations, and that blackness and indigeneity were systematically ig-

⁸ This includes UN international conventions that seek compliance of member states through international pressure and the participation of a new set of global elites comprised of international experts and institutions (Van Cott 2000; Telles 2004).

nored, provides a partial explanation for Latin America's scant record of multiculturalism (Marx 1998; Paschel and Sawyer 2008).

The widespread denial of systematic disadvantage suffered by racial and ethnic minorities is another important mechanism through which, scholars argue, *mestizaje* retarded ethnoracial mobilization and antiracism policy. Latin American *mestizaje* racial ideologies obfuscated the structural causes of ethnoracial inequality, leading to "color blindness" (Paschel 2010, p. 729) or "false consciousness" (Winant 1999, p. 99) that "denies the existence of any racism" (Sidanius et al. 2001, p. 826), even in the minds of nonwhites themselves (Twine 1998, p. 8). Beck et al. (2011, p. 106) write that, in Ecuador, "*mestizaje*, and the wide swath of people who clearly identify as *mestizo*, produces a perceptual prism in which it is quite easy to ignore, hide, downgrade, and ultimately deny processes of prejudice and discrimination." Perhaps clearest in connecting myths of *mestizaje* with a claim that nonwhite Latin Americans are colorblind, Warren and Sue (2011, p. 50) write that, across Latin America, "nonwhites" have "scant understanding of how race, both its contemporary and historical forms, is directly linked to the particular configurations of the labor market, social welfare, taxation policies, housing, educational opportunities, and so forth." Using ethnographic research, these authors conclude: "In short, like U.S. whites, they [Latin American nonwhites] do not link race to economic and social marginalization" (p. 50).

While noting the assimilationist core to these *mestizaje* myths in Latin America, we contend that their role as hegemonic ideologies blinding Latin American populations to racial discrimination and disadvantage, that is, conditioning their stratification beliefs, is an empirical question needing further examination. While most research to date on *mestizaje* has been based on qualitative methods, large-sample survey data may be uniquely suited to exploring generalized attitudinal orientations; to date, the absence of those data and analyses using advanced survey methods constitute a gap in the literature. New survey data may simply confirm earlier ethnography, extending its explanatory power; survey data could also reveal new patterns that complicate localized perspectives. With the goal of bringing the lens of survey research to the study of Latin American racial attitudes, we look first at general framings for understanding the effects of hegemonic racial ideologies on explanations for racial inequality before laying out a series of hypotheses about the Latin American context.

THEORETICAL FRAMINGS OF STRATIFICATION BELIEFS

Two competing frames characterize much of the literature on racial attitudes and explanations for racial inequality or stratification beliefs: socio-cultural theories and variants on realistic group conflict theory. The U.S.

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case dominates this literature, although applying these theories to Latin America is plausible based on Anglo and Latin America's similar histories of conquest, colonization, and slavery involving European, African, and indigenous populations. Furthermore, in both contexts, and as a result of those histories, racial and ethnic distinctions continue to structure inequality. However, important differences, most centrally concerning Latin America's myths and practices of *mestizaje*, may act to structure Latin American beliefs about racial inequality differently.

Sociocultural Theories

Sociocultural approaches hold that racial attitudes develop through a gradual socialization process that can result in negative affect toward out-groups (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Tuch and Hughes 2011). These perspectives posit that children develop racial prejudice that is normative in their social environment, later carrying a solid core of prejudice into adulthood as negative affect. Symbolic racism (Kinder and Sears 1981), the sociocultural frame that predominates in the United States, for example, explains whites' attitudes toward black disadvantage as a blend of racial prejudice with the view that blacks do not fully embrace "the kind of traditional American moral values embodied in the Protestant Ethic" (Kinder and Sears 1981, p. 416). Hence, this framing posits that childhood-nurtured prejudice and a perception of cultural gaps between dominant and minority populations lead dominants to individualist explanations for racial inequality, or to "blaming the victim"; this in turn leads dominants to oppose policies designed to combat inequality. Gilens (1999), for example, asserts that white opposition to "welfare" programs is rooted in negative racial stereotypes, specifically, the perception of blacks as lazy and unmotivated. Because the targeted minority population generally views this racial prejudice and stereotyping differently, dominant/minority divides on individualist explanations develop (Sears et al. 2000).

Group Conflict Theories

Variants on group conflict theory comprise the second approach to racial attitudes (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Sidanius and Pratto 1999). These framings posit broadly that material interests, not prejudice, structure racial attitudes. In the United States, this frame suggests that whites perceive blacks as competitive threats for valued social resources and defend their privileged position by blaming blacks for racial inequality, thereby justifying their opposition to, for example, affirmative policy intervention (Bobo and Kluegel 1993). In contrast to dominants, racial minorities generally hold structuralist explanations of inequality due to their experience of sys-

tematic discrimination; moreover, this asymmetry between the attitudes of dominants and minorities forms the basis for conflict-based attitudes, which may favor challenges to the status quo (Bobo and Hutchinson 1996). Thus, conflict theories generally posit dominant/minority divergences on explanations, which some scholars term the “ideological asymmetry hypothesis” (Sidanius and Pratto 1999, p. 235; Sidanius et al. 2001). Nonetheless, in situations of ideological hegemony, subordinates may agree with dominant interpretations of inequality, victims of a type of “false consciousness” (Sidanius and Pratto 1999, 106). This latter variant of group conflict theory posits “symmetry” between racial ideologies of dominants and minorities, where both populations adopt individualist explanations for racial inequality.

In sum, the consensus of scholarship on the United States is that “racial attitudes are structured across racial groups” (Dawson 2000, p. 350), regardless of whether those attitudes are explained through prejudice or race-based interests. Furthermore, those group-specific attitudes that comprise explanations for racial inequality are associated with attitudes toward race-targeted public policy (Kluegel 1990; Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Tuch and Hughes 2011). We now turn to the Latin American context, parsing the structure of stratification beliefs in that region and exploring hypotheses on their make-up and effect.

HYPOTHESES

Scholars of Latin American ethnoracial dynamics maintain that the *mestizaje* myths have had a decisive influence on the region’s stratification beliefs. More specifically, many scholars judge that these myths have led the minority populations to deny the structural causes of their own inequality (Hanchard 1994; Twine 1998; Sidanius et al. 2001; Beck et al. 2011; Warren and Sue 2011). This denial positions minorities in Latin American alongside dominants, whose rejection of the structural causes of minority disadvantage is taken as a given (due to out-group prejudice or diverging material interests). This attitudinal symmetry (i.e., both dominants and minorities reject structural explanations) goes against much of the general literature on stratification beliefs, which, as previously noted, holds that dominants and minorities disagree on the causes of racial inequality (e.g., Sears et al. 2000).

Bailey (2002, 2009) explored stratification beliefs in Brazil using survey data from 1995 and 2000. He found no widespread denial of the structural causes of inequality. Instead, Brazilians overwhelmingly endorsed discrimination as an explanation for black disadvantage. In this study, we examine stratification beliefs using more recent, expanded, and nuanced survey data on seven other Latin American contexts in addition to Brazil. Moreover, we extended the analysis beyond attitudes about Afrodescendants to four na-

tional contexts where indigenous are the principal minority population. Hence, our first set of hypotheses:

HYPOTHESIS 1.—*Ideologies of mestizaje in Latin America condition a denial of the structural causes of minority disadvantage.*

HYPOTHESIS 2.—*Both dominant and minority populations in Latin America deny the structural causes of minority disadvantage.*

Because Latin America's ethnoracial dynamics are not homogenous (e.g., Hooker 2005), examining stratification beliefs across various Latin American contexts is highly informative. Stratification beliefs may differ, for example, depending on whether the target population is indigenous or Afrodescendant and on the prevalence of national antiracist mobilization and discourse. Regarding the former, sociocultural theories suggest that perceptions of culture gaps between dominant and minority populations can stimulate individualist explanations for minority disadvantage on the part of dominants, as discussed above (e.g., Kinder and Sears 1981). In Latin America, cultural differences may be seen as more characteristic of indigenous populations than Afrodescendants. This is partly because the cultural distinctiveness that distinguishes indigenous communities from dominants is maintained in rural settlements and through language, dress, or other traditions. In contrast, Afrodescendants are almost always Spanish/Portuguese monolinguals and often urban. In fact, recent research suggests that many indigenous populations, struggling for collective rights under new "multiculturalist" citizenship regimes, have been helped in their struggle precisely by this perception of their cultural distinctiveness (Hooker 2005). At the same time, scholars argue that Afrodescendants have been hampered in their inclusionary struggles by their general inability to claim cultural distinctiveness (Hooker 2005; French 2009; Paschel 2010).⁹ In sum, perceptions of culture gaps between indigenous and dominants compared to between Afrodescendants and dominants may condition stratification beliefs. Hence, our third hypothesis:

HYPOTHESIS 3.—*Indigenous poverty is more likely to be explained by culture-based individualist accounts than Afrodescendant disadvantage.*

With respect to the prevalence of antiracism discourse and mobilization, we would expect awareness of the structural sources of racial inequality to be higher among Afrodescendants in Brazil, given the widespread public discussion of racism and the adoption of affirmative action policies there over the past decade. In contrast, we would expect dominants in Brazil to adopt individualist explanations due to a perceived threat to their material

⁹ To the point, in those cases where Afrodescendants can claim indigenous-like cultural specificity, they have made strides toward state recognition and collective rights. Examples include the Garifuna in Honduras and coastal Afrodescendants in Colombia (Hooker 2005; Paschel 2010).

resources that race-targeted public policy may represent. Bolivia, too, has experienced a very significant shift in the ethnoracial status quo with the election of its first indigenous president in 2005. The Bolivian government made combating racism a priority, although this is part of a more general political and cultural transformation toward indigeneity and plurinationalism (Schilling-Vacaflor 2011). This shift is referred to as the *proceso de cambio* (process of change) and has been conflict ridden (García Linera 2010; Gustafson and Fabricant 2011). Indeed, it has produced a veritable “social earthquake” (Mamani Ramirez 2011) that has led to discourses of “reverse racism” among certain sectors of that society (Gustafson and Fabricant 2011, p. 12; Hale 2011). Hence, in Bolivia too we might expect heightened awareness of structural racism for indigenous and a dominant backlash through adopting individualist stances and denying discrimination. In contrast, individualist explanations may be more likely for both dominants and minorities in countries like the Dominican Republic and Mexico where racism remains relatively uncontested and is rarely discussed (Sidanius et al. 2001; Sue 2010). In these two countries, for example, the national census is marked by the absence of data on racial composition, suggesting some indifference to racial dynamics in general (Howard 2001; Candelario 2007; Antón et al. 2009).¹⁰ Hence, our final hypothesis:

HYPOTHESIS 4.—Stratification beliefs differ significantly across Latin American countries, with minority populations in Brazil and Bolivia especially likely to hold structuralist beliefs in contrast to dominants, and minorities in Mexico and the Dominican Republic the least likely to do so, joining with dominants in denying the structural bases of inequality.

DATA AND METHODS

In this analysis, we examined eight countries using data from the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey, which were collected a product of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) based at Vanderbilt University.¹¹ The 2010 AmericasBarometer conducted nationally representative face-to-face surveys of adults in 18 of the 19 countries in Latin America (except Cuba). In the eight countries we examined—Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru—the Amer-

¹⁰ In addition to cross-national differences, some literature highlights differences in racial attitudes among regions in a single country. For example, Boza-Golash (2010) distinguishes an urban/rural divide among Afrodescendants in Peru, whereas Gustafson and Fabricant (2011) point to the difference in attitudes toward indigeneity between “tropical east and Andean west” (p. 11).

¹¹ We thank LAPOP and its director Mitchell Seligson. We also thank its major supporters (USAID, UNDP, IDP, and Vanderbilt University) and the Ford Foundation and Princeton University for funding the ethnicity module.

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icsBarometer incorporated an ethnicity module, which was developed by the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA) at Princeton University. The countries chosen for the additional ethnicity module were those with a significant mix of black and indigenous populations. The sample size for most of these countries was about 1,500, with larger samples taken in Ecuador (about 3,000) and Brazil (about 2,500).

The ethnicity module includes two items addressing respondents' explanations for black or indigenous disadvantage (i.e., stratification beliefs), which we used to create our dependent variables. The first survey item, which begins with a clear affirmation that race/ethnicity structures socioeconomic outcomes, asks respondents to explain why that is so:

According to the Census, indigenous persons/black persons/darker skin persons are poorer. What do you think is the main reason for that? [Read options] [Allow only one response]

1. Because they do not work hard enough
2. Because they are less intelligent
3. Because they are treated unfairly
4. Because they have a low educational level
5. Because they do not want to change their culture.¹²

In Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru, this item refers to the poverty of indigenous persons (*indígenas*); in Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador, to black persons (*negros*); and in the Dominican Republic to dark-skinned persons, since Dominicans sometimes understand black to reference Haitians. In this first question, options 1 (insufficient work effort), 2 (less intelligence), and 5 (cultural complacency) are considered individualist attributions for minority poverty.¹³ Options 3 (unfair treatment) and 4 (low education) represent structural explanations.¹⁴ We first collapse the individualist versus structuralist options and present the frequency distributions as percent-

¹² In Spanish: "Según los datos del Censo de Población, la gente negra/indígena/más oscura es más pobre. ¿Usted cuál cree que es la principal razón de esto? [Leer opciones] [Permitir solo una respuesta] (1) Porque las personas negras/indígenas/más oscuras no trabajan lo suficiente (2) . . . son menos inteligentes; (3) . . . son tratadas de manera injusta; (4) . . . tienen bajo nivel educativo; (5) . . . no quieren cambiar su cultura."

¹³ See Kluegel (1990) on motivational individualism (option 1) and traditional individualism (option 2); see Kinder and Sanders (1981) and Gilens (1999) on cultural attributions (option 5).

¹⁴ See Kluegel (1990) and Hunt (2007). Unfair treatment of racial and ethnic minorities references direct structural discrimination. The educational explanation was designed and tested to signal the poorer provision of schooling that disproportionately affects minorities in Latin America; it references indirect structural discrimination (Massey and Denton 1993). Schuman et al. (1997) assert that this joint conceptualization rests on the assumption that "discrimination and education explanations are structural *in emphasis*," pointing more toward external constraints than individualist explanations (p. 161; emphasis added).

ages by country and by dominant and target minority population; we then present the same across all five options. Following past research, we subsequently use the collapsed categories as the dependent variable in a binomial logistic regression to model the choice of structural (= 1) versus individualist (= 0) explanations for racial inequality in each of the eight countries.

We used another survey question from the ethnicity module to create our second dependent variable, narrowing the scope of possible explanations for black and indigenous disadvantage due to unequal treatment (i.e., discrimination). The question reads: "Do you believe that indigenous persons/black persons/darker skin persons are treated (1) much better, (2) better, (3) the same, (4) worse, or (5) much worse than white persons?"¹⁵ We collapsed options 1 (much better), 2 (better), and 3 (the same) to index the lack of belief that indigenous or black persons suffer discrimination and options 5 (worse) and 6 (much worse) as recognition of discrimination. This question challenges respondents to register their opinions on the existence of direct discrimination. It contrasts with the previous survey item where respondents chose between discrimination or the education-based structural explanation; the latter may only indirectly reference race or remit to class (Schuman et al. 1997). As with the first question, we present results of the collapsed categories by country and by dominant and target minority populations. The two collapsed categories form the dependent variable in a second set of binomial logistic regressions in country-level models. In our analysis, we employed standard logit regression and adjusted for clustering at the level of the primary sampling unit.

In our statistical models of both survey items we used the same independent variables. Our independent ethnicity variable capturing dominant versus target minority populations was based on the following survey item: "Do you consider yourself white, *mestizo*, indigenous, *negro*, *mulato* or other?"¹⁶ In all countries, the first part of the question ["Do you consider yourself . . ."] was the same, but the response categories differed in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Brazil. In the Dominican Republic, *indio* (literally Indian, but Dominicans often interpret it as copper-colored; see Candelario 2007) was included in the same category as *mestizo* (*mestizo/Indio*), and the indigenous category was excluded.¹⁷ In Guatemala, the response categories were *ladino* (a term roughly referring to whites and *mes-*

¹⁵ In Spanish: "Usted cree que las personas negra/indígena/más oscura son tratadas mucho mejor, mejor, igual, peor, o mucho peor que las personas blancas?"

¹⁶ The question in Spanish: "¿Usted se considera una persona blanca, mestiza, indígena, negra, mulata u otra?"

¹⁷ Popular racial categories in the Dominican Republic are unique. Dominicans commonly associate "blackness" with Haitians as a result of their complicated history with neighboring Haiti (Safa 2005; Candelario 2007).

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TABLE 1
DEFINITIONS AND PERCENTAGES OF GROUPS

	Dominant	Target Minority	All Others
Brazil	White (37)	<i>Pardo, preto</i> (57)	Indigenous, other (6)
Colombia	White, <i>mestizo</i> (85)	Negro, mulatto (10)	Indigenous, other (5)
Dominican Republic	White, <i>mestizo/indio</i> (77)	Negro, mulatto (21)	Other (1)
Ecuador	White, <i>mestizo</i> (93)	Negro, mulatto (5)	Indigenous, other (2)
Bolivia	White, <i>mestizo</i> (26)	Indigenous (73)	Negro, mulatto, other (1)
Guatemala	Ladino (61)	Indigenous (36)	Negro, mulatto, other (3)
Mexico	White, <i>mestizo</i> (88)	Indigenous (7)	Negro, mulatto, other (4)
Peru	White, <i>mestizo</i> (80)	Indigenous (16)	Negro, mulatto, other (4)

NOTE.—Descriptive statistics are weighted to adjust for sampling design. Nos. in parentheses are percentages, reflecting size and composition of the country’s dominant group.

tizos collectively), indigenous, *negro*, *mulato*, and other. In Brazil, the response options (in Portuguese) were those of its national census: *branca* (white), *preta* (black), *parda* (brown or mixed race), *amarela* (Asian), and *indigena* (indigenous).

In all countries, the target minority referred to either indigenous or Afrodescendants, which was referenced in the survey items used for the two dependent variables. The group chosen in each country was the larger group in the sample, as shown in table 1.¹⁸ A small residual category, “all others,” was also part of the comparison and included nontarget minorities of each country as well as “others,” which are collectively represented in the last column of table 1.

Our dominant category included whites and *mestizos*, the latter generally understood as progeny of whites and indigenous.¹⁹ Although technically nonwhite, *mestizos* are commonly considered part of the dominant population in these countries, largely because of *mestizaje* ideologies (Safa 2005; Roitman 2009; Beck et al. 2011; Hale 2011). Indeed, *mestizos* are the quintessential national citizen in the national ideologies of *mestizaje*, a category in which many elites place themselves. At the other side of the *mestizo* category, the ethnic boundary between *mestizo* and indigenous is also fluid.

¹⁸ Although the dependent variables ask opinions about “blacks” in three countries and “dark-skinned persons” in the Dominican Republic, we constructed the target minority in those countries as persons that self-identified as *negros* and *mulatos* in Colombia, Dominican Republic, and Ecuador, and *pretos* (blacks) and *pardos* (browns) in Brazil, all of whom are often referred to as Afrodescendants in Latin America, especially in official documents (Antón et al. 2009).

¹⁹ In the Dominican Republic, African ancestry is clearly part of the *mestizo/indio* category, although it is denied in national narratives (Candelario 2007). Even in countries like Mexico, African ancestry forms part of the *mestizo* genealogical mix, but it is also downplayed.

Some individuals may have self-identified as *mestizo* in the survey; however, they may be perceived as indigenous because of their language or dress, or for other reasons, or they may self-identify as indigenous or in a particular indigenous group in other situations. In her study of Peru, for example, De la Cadena (2001) refers to such persons as “indigenous mestizos.” Following the custom of national censuses of Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru (Schkolnik and Del Popolo 2008), and to clarify the indigenous-*mestizo* boundary, we also used additional language and ethnic group identifiers (e.g., Maya, Aymara) to construct the indigenous/target minority variable.

For the regression analyses, the other independent variables were education, sex, age, and urban/rural residence. Education was a three-category variable, age was continuous, and gender and rural/urban were dichotomous. We included an attitudinal variable tapping one dimension of the multifaceted *mestizaje* orientation. The survey item reads: “The mixing of races is good for [name of country]. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?” Responses were measured on a 1–7 scale, with 1 indicating strongly disagree and 7 indicating strongly agree. We believe that this item may reflect nationalist “originating” myths that retell the histories of these countries as beginning from separate “racial stocks” and later moving toward mixed-race populations (e.g., Rahier 2010).

FINDINGS

Table 2 shows the distribution of structuralist versus individualist explanations for Afrodescendants or indigenous disadvantage and of opinions on the existence of discrimination in each of the eight countries, by dominant and target minority population. We focus first on column 1, which presents total population percentages of those who endorsed structural accounts by country. At the high end, fully 89.1% of Brazilians offered structuralist interpretations for Afrodescendant poverty, followed by Peru, where 81.3% adopted the structuralist account for indigenous poverty. At the low end, we find Ecuador and the Dominican Republic, at 62.7% and 65.8%, respectively. Totals for the survey item that focused narrowly on the recognition of unfair treatment, or discrimination, show that the highest percentages recognizing discrimination were in Peru and Mexico at 81.6% and 80.7%, respectively, followed by Brazil at 72.1%. Bolivia was clearly at the low end, with only 31.5% of the sample responding that indigenous were treated worse than whites.

Overall, these first bivariate results show that, despite some variation, robust majorities of Latin Americans across all eight countries preferred structural explanations, including both discrimination and education, for

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TABLE 2
DISTRIBUTION (WEIGHTED) OF EXPLANATIONS FOR MINORITY GROUP POVERTY

TARGET MINORITY GROUP AND COUNTRY	STRUCTURAL EXPLANATIONS			BELIEF IN DISCRIMINATION		
	Total (1)	Dominant (2)	Minority (3)	Total (4)	Dominant (5)	Minority (6)
Afrodescendant:						
Brazil	89.1	85.6**	90.9**	72.1	68.0	74.4
Colombia	75.2	74.7	80.4	59.9	60.2	61.7
Dominican Republic	65.8	65.6	67.2	63.6	62.2	68.4
Ecuador	62.7	62.7*	71.5*	68.7	68.9	71.5
Indigenous:						
Bolivia	70.6	67.1	72.1	31.5	30.6	31.9
Guatemala	77.2	74.5**	82.1**	57.9	57.5	58.7
Mexico	76.4	76.7	74.8	80.7	81.6*	69.2*
Peru	81.3	80.6	84.9	81.6	82.6	80.2

NOTE.—Nos. in table are percentages. *P*-values are measuring whether the differences between the dominant (cols. 2, 5) and target minority groups (cols. 3, 6) are statistically significant.

* *P* < .05 (two-tailed *t*-test).

** *P* < .01.

*** *P* < .001.

minority disadvantage. Moreover, in seven out of eight countries (except Bolivia), robust majorities specifically recognized discrimination toward racial or ethnic minorities. These findings clearly contradict our hypothesis 1, in which we predicted widespread denial of inequality’s structural basis, including discrimination.

Results in table 2 also speak to hypothesis 2, in which we predicted attitudinal symmetry between dominants and minorities in denying structural explanations for minority disadvantage. As shown in columns 2 and 3, minority group members showed a small preference for structural explanations compared to dominant group members, but this difference was not statistically significant in over half of the countries.²⁰ In Brazil, fully 90.9% of Afrodescendants (*pretos* and *pardos*) preferred structural explanations for Afrodescendant poverty compared to 85.6% of whites. At the other end, only 62.7% of Ecuadorian whites and *mestizos* preferred structuralist explanations, while 71.5% of Afro-Ecuadorians did. As regards unequal treatment (cols. 4–6), we found a significant dominant/minority difference only in Mexico; dominants were actually more likely to recognize discrimination than the indigenous minority, at 81.6% and 69.2%, respectively. Hence, there was near symmetry between minorities and dominants in all eight countries on the “explanations” outcome, and in seven out of eight on

²⁰ The small “all others” category is not shown.

the “belief in discrimination” outcome. However, the symmetry we found ran counter to our predictions, by embracing structural explanations and belief in discrimination, not by denying them.

Concerning belief in discrimination, however, the pattern was quite different in Bolivia. In that context, we did find support for our second hypothesis: there was symmetry between dominants and subordinates in a majority denial of discrimination. A closer look at the distribution of responses on this question reveals just how different Bolivia is compared to the other seven countries. Table 3, with the disaggregated choices regarding the treatment of minorities, from “much better” to “much worse,” provides that look. Results show that about one in three Bolivians (6.9% and 24.2% endorsing the “much better” or “better” options, respectively) claimed that indigenous are actually treated better than whites, thereby seeming to espouse reverse racism. However, Bolivians’ most popular single response was that indigenous are treated the same as whites, chosen by 37.4% of the sample. The prevalence of the reverse racism stance clearly sets Bolivia apart among our eight country cases, as we will discuss further.

In hypothesis 3 we predicted that respondents would be more likely to explain indigenous disadvantage by culture, an individualist stance, than structure, based on perceptions that indigenous peoples are more culturally specific in comparison to Afrodescendants. In order to isolate that difference, table 3 presents percentage distributions for the subcategories that make up the structuralist versus individualist accounts, the latter including culture (col. 5). Results did not support our hypothesis: the percentages choosing culture as the primary cause for minority disadvantage did not vary by type of minority population, that is, whether in reference to Afrodescendant or indigenous people. The lowest percentage choosing culture was in Brazil, at 8.6%; percentages in the other cases ranged between 12.1%, in Peru, to 22.2%, in the Dominican Republic. These percentages suggest that the perception of cultural differences does affect the views of significant segments of these countries’ populations; however, blaming culture is not a majority stance in any country.

Interestingly, respondents in the Dominican Republic, where the target minority is Afrodescendant, were most likely to use culture to explain why “dark skin” people are poor. This could reflect an understanding that “dark skin” refers to Haitians, despite our strategy to preempt that connotation by avoiding the word *negro* in that country’s survey. On the other end of the spectrum, Brazilians were least likely to view culture as explaining Afrodescendant poverty, which seems consistent with the view that Afro-Brazilians are integrated into a national-level culture (Sansone 2003; Telles 2004; Bailey 2009). As to the other individualist accounts, few Latin Americans believed that lower intelligence explains minorities’ poverty (col. 4), although the Dominican Republic again showed the high-

TABLE 3
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION (WEIGHTED) OF PREFERRED EXPLANATIONS FOR MINORITY POVERTY TREATMENT

	EXPLANATION FOR MINORITY POVERTY									
	Structural					Individual				
	Discrimination (1)	Education (2)	Work (3)	Intelligence (4)	Culture (5)	Much Better (6)	Better (7)	Same (8)	Worse (9)	Much Worse (10)
Afrodescendant:										
Brazil	76.9	12.2	1.7	.7	8.6	1.0	2.5	24.5	60.4	11.7
Colombia	57.3	18.1	8.5	2.0	14.1	.7	4.1	35.5	51.8	7.9
Dominican Republic	42.4	23.4	4.4	7.6	22.2	.6	3.2	32.7	54.6	8.9
Ecuador	47.0	15.7	19.5	3.2	14.6	.4	2.8	28.0	56.5	12.2
Indigenous:										
Bolivia	31.3	39.3	6.6	3.7	19.2	6.9	24.2	37.4	28.2	3.4
Guatemala	40.0	36.8	5.0	2.6	15.6	2.1	6.9	33.5	49.7	7.9
Mexico	47.1	29.3	4.0	1.8	17.8	1.3	4.6	13.9	56.7	23.5
Peru	35.4	45.9	3.4	3.2	12.1	1.2	1.4	16.1	62.7	18.7

NOTE.—Nos. are weighted percentages. Data are from the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey.

est percentage (7.6%) for this belief. Finally, fully 19.5% of Ecuadorian respondents named laziness (insufficient work effort), a sociocultural victim-blaming stance, as the primary reason for black poverty compared to less than 10% of respondents in the other seven countries.

Table 3 also shows the variation among countries between the two structural explanations, discrimination versus poor schooling. Although the preferred explanation in most countries was discrimination (col. 1), more than three-quarters of Brazilians (76.9%) preferred that explanation in contrast to roughly a third of Bolivians (31.3%) and Peruvians (35.4%). On the other hand, almost half of Peruvians (45.9%) and over a third of Guatemalans (36.8%) chose poor schooling (col. 2) to explain minorities' poverty. These results suggest that structural explanations are sensitive to Afrodescendant/indigenous target group distinctions. Explanations based on poor schooling seem to be especially strong in reference to indigenous people, who may more obviously lack access to quality schools, while discrimination was invoked more often to account for the poverty of blacks.

Turning to our regression analyses, table 4 presents the means for the independent variables for each of the eight countries for both of our outcome measures. We present odds ratios from logistic regression models for each of the eight countries for both outcome variables, explanations for inequality (table 5) and belief in discrimination (table 6). A first important finding from these models concerns minority versus dominant group differences. In line with our bivariate analysis in table 2, the general lack of significance of the ethnicity variable across models in tables 5 and 6 suggests that ethnoracial divergence on stratification beliefs are exceptional, not common, in Latin America. That is, attitudes about the existence and causes of ethnoracial inequality are not robustly contoured by ethnoracial group status. Even when separating *mestizos* and whites in an analysis (not shown) so that the dominant category was comprised only of whites, the general lack of significance of the ethnicity variable held in all but one case in a single model.²¹ Hence, group conflict and sociocultural theories predicting robust, dominant versus minority cleavages on stratification beliefs are clearly inadequate framings in these Latin American contexts.

There are a few exceptional outcomes, however. Regarding the first dependent variable, table 5 results reveal that targeted minorities in Brazil and Guatemala were more likely to hold structuralist explanations at statistically significant levels than dominants. The odds of targeted minorities using structure to explain minority disadvantage compared to dominants in Brazil and Guatemala were 1.5 and 1.7 times greater, respectively. In comparison, table 6 shows that only in Brazil was the target minority

²¹ Regarding the "belief in discrimination" outcome, only in Ecuador were whites significantly less likely than *mestizos* to express belief in discrimination against Afrodescendants.

TABLE 4
 MEANS FOR THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES (Weighted) IN EIGHT LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	AFRODESCENDANT TARGET MINORITY				INDIGENOUS TARGET MINORITY				POOLED SAMPLE (9)
	Brazil (1)	Colombia (2)	Ecuador (3)	Dominican Republic (4)	Bolivia (5)	Mexico (6)	Guatemala (7)	Peru (8)	
Ethnicity:									
Dominant . . . . .	.37	.85	.93	.77	.26	.88	.61	.80	.65
Target minority . . . . .	.57	.10	.05	.21	.73	.07	.36	.16	.32
All others . . . . .	.06	.05	.02	.01	.01	.04	.03	.04	.03
Education:									
Low . . . . .	.33	.28	.28	.33	.24	.33	.49	.16	.31
Medium . . . . .	.58	.18	.47	.50	.49	.52	.40	.43	.45
High . . . . .	.09	.54	.25	.17	.27	.15	.11	.41	.25
Female . . . . .	.52	.50	.51	.51	.50	.50	.50	.50	.51
Age	39.5	37.2	39.4	41.2	37.1	39.4	38.5	39.0	38.9
Urban . . . . .	.88	.74	.76	.73	.69	.77	.47	.77	.73
Belief in <i>mestizaje</i>	6.3	5.9	5.5	3.8	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.5	5.4
N	2,442	1,455	2,968	1,483	2,966	1,461	1,460	1,467	15,702

TABLE 5
 ODDS RATIOS FROM LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSES OF STRUCTURAL VERSUS INDIVIDUALIST EXPLANATIONS
 FOR MINORITY POVERTY IN EIGHT LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	AFRODESCENDANT TARGET MINORITY				INDIGENOUS TARGET MINORITY			
	Brazil	Colombia	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	Bolivia	Guatemala	Mexico	Peru
Ethnicity (dominant is omitted variable):								
Afrodescendant	1.537** (.249)	1.432 (.411)	1.033 (.169)	1.428 (.299)	1.15 (.109)	1.733** (.298)	.913 (.215)	1.433 (.386)
Indigenous . . . . .					.759 (.365)	.968 (.417)	.869 (.265)	1.103 (.427)
All others	1.486 (.368)	1.112 (.488)	.675 (.435)	.381** (.119)				
Education (low is omitted variable):								
Medium	1.066 (.186)	1.282 (.231)	1.653*** (.250)	1.309* (.155)	.860 (.072)	1.842*** (.312)	1.530* (.264)	1.454 (.284)
High . . . . .	.752 (.197)	1.902*** (.300)	2.217*** (.505)	1.485** (.195)	.786* (.096)	1.436 (.367)	2.991*** (.764)	1.547 (.366)
Female	1.178 (.167)	1.349* (.173)	1.119 (.133)	1.254*** (.083)	.96 (.057)	1.214 (.168)	.882 (.122)	.815 (.108)
Age . . . . .	.994 (.005)	.992 (.004)	.995 (.004)	.983*** (.003)	.998 (.003)	.993 (.005)	.994 (.005)	1.001 (.004)
Urban	1.026 (.313)	1.147 (.195)	1.237 (.228)	1.297* (.152)	.855 (.076)	1.117 (.197)	1.249 (.253)	1.251 (.279)
Belief in <i>mestizaje</i>	1.175* (.074)	1.118 (.070)	1.051 (.031)	1.200*** (.036)	1.044* (.023)	1.114* (.050)	1.167** (.064)	1.017 (.043)
Pseudo R ² . . . . .	.019	.031	.026	.050	.005	.034	.041	.008
N	2,125	1,334	1,140	2,636	2,517	1,189	1,330	1,287

NOTE.—Dependent variable: 1 = structural explanations, 0 = individualist explanations. Nos. in parentheses are SEs.
 * $P < .05$ (two-tailed test).
 ** $P < .01$.
 *** $P < .001$.

TABLE 6
ODDS RATIOS FROM LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSES OF BELIEF ABOUT DISCRIMINATION IN EIGHT LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	AFRODESCENDANT TARGET MINORITY				INDIGENOUS TARGET MINORITY			
	Brazil	Colombia	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	Bolivia	Guatemala	Mexico	Peru
Ethnicity (dominant is omitted variable):								
Afrodescendant	1.455* (.222)	1.078 (.257)	1.221 (.199)	1.135 (.231)				
Indigenous					1.069 (.087)	1.172 (.157)	.494** (.123)	1.110 (.256)
All others	1.322 (.329)	.769 (.272)	1.260 (.603)	.619 (.160)	0.932 (.538)	1.086 (.345)	1.025 (.354)	.445* (.177)
Education (low is omitted variable):								
Medium	1.109 (.134)	1.226 (.203)	1.571** (.258)	1.031 (.109)	.833* (.065)	1.483** (.213)	1.626** (.281)	.966 (.223)
High . . . . .	.890 (.150)	1.629** (.245)	2.749*** (.534)	1.223 (.180)	.802* (.084)	1.258 (.245)	1.860* (.460)	1.375 (.366)
Female	1.288* (.127)	1.103 (.120)	1.324** (.141)	1.337*** (.095)	1.068 (.058)	.971 (.118)	1.093 (.151)	1.121 (.163)
Age . . . . .	.995 (.003)	.999 (.004)	.998 (.005)	.982*** (.003)	.997 (.003)	.995 (.004)	.999 (.005)	1.000 (.004)
Urban	1.056 (.226)	1.153 (.160)	1.015 (.163)	1.153 (.138)	.942 (.085)	1.374* (.201)	1.039 (.266)	1.851* (.479)
Belief in <i>mestizaje</i>	1.054 (.047)	1.037 (.050)	1.012 (.031)	1.070 (.039)	.937* (.025)	1.063 (.034)	1.106 (.073)	1.062 (.051)
Pseudo R ² . . . . .	.012	.013	.027	.025	.004	.018	.023	.024
N	2,297	1,394	1,399	2,741	2,646	1,301	1,353	1,338

NOTE.—Nos. in parentheses are SEs.
* $P < .05$ (two-tailed test).
** $P < .01$.
*** $P < .001$.

more likely than the dominant population to recognize the unequal treatment of the minority population (1.5 odds ratio); and only in Mexico was the targeted minority actually less likely than dominants to point to discrimination against the minority (odds ratio of .5).

The effects in Brazil for both outcome measures contrast with Bailey's (2002, 2009) findings from 1995 and 2000, where significant racial differences were not present. We believe this key difference may be explained in part by the country's recent widespread embrace of targeted policies for Afrodescendants and public discussion of racism. Those policies may be highlighting Afrodescendants' and whites' conflicting racial interests and thereby stimulating conflict-based attitudes by way of racial attitudinal cleavages (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Hunt 2007), lending some support to hypothesis 4 that predicted minority and dominant divergence in that context. Hence, Brazil may be uniquely situated in reconfiguring attitudinal stances reflecting divergent racial group interests, although the acceptance of structural explanations and the explicit recognition of unequal treatment are relatively high for both the dominant and minority populations.

In Guatemala, indigenous people were much more likely than ladinos to embrace structuralist accounts (table 5). Ethnic polarization seems to be particularly acute in this context, perhaps reflecting the history of indigenous segregation and displacement, including a national narrative, unique in Latin America, of opposition to *mestizaje* and support for separate ladino and Maya (indigenous) nations (Grandin 2000; Hale 2006). We expected a similar cleavage in Bolivia, as stated in our fourth hypothesis, but it did not occur.

The finding on Mexico indicating that dominants are significantly more likely than the minority population to recognize discrimination (table 6) is anomalous in terms of existing theoretical framings; no scholar, to our knowledge, has posited that minorities would be less likely than dominants to endorse structuralist accounts. Even with this statistically significant cleavage between dominants and indigenous on the one survey item, robust majorities of both populations nonetheless endorse structural accounts and point to discrimination; this contradicts hypothesis 4, where we predicted that minorities would join dominants in Mexico in denying the structural basis of minority disadvantage. That hypothesis was also contradicted in the Dominican Republic, where we found no significant difference between minority and dominant populations (tables 5 and 6); agreement between these two populations, however, was in an embrace of structural accounts and the recognition of discrimination. Overall, our findings suggest that ethnoracial divides regarding stratification beliefs are exceptional in Latin America, making that region quite different from the United States, where

those divides appear firmly ensconced in that country's racial and ethnic landscapes (Dawson 2000; Sears et al. 2000).²²

A second important finding from these models on both outcomes suggest that, in most countries, class (as indexed by education) is more strongly associated with attitudes toward racial and ethnic disadvantage than race/ethnicity. Again, this stands in contrast to studies in the United States that find racial group membership transcends major social class divisions in forming racial attitudes (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sidanius and Pratto 1999).²³ The Dominican Republic and Colombia, for example, present some of the clearest evidence of the importance of class over ethnicity/race for understanding stratification beliefs. For Dominicans, the odds that an individual with a college education would explain black poverty structurally and recognize unequal treatment were both more than two times greater compared to an individual with a primary education (odds ratios of 2.2 and 2.7, respectively).

In four countries, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Mexico, the most educated persons were more likely than the least educated to prefer structuralist explanations, and in three of those four countries (excepting Ecuador), the same was true regarding the recognition of discrimination. Only in Bolivia, where such explanations are more unpopular overall, were the most educated actually less likely than those with a primary education to recognize discrimination against the target minority. This finding may reveal again the significant reorganization underway in Bolivian society (García Linera 2010). The effects of those changes appear to reverberate more clearly along class cleavages as opposed to ethnoracial ones. Besides being indigenous, the Bolivian president, Evo Morales, was a union leader more versed in labor union struggle than indigenous ones; his rise was backed by a combination of lower- and middle-class leftist, nationalist, indigenous, and labor organizations. As head of the Movement to Socialism, the ruling leftist party, he leads a broad democratic challenge to entrenched elite interests (Gustafson and Fabricant 2011). A class threat felt by the Bolivian elite, then, may help to explain the negative correlation between education and recognition of discrimination in that context.

In Brazil, the lack of significance for the educational level variable alongside the significance of the ethnicity variable is particularly interesting. This

²² In Ecuador, the "all others" category was significant in table 5, as it was in Peru in table 6. In both cases, these populations were actually less likely than dominants to embrace structuralist accounts (in Ecuador) or recognize unequal treatment (in Peru). However, due to the heterogeneous makeup and smaller number of cases in these categories, drawing substantive conclusions may not be warranted.

²³ Scholars argue that minority experiences in the United States trump social class divides due in part to a strong sense of linked collective fate and robust group identification (e.g., Hunt 2007).

finding further contrasts with the earlier research on Brazil (data from 1995 and 2000) that showed race made no difference for explanations of racial inequality, but that class was determinant (Bailey 2002, 2009). We now find the opposite, and thus it seems that race has become a salient cleavage marking racial attitudes, while class has receded. Our divergent results may provide further insight into the changing racial climate during the past decade in Brazil.

Our models' controls, gender, age, and urbanicity, showed significant effects in a few cases. Younger persons in Ecuador strongly preferred structural explanations for minority group disadvantage and were more likely to recognize unequal treatment. For example, the odds of a 20-year-old individual recognizing the unequal treatment of minority populations were 51% greater compared to a 50-year-old ($.017 \times 30$; table 5). These results may suggest a trend toward increasing recognition of discrimination in that context. Ecuador has gone through a significant shift toward multiculturalism, as reflected in both its 1998 and especially 2008 constitutions (Rahier 2010). Whether an age or a cohort effect, a negative association between age and both endorsing structural explanations and recognizing discrimination in Ecuador suggests a gradually changing attitudinal context for antiracism.

Finally, views on the value of racial mixing as "good for one's country" (indexed by our variable on *mestizaje* beliefs) were positively associated with accepting structuralist beliefs in five of the eight cases (table 5), but were not positively associated with recognizing discrimination in any of the models. One could argue that, while this measure captures the positive and most obvious idea of *mestizaje*, *mestizaje* is a more complex belief structure that includes, and hides, the idea of black and indigenous assimilation or disappearance. Apart from this specific measure, the general acceptance of structural explanations and the specific recognition of discrimination despite the overarching *mestizaje* ideology are notable.²⁴

In Bolivia, however, the *mestizaje* attitudinal variable was negatively associated with recognizing discrimination (table 6). This exceptional result may reflect the tension in this context where the great majority of the population is indigenous at the same time that the president, who is deeply challenging the structures of privilege, including that of a *mestizo* class, is also indigenous (Gustafson 2009). Only in Bolivia, then, are those who endorse a view of *mestizaje* as positive for the nation more likely to deny indigenous disadvantage. The scholarly view on the negativity of *mestizaje* for stratification beliefs (Winant 1999; Sidanius et al. 2001; Paschel 2010; Beck et al. 2011; Warren and Sue 2011), then, finds some echo in the Bolivian context.

²⁴ In models (not shown) without the *mestizaje* variable, the general magnitude and direction of the coefficients for the other variables were the same.

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Overall, our results show that, in the eight countries we examined, Latin Americans generally accept structural explanations and recognize discrimination. Moreover, both dominants and minorities embrace these stratification beliefs. Hence, contrary to the literature, our findings suggest that Latin America's ideological context does not necessarily lead to masking the structural causes of racial and ethnic disadvantage, including direct discrimination. In this way, our article challenges the field to move toward a more nuanced understanding of the racial common sense in Latin America, at least as revealed through large-sample surveys.

DISCUSSION

We began this exploration of racial attitudes in Latin America noting a historic difference between racial ideologies that have shaped that context in contrast to the United States. In Latin America, an embrace of *mestizaje* has characterized the racial common sense over most of the 20th century, while an emphasis on racial purity and segregation held sway for much of the same period in the United States. Both ideologies arguably continue to be well entrenched in national psyches, and they are indeed "racial myths" (Omi and Winant 1994, p. 63) in the sense of being popularly held beliefs about skin color and ancestry that help individuals and groups explain significant dimensions of everyday life.

In the United States, dominated by the myth of racial purity, anti-miscegenation laws "guarded" whites from racial mixing, which was considered dangerous. In contrast, elites have promoted *mestizaje* discourses in many Latin American nations since the early 20th century. In the later decades of the 20th century, the United States saw African-American mobilization that created a public demand for countering white racial oppression, setting a progressive agenda for race relations. Meanwhile, beginning in some Latin American countries in the 1980s, the progressive character of *mestizaje* came under scrutiny. Many social movement actors and academics began questioning its progressive value, viewing it instead as a common-sense ideology that furthered white racial interests in large part through masking the role of race in structuring disadvantage.

Based on public opinion surveys for eight Latin American countries, our results complicate and challenge that characterization of the effects of *mestizaje* myths. We arrived at this conclusion through a detailed analysis of explanations for racial inequality, including a direct assessment of the recognition of unequal treatment of ethnoracial populations. The general literature led us to assume that, as in the United States, minorities in Latin America would embrace a structuralist stance, and dominants, an individualist orientation (Bobo and Hutchings 1996). Nonetheless, Latin American scholarship, much of it based on ethnographic studies, led us to hypothesize

that both dominants and subordinates would endorse an individualist stance (Twine 1998; Beck et al. 2011; Warren and Sue 2011). Contrary to these key assumptions, we found that robust majorities of Latin Americans across these eight countries, and both dominant and minority populations, supported structuralist explanations for racial inequality. In addition, numerical majorities in seven of eight countries explicitly recognize the unequal treatment of ethnoracial minorities.

The Brazilian and Bolivian results are notable in that they reveal heterogeneity among Latin American countries' stratification beliefs. Even though these two countries have arguably shifted the most from official myths of *mestizaje* and toward an official embrace of multiculturalism and the recognition of minority rights, their populations' attitudes toward racial discrimination diverge significantly. While Brazilians most robustly embrace structuralist understandings of racial inequality, with particularly strong beliefs regarding antiblack discrimination, most Bolivians do not believe that indigenous people suffer direct discrimination. Moreover, in Bolivia, the idea of reverse racism was endorsed by 34.6% of that national sample, whereas in Brazil, only 3.5% claimed the same. These Bolivia-Brazil differences may have much to do with their divergent processes of transition to multicultural citizenship regimes and the recognition of minority grievances. In Brazil, the process was largely consensual and gradual, following decades of official denial of racism (Telles 2004); however, the end result of that process, although significant, has had relatively little impact on Brazil's racial hierarchy. In contrast, the Bolivian transition was considered revolutionary (Garcia Linera 2006), leading to the election of an indigenous president in a mostly indigenous country, who, despite his popularity in reducing inequality and on other fronts, quickly challenged entrenched interests (Schilling-Vacaflor 2011). The more dramatic social reorganization in Bolivia as a plurinational democracy has so deeply threatened racial and class hierarchies to the point that his administration has been accused of discrimination against the nonindigenous population (Gustafson and Fabricant 2011; Mamani Ramirez 2011).

In a comparative lens, the General Social Survey (GSS) has asked U.S. respondents over many years if the lower socioeconomic level of "blacks" was "due to discrimination," using a stand-alone question format. Between the years 2000 and 2008, while 59% of African-Americans responded "yes," only 30% of whites responded the same (Bobo et al. 2012, p. 64). Our findings show, then, that, like African-Americans in the United States, minorities in Latin American generally recognize discrimination and prefer structuralist accounts. However, in stark contrast to the United States, where whites largely reject discrimination and structuralist explanations, dominant populations in our Latin American country samples agreed with minorities on these issues. For example, while only 30% of white Americans

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acknowledged discrimination in the United States (Bobo et al. 2012, p. 64), 68% of white Brazilians and 58% of ladinos in Guatemala did so. Hence, in the case of the “Americas,” our analysis suggests that U.S. whites stand out as exceptional in holding almost asymmetrical attitudinal stances when compared with minority populations.²⁵

What explains these counterintuitive findings in Latin America? We posit two related lines of inquiry; both consider the relative absence of conditions amenable to stark attitudinal divides among dominant and ethno-racial minority populations in Latin America. First, a key factor identified in the literature as promoting attitudinal divides is the perception of conflicting racial group-based interests (Kinder and Sears 1996; Sears et al. 2000). For decades of 20th-century U.S. society, white supremacy encoded in law proscribed the most basic dignities and rights of African-Americans. This contorted legal context no doubt promoted bright racial cleavages in the perception of group-based interests and attitudes; blacks and whites saw the world from different lenses in part because they lived in legally segregated worlds. In addition to that legacy, highly racialized political and social discourses as well as high residential segregation in the United States remain, perhaps contributing to the persistence of sharper group-based interests and attitudes.

Except in mid-20th-century Cuba, Panama, and Puerto Rico, which were controlled by the United States, race was not reinscribed in law or generally stated in policy in Latin America, and ideas of *mestizaje* blurred racial boundaries and thus perceived racial group-based interests and attitudes. Brazil is illustrative in this regard. After the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the formation of the republican country of Brazil in 1889, the Brazilian state did not inscribe race into its constitution or laws regulating the lives of its citizens. Although elite white interests dominated Latin American societies, the lack of an explicit/legal use of race, a *mestizaje* discourse, and relatively moderate racial segregation may have mitigated the perception of contrasting racial interests and attitudes among the masses of poor black, brown, and white Latin Americans.²⁶ Hence, despite racial inequality and discrimination, racial attitudes in Latin America are not straightforwardly racial-group specific as would be posited by group conflict framings.

²⁵ The format of the GSS question differs from that of the items in our surveys. Nonetheless, the similar substance of the questions holds. Regarding Bolivians, results show that they also appear to embrace similar views to whites in the United States, as reflected in the item on the recognition of discrimination. However, on the other survey item regarding explanations for racial inequality, Bolivians align with the other Latin American cases, where there is near symmetry between dominants and minorities in an embrace of structural explanations for racial inequality.

²⁶ For example, Telles (2004, p. 221) argues that in large part “white privilege in Brazil is advanced through a defense of class interests.”

A second line of inquiry that provides insight into our unexpected findings concerns dominant views (i.e., both whites and *mestizos*) of the racialized “other” in many Latin American contexts. The embrace of *mestizaje* means that large swaths of Latin Americans may view the racial or ethnic “other” as part of themselves, if not through miscegenation, then through national imagination (De la Cadena 2005; Wade 2005). This dynamic of overlapping or nested identifications is also suggested by the fluidity that characterizes ethnoracial boundaries throughout much of Latin America (Telles and Sue 2009). French (2009, p. 175), for example, writes in her ethnography of Afrodescendant and indigenous populations in Northern Brazil, “Each person . . . also self-identifies as simultaneously being Indian, African, Dutch, Portuguese, *Sergipano*, and *sertanejo*. In fact, it is the very perspective on heritage that permits them to be different and separate, yet similar and related.” Wade (2005, p. 257) too writes: “As I have tried to show with Latin American examples, people are constantly thinking in terms of roots and racial origins, and they may make inclusive spaces for these origins within their own bodies and families.” Wade argues that while *mestizaje* may be framed as an ideology, it is also a lived experience among the masses in ways that a singular focus on ideology may miss.

From the perspective of the myth of racial purity, the “other” is never within in the United States; the racial “other” is historically contaminating, dangerous, and separate (Davis 1991; De la Cadena 2001). Consequently, research reveals that those who most embrace the myth of racial purity in the U.S. context, white Americans, are most strident in rejecting structuralist interpretations of racial hierarchy (Kluegel 1990; Hunt 2007). In contrast, when we measured the embrace of *mestizaje* directly in our models, those who most embraced racial mixing were often also most likely to endorse structuralist accounts. We suggest, then, that the sociocultural context of belief in white racial purity in the United States, which necessarily excises the “other,” contributes to ethnoracial attitudinal asymmetry, thereby contrasting with the symmetry of attitudes between Latin American ethnoracial populations that we have documented here.

Do these findings suggesting an agreement on the structural causes of minority inequality in Latin America speak to the possibility of growing support for anti-inequality policy measures in those countries? In the United States, race-targeted policies are being challenged and largely dismantled due in no small part to white opposition to them (Kluegel 1990; Tuch and Hughes 2011). That opposition is expected through whites’ endorsement of individualist explanations for black inequality (Kluegel and Bobo 1993; Sears et al. 2000). Social scientific theories on the relationship between stratification beliefs and policy attitudes clearly suggest that agreement between dominants and minorities in support of structural explanations could positively affect the chances of future policy in favor of disadvantaged minorities in

Latin America. Indeed, Bailey (2004) documented a positive association between structuralist stratification beliefs and support for the idea of race-targeted affirmative action in the Brazilian context as early as 2000.²⁷ Progressive policy changes may conceivably occur soon in several Latin American countries, and current policy redress may be expected to continue in Brazil and Bolivia.

In contrast, over the past decades in the United States, black and Hispanic attitudes have shifted toward individualist explanations, increasingly converging with the attitudes of non-Hispanic whites (Hunt 2007; Bobo et al. 2012).²⁸ In the United States, then, there is evidence of a trend toward symmetry between dominants and minorities, but in the wrong direction for progressive racial reforms.²⁹ Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2008) note this changing ideological context in the United States, labeled “colorblind racism,” and express concern that it diffuses oppositional racial consciousness, blinds Americans to discriminatory racial structures, and compromises the possibility of race-based social policy. These researchers point to this ideological shift as part of a more complex restructuring of racial stratification and white dominance in the United States from a biracial (white vs. nonwhite) cleavage toward a Latin American triracial system. The latter is characterized by the presence of intermediate or “mixed-race” categorization and is noted as typifying the colorblind racial ideology increasingly salient in the United States. Although much of their “Latin Americanization” thesis is beyond the scope of this analysis, our results suggest that, as measured through large-sample survey data on explanations for racial inequality, the broad association of a denial of discriminatory racial structuring with Latin American racial ideologies is not supported.

²⁷ The literature in the United States does note a “principles gap” in the attitudes of white Americans (Krysan 2000; Sears et al. 2000). Namely, although whites endorse the principle of racial equality, they do not embrace anti-inequality public policy. That “principles gap” does not, however, extend to explanations for racial inequality: a majority of U.S. whites do not support anti-inequality policy and they blame blacks for that inequality.

²⁸ In the United States, 50% of non-Hispanic whites, 51% of Hispanics, and 45% of African-Americans responded yes to a “lack of motivation or will power” as explaining black poverty in a stand-alone question between the years 2000 and 2004 (Hunt 2007, p. 400).

²⁹ Might our findings simply reflect social desirability bias, i.e., in the survey context respondents feel pressured by politically correct discourse? Two points suggest otherwise. First, survey subjects chose the best of five options on the “explanations” item, only one of which may have seemed clearly politically incorrect (that blacks/indigenous are less intelligent); hence, the question content and format should have mitigated possible bias. Second, evidence from the United States shows that regardless of the survey context, whites readily reject structural explanations for black poverty and endorse individualist accounts, as do significant percentages of minority populations as well (Hunt 2007).

CONCLUSION

Our findings on racial attitudes in Latin America contradict much of the research on that subject. We find that Latin Americans tend to recognize structural explanations for ethnoracial disadvantage, such as discrimination, and reject victim-blaming stances. Since much of that existing research is qualitative, this could suggest a methodological divide, perhaps around issues of case selection and generalizability or survey interviews versus ethnography. Moreover, we also find evidence that *mestizaje* ideas themselves may support greater comprehension of the structural causes of minority disadvantage, which further challenges the literature. However, our results are compatible with the insights of some ethnographic research (De la Cadena 2001, 2005; French 2004, 2009; Wade 2005), which argues that far from a wholly negative ideology, myths of *mestizaje* and racial democracy may provide cultural tools for the struggle against racial inequality in part through imagining equality and hence setting goals for racial inclusion (Swidler 1986; Sheriff 2001). De la Cadena (2005, p. 23), for example, posits that her research in Peru reveals that although *mestizaje* may be “despised by prominent intellectuals,” it can simultaneously be “empowering for the working classes” without necessarily denying indigeneity.

Is an end to *mestizo* ideologies the only way to move toward transforming the racial status quo? The U.S. case, the paragon of racial/ethnic change in a healthy democracy (French 2009), may suggest so (see Winant 1999; and Warren 2001). However, the recent racial reforms in Brazil and the population’s clear structural understanding of racial inequality may suggest otherwise. While an embrace of *mestizaje* does not erase existing racial hierarchies, neither does it necessarily lead to attitudes incompatible with anti-racism, as our results suggest. In the end, both the myth of *mestizaje* and that of racial purity are clearly double-edged swords in terms of the ability for individuals and groups enmeshed in these ideological terrains to transform their societies (French 2004).

Finally, Latin America’s turn to multiculturalism, as compared to the past when *mestizaje* beliefs held greater sway, might account for greater consciousness of the structural causes of inequality and thus our counterintuitive findings. However, we believe that our findings reflect attitudes that may have predated multiculturalism, as the Brazilian case, the only country for which we have earlier large-sample survey data on racial attitudes, reveals. Even before the strong shift in state discourse and the implementation of race-targeted policies in that context, Brazilians overwhelmingly embraced structuralist accounts for disadvantage,³⁰ and this despite the presumed em-

³⁰ Our results showed that 77% of Brazilians in 2010 chose discrimination as the primary reason for explaining black disadvantage compared to a slightly smaller proportion (72%) based on a 1995 national survey (Bailey 2002).

brace of a racial democracy ideology that held there was little or no racial discrimination in Brazil. The general absence of an age effect in our models also supports the idea that the attitudes we tapped in our analysis may not be simply the result of the recent shift toward multiculturalism. Overall, recognition of the structural causes of inequality may have deeper roots in the region than is commonly believed.

Moreover, even with the recent adoption of multiculturalism, scholarship across many regions of Latin America continues to point to *mestizaje*'s lasting dominance and generally assumes its destructive and obfuscatory effects. Our results suggest that those scholarly descriptions may be in need of some scrutiny (Wade 2005). The fact that there is so little survey research on how elite racial ideologies filter down to the Latin American masses puts scholarship at risk of top-down generalizing about attitudes or of addressing general beliefs based on localized ethnography. So, when we do finally get robust survey data, they are uniquely positioned to surprise us.

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