

# *Is It Race, Class, or Gender? The Sources of Perceived Discrimination in Brazil*

*Matthew L. Layton  
Amy Erica Smith*

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## ABSTRACT

Observers have long noted Brazil's distinctive racial politics: the coexistence of relatively integrated race relations and a national ideology of "racial democracy" with deep social inequalities along color lines. Those defending a vision of a nonracist Brazil attribute such inequalities to mechanisms perpetuating class distinctions. This article examines how members of disadvantaged groups perceive their disadvantage and what determines self-reports of discriminatory experiences, using 2010 AmericasBarometer data. About a third of respondents reported experiencing discrimination. Consistent with Brazilian national myths, respondents were much more likely to report discrimination due to their class than to their race. Nonetheless, the respondent's skin color, as coded by the interviewer, was a strong determinant of reporting class as well as race and gender discrimination. Race is more strongly associated with perceived "class" discrimination than is household wealth, education, or region of residence; female gender intensifies the association between color and discrimination.

Unequal treatment of members of different groups, from unintentional to intentional bias and even overt aggression, is common in human society. Social scientists have produced a vast collection of research seeking to identify which segments of society perceive and report discriminatory or unjust behavior predicated on their group identities, including race, class, and gender (e.g., Fiske 1998). Yet even in societies where group boundaries are clearly delineated, disadvantaged individuals often hold multiple, readily identifiable, and potentially overlapping identities, including ethnic or racial identity, economic class, and gender identity, any one or combination of which may elicit prejudice from people who engage in discriminatory behavior. This raises the question: in a world of overlapping identities, which personal characteristics most strongly predict individuals' perceived experiences of discrimination?

This article seeks to answer this question for the case of Brazil. Despite declines in inequality over the past two decades, Brazil remains one of the most unequal

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Matthew L. Layton is an assistant professor of political science at Ohio University. laytonm@ohio.edu. Amy Erica Smith is an assistant professor of political science at Iowa State University. aesmith2@iastate.edu.

countries in the world. Evidence of disparities in political, economic, and health outcomes by color, class, and gender is overwhelming (Andrews 1992, 2014; Heringer 2002; Lovell 2000, 2006). Yet in the Brazilian context of supposedly depoliticized and fluid racial boundaries and a national ideology of “racial democracy,” members of disadvantaged groups, particularly citizens with intersectional identities, may often fail to perceive their experiences as linked to those of others with similar characteristics.

This study focuses on three categories of individual differences: race, class, and gender. It uses the terms *race* and *skin color* interchangeably. More precisely, skin color is just one indicator of race—it is one element in a socially constructed set of biological traits enabling social categorization of individuals. Nevertheless, substantial research in Brazil and across the Americas shows that skin color is a highly reliable measure of race and a powerful determinant of life outcomes (e.g., Telles 2014). Indeed, we find that skin tone is the most consistent predictor of experience with discrimination in the Brazilian context.

An illustration of the importance of race in Brazil comes from a recent segment on National Public Radio in the United States that described the experiences of dark-skinned, upper-middle-class American professionals who are living in Brazil as expatriates (García-Navarro 2015). Women are regularly mistaken for their own mixed-race children’s nannies; a man reported that others think he is a paid dog walker when he walks his own dog. Both men and women take care to wear clothing signaling their social status, and women avoid white, the color of nannies’ uniforms (see also Silva and Reis 2011). One interviewee described a photographer suggesting he pinch his infant daughter’s nose to train it to grow narrower; another reported her three-year-old son coming home from preschool and trying to rub the brown color off her arm. The former interviewee, an African-American man from Philadelphia, told NPR, “the racism here is much deeper than I’ve felt anywhere.”

Understanding the role of discrimination in one’s personal outcomes, in Brazil and elsewhere, can greatly affect democratic politics. On the one hand, believing one has been affected by inequality and discrimination can heighten one’s sense of injustice and diminish the legitimacy of political institutions (Córdova and Layton 2016; Levitt 2015; Mitchell 2010; Silva and Reis 2011). On the other hand, perceiving that one is not solely to blame for one’s misfortunes could, paradoxically, improve self-esteem and feelings of efficacy in some circumstances (Branscombe et al. 1999). When citizens come to attribute their own fortunes and misfortunes partly to physical traits shared with a group, they may form powerful group identities—which not only affect choices of political candidates and policy preferences but also abet collective action to redress grievances.

This study draws on data from the 2010 AmericasBarometer to examine how much Brazilians identify themselves as targets of discrimination and the factors associated with those experiences. We find, not surprisingly, that those with darker skin tones, lower household wealth, and women are more likely to perceive discrimination on the basis of skin color, their economic situation, and gender, respectively. Discrimination predicated on economic class is by far the most common.

Yet any individual citizen can be disadvantaged in multiple ways—by the intersection of race and class, for instance, or by race and gender. Hancock argues forcefully that quantitative research should better account for “intersecting categories of difference” (2007, 64). In a country priding itself on “racial democracy,” what factors are most strongly associated with perceived ill treatment? For instance, do citizens’ racial features predict perceived discrimination not only by race but also by class and gender?

This investigation shows that, controlling for various objective measures of economic status, dark skin tone is a strong determinant of perceiving class and gender discrimination, as well as racial discrimination. In other words, race underlies discrimination even when respondents fail to perceive it as race-based. What is more, congruent with other recent research (Hancock 2007), we find that the intersections of race and gender matter. Dark-skinned women are substantially more likely to perceive themselves as targets of gender discrimination than their light-skinned peers.

## PERCEIVING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN BRAZIL

Brazilians’ self-conceptualization as a country of “racial democracy” dates to Freyre’s nation-defining *Casa grande e senzala* (1973 [1933]), which tells the story of how racial miscegenation and familial master-slave relationships ultimately led, by the early twentieth century, to fluid systems of racial categorization and amicable, integrated relations across color lines. Though subsequent social scientists differed on the historical, legal, and social causes of Brazil’s distinctiveness, a consensus emerged, framing Brazil as a country of relative racial equality, in contrast with the United States and South Africa (e.g., Dávila 2014; Degler 1971; Tannenbaum 2012 [1946]).

This national identity was strongly disseminated, creating a folk understanding of what it meant to be Brazilian. At the same time, perceived racial equality existed in an urbanizing, relatively poor country with growing economic inequality. Indeed, maintaining what is now typically called the myth of racial democracy has required explaining obvious color-based hierarchies as the result of intergenerational perpetuation of socioeconomic inequality, combined with incomplete miscegenation (Fry 1996; Kamel 2006; Motta 2000).

Nevertheless, in the past four decades, a broad scholarly literature has demonstrated great inequalities in economic, health, and social outcomes by gender and race.<sup>1</sup> These inequalities have narrowed to some extent since 2000, thanks in large part to the mobilization of Afro-Brazilian communities, yet racial inequalities in particular remain quite large (e.g., Andrews 2014; Salardi 2013). Moreover, there are very large gaps in women’s and Afro-Brazilians’ representation in elected office (Boas and Smith 2016; Bueno and Dunning 2014; Htun 2002; Jalalzai and dos Santos 2015). Inequalities may be especially large for two intersectionally defined groups: Afro-Brazilian women are disadvantaged in a great variety of outcomes and can be targets of police violence (Bernardino-Costa 2014; Marcondes et al. 2013;

Rezende and Lima 2004; Smith 2014), and racial disparities are larger among the middle to upper classes and those with a university education (Bailey et al. 2013; Cacciamalla and Hirata 2005; Osório 2008; Ribeiro 2006; Santos 2005; Telles 2004).

What explains these inequalities? Observers have proffered two types of explanations. The first emphasizes historical and structural factors. Racial inequalities are explained as a result of inequalities stemming from slavery, as well as historical processes of uneven development across and within Brazilian regions. That is, the problem is classism. The solution is relatively simple: increase attendance and investment in public schools (Kamel 2006). The second perspective, seeing the first as insufficient, emphasizes active yet subtle discrimination by gender and race (Lovell 1994; Telles 2004). It is interesting that studies show that despite widespread adherence to the myth of racial democracy as an aspirational national identity, most Brazilians also acknowledge persistent racial discrimination (Bailey 2002, 2004; Joseph 2013; Miranda-Ribeiro 2006; Silva 2012; Telles and Bailey 2013). Moreover, a large percentage of Brazilians point to discrimination when asked to explain why Afro-Brazilians remain poorer (Bailey 2002; Telles and Bailey 2013).

This article examines not the perpetrators but the apparent targets of discrimination. What leads citizens to perceive that they have been discriminated against on the basis of race, class, or gender? Unsurprisingly, Afro-Brazilians, the poor, and women are all more likely to perceive discrimination (Macinko et al. 2012). But how? Perceiving discrimination requires believing that one has been treated poorly and ascribing ill treatment to a group characteristic. We assume that citizens' beliefs that they have been poorly treated largely reflect reality, with idiosyncratic error; some people are more sensitive to slights than others. The second step—*attribution*—is sometimes straightforward; occasionally a perpetrator expresses explicit bias or a particular scenario provides an unambiguous frame for interpreting behavior. However, when the reason for one's own ill treatment is not clear-cut, socialized historical narratives, in-group identification, and belief in linked fate affect the likelihood of attributing ill treatment to discrimination (Chong and Kim 2006). Thus, Brazil's myth of racial democracy may impede recognition of race-based discrimination. Nevertheless, rising awareness of racial issues and a growing movement to address racial prejudice may have diminished that tendency, particularly among those who have been most strongly socialized in changing norms (Mitchell 2009; Nolen 2015a; Reiter and Mitchell 2009).

In short, we expect that individuals with observable characteristics clearly marking them as members of a disadvantaged group will be more likely to experience poor treatment and to perceive that treatment as predicated on group membership. However, powerful societal narratives of racial democracy will lead observers, including targets and perpetrators themselves, to misattribute discrimination triggered by the target's skin color instead to class or gender. Consequently, we argue that skin tone makes individuals vulnerable to poor treatment not just in explicitly racial situations but in scenarios in which even participants see class or gender as the likely explanation for poor treatment.

But what leads to poor treatment in the first place? What leads Brazilian citizens to show in-group preferences or out-group biases? Negative out-group attitudes have both cognitive components (stereotypes) and affective ones (antipathy) (Brewer 1999; Lippmann 1997 [1922]). Studying U.S. politics, Hutchings and Valentino suggest that biases probably influence behavior through both “racial group interest conflict” and “psychological orientations acquired in childhood” (2004, 393). According to group conflict theories, out-group antipathy and discrimination intensify when the in-group is threatened (e.g., Hutchings et al. 2011; Hutchings and Valentino 2004).

In Brazil, negative stereotypes of the competence, power, and status of women and the dark-skinned—and positive ones of whites and men—are pervasive (Bastide and Van Den Berghe 1957; Goldstein 1999; Nolen 2015a, b; O’Dougherty 2002; Twine 1998). At the intersection of race and gender are particularly powerful stereotypes of dark-skinned women as domestic workers and seductresses (Bernardino-Costa 2014; Caldwell 2007; Goldstein 1999; Nolen 2015a, ). Affective prejudice toward women, the dark-skinned, and the poor in Brazil may operate in subtle ways. Duckitt (2003) suggests that, in contrast to negative “beneficence” stereotypes associated with “hot discrimination,” negative “competence” stereotypes lead to “cold,” less overtly aggressive forms of discrimination (Fiske 1998, 374; also quoted by Duckitt).

Indeed, explicit aggression based on skin color is moderately low in Brazil relative to other countries in the Americas, and norms of both racial democracy and antidiscrimination law repress its expression (Johnson 2015; Nascimento 2007; Racusen 2002; Telles 2007). This facilitates the myth of nonracism, as racism is conceived in popular discourse, media, and law as intent to harm (Racusen 2002; Telles 2007). Therefore, attention focuses on less common, high-profile news stories of aggressive, overtly race-based incidents.<sup>2</sup> Still, discrimination occurs even in the most intimate relationships: in choices of sexual partners and mates; in preferences shown to lighter-skinned over darker-skinned children (Goldstein 1999; Gullickson and Torche 2014; Hordge-Freeman 2013, 2015; Osuji 2014).

On the basis of this discussion, we test the following hypotheses:

*H1. Citizens’ race, class, and gender will each be associated with subjectively reported experiences with the respective forms of discrimination.*

*H2A. Pervasive racial discrimination: Controlling for social class and gender, darker-skinned respondents will be more likely to report not only discrimination predicated on race but also class and gender discrimination.*

*H2B. Limited racial discrimination: Darker-skinned respondents will be more likely to report race-based discrimination but, controlling for social class and gender, they will be no more likely to identify discrimination based on gender or social class.*

*H3. Dark skin will be more strongly associated with discrimination among women.*

## MEASURING RACE AND ETHNICITY IN BRAZIL

Based on a national mythology of racial democracy and miscegenation, many Brazilians conceive of their nation as a multicolor one in which a racial classification system based on descent makes little sense. (Examples of racial classification systems based on descent include the “one drop” rule or, more recently, “biracial” identification in the United States; see Rockquemore and Brunnsma 2002.) Instead, racial classification in Brazil focuses on appearance, or phenotype. In everyday speech, Brazilians tend to speak of color, rather than using the word *race* (*raça*).

The most common empirical measure of race involves self-identification in categories defined by the census bureau: white, brown (*pardo*), black (*preto*), indigenous, and yellow (*amarelo*, for Asian heritage). In this scheme, those identifying as “brown” probably include a great range of people of mixed European, indigenous, and African heritage. Observers identify a few problems with the census measure, however. Some object to the categories themselves, as folk classification systems involve hundreds of terms identifying subtle hues and variations in color (Sansone 2003). Yet in recent decades, activists have instead pushed for a system that would come closer to a black-white binary, facilitating Afro-Brazilians’ identification of shared fate and interests (Bailey and Telles 2006; Nobles 2000).

A second set of objections relates to self- versus other-identification. Brazilians tend to base racial identification partly on social status—“money whitens” (Degler 1971; Fry 1996; McIntire 2002; Schwartzman 2007). Survey-based measures of Brazilians’ self-identified race demonstrate considerable instability, and may respond to short-term political stimuli (Bailey 2008; Mitchell-Walthour and Darity 2014; Travassos et al. 2011). Over the past few decades, as indigenous and black movements have grown, self-identification in nonwhite categories has increased (Bailey 2008; Bailey et al. 2013; Mitchell-Walthour and Darity 2014; Nolen 2015a; Warren 2001).

Scholars are increasingly moving to “objective” (that is, interviewer-identified rather than self-identified) measures emphasizing phenotype, most commonly skin color. For our purposes, such measures have the very strong advantage that they emphasize others’ perceptions, providing a window into the mechanisms of discrimination. Still, we recognize that skin color measures ignore other aspects of phenotype that signal race and may likewise trigger stereotypes or discrimination, such as hair type and facial features (Bailey et al. 2013).

## DATA AND METHODS

This analysis relies on data from the Brazilian portion of the 2010 AmericasBarometer, in which 2,482 respondents were interviewed in a face-to-face, nationally representative study.<sup>3</sup> Dependent variables are drawn from three questions about discrimination by race, gender, and class.<sup>4</sup>

Thinking about the last five years, did you ever feel discriminated against or poorly or unjustly treated. . .

**DIS11.** Because of the color of your skin? Would you say that this happened many times, several times, a few times, or never?

**DIS13.** Because of your economic status? Many times, several times, a few times, or never?

**DIS12.** Because of your gender or sex? Many times, several times, a few times, or never?

We collapsed responses into three dichotomous measures. Those who responded “never” received a value of 0, and those who responded “a few times,” “several times,” or “many times” a value of 1. We also constructed a dichotomous variable capturing whether the respondent reported any one of the three forms of discrimination. We employed logistic regression to model these dependent variables.<sup>5</sup>

We developed predictive models of discrimination experience, differentiating between race, class, and gender as determinants. For instance, are lower-class Brazilians more susceptible to discrimination than those in the middle or upper classes? Or do largely immutable individual characteristics like skin tone or gender increase vulnerability to discrimination?

The 2010 AmericasBarometer measured respondents’ facial skin color using a color palette designed by Edward Telles and René Flores of the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA) (Telles 2014).<sup>6</sup> Immediately after each interview, the interviewer discreetly coded facial skin color using a card depicting 11 tones ranging from 1 (the very lightest) to 11 (the darkest).<sup>7</sup> We recoded these values from 0 to 1 to facilitate comparison of coefficients. This provides a more objective measure of racial differences than is afforded by traditional self-reported census measures of identity.

Moreover, the scale is more nuanced and gradated than such categorical measures. Although we are particularly interested in the experiences of citizens in groups traditionally recognized as disadvantaged—especially the lower class, darker-skinned, and women—we included all citizens in the analysis. This establishes a baseline that enables us to compare the levels of discrimination perceived by disadvantaged citizens to the levels perceived by citizens who are privileged by their own skin color, class, or gender.

We measured respondents’ economic class in three ways. First, we constructed an index of household wealth using principal components analysis (McKenzie 2005).<sup>8</sup> Respondents were sorted into wealth quintiles based on the quality of their housing and possession of a series of durable consumer goods, giving more weight to the durable goods and qualities of housing that vary the most in the population.

This measure is less subject to nonresponse bias than traditional income-based measures of well-being, as respondents are typically less hesitant to answer asset questions. It is also somewhat less subject to measurement error; assets are more stable than incomes, which can fluctuate rapidly in the short term.

Education constitutes a second important dimension of class. We represented this by coding a categorical measure of educational attainment: primary education (1 to 8 completed years of schooling); secondary (9 to 11 completed years); higher education (12 or more completed years); and “none” (the few who never completed any schooling). Third, a measure of the number of children at home runs from 0 to 10. Based on our experience conducting fieldwork in Brazil, a common stereotype of the poor in Brazil is that they have large families; people with more children may be subject to class-based discrimination.

Gender was coded as a dichotomous indicator for women. Our models also include a measure of interpersonal trust, as those who are more trusting of others may be less likely to perceive and report discrimination.

In addition, we included several standard sociodemographic control variables: the age of the respondent (measured in years), an indicator for urban or rural residence, and an indicator of region of residence in Brazil (North, Northeast, Center-West, Southeast, or South). Region is a particularly important control because racial composition varies substantially across the country. We also controlled for abrupt, short-term changes in a household’s economic well-being, which may affect perceptions of the fairness of society, using an indicator from a question asking, “Over the past two years, has your household’s income increased, remained the same, or decreased?”<sup>9</sup>

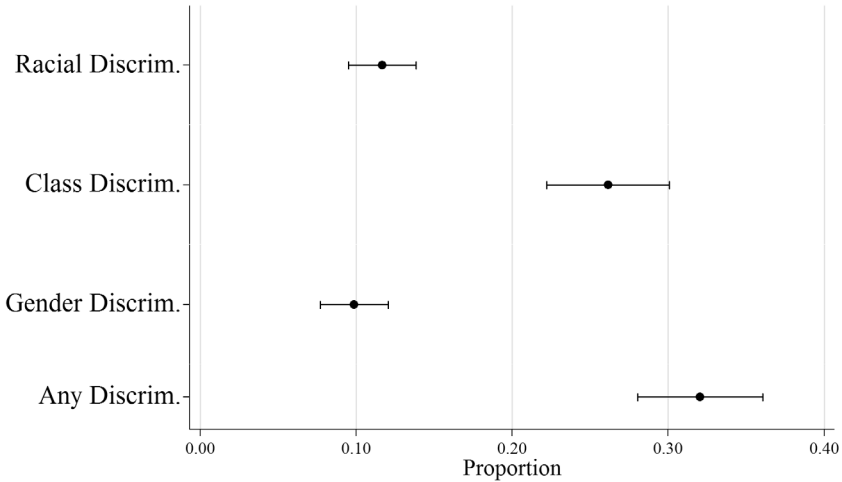
## **LEVELS AND DETERMINANTS OF PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION IN BRAZIL**

We begin by assessing the incidence of discrimination in the 2010 AmericasBarometer in Brazil. Figure 1 presents the survey design-adjusted estimates of the proportion of Brazilians who reported experience with each type of discrimination, as well as the proportion experiencing any one of the three types. Overall, 32.1 percent of Brazilians reported some form of discrimination. Specifically, 11.7 percent reported racial discrimination, 26.1 percent class discrimination, and 9.9 percent discrimination on the basis of gender or sex (14.1 percent of women and 5.3 percent of men).

What predicts perceived discrimination in Brazil? Is it race, class, or gender? Citizens can interpret a given instance of ill treatment as predicated on any of these three, but which personal characteristics are the most important determinants? We expect that in the Brazilian context, despite claims to the contrary, one’s race, rather than class or gender, is what most affects the likelihood of perceiving that one has been affected by discrimination. Figure 2 presents logistic regression coefficients and 95 percent confidence intervals for a model assessing determinants of reporting any discrimination. To facilitate the substantive interpretation of these coefficients, we



Figure 1. Incidence of Perceived Discrimination in Brazil, 2010



Note: Prop(Gender Discrimination/Female) = 0.14. Design effect–based estimates with 95 percent confidence interval.

Source: AmericasBarometer 2010.

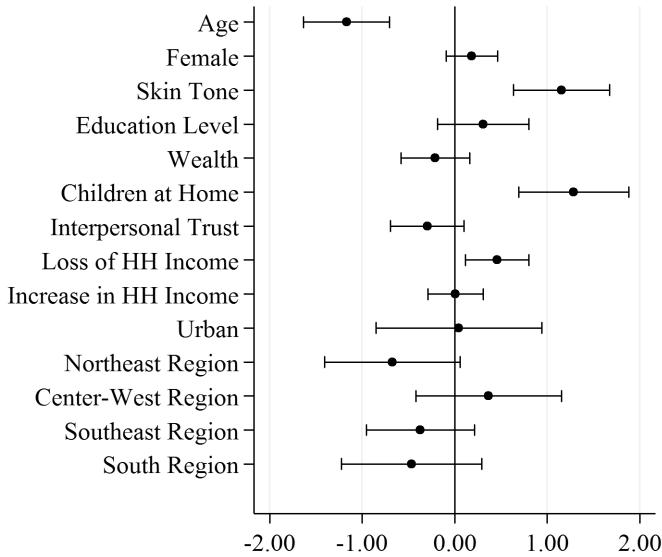
discuss the results for this model and our other multivariate models in terms of changes in the predicted probability of observing the dependent variable.<sup>10</sup>

As hypothesized, skin color is one of the strongest determinants of reporting any discrimination. Moving from the lightest to the darkest skin tone increases the probability of the average respondent’s reporting discrimination by 23.5 percent. By contrast, gender is not a significant predictor of discrimination in this combined model.<sup>11</sup> It is striking that the effect of skin color is so pronounced despite the fact that most reported discrimination is attributed to class, rather than race.

It is likewise striking that the only measure of class that is significantly correlated with overall perceived discrimination is the number of children at home. Holding all else constant, neither those with less education nor those with relatively few household possessions are more likely to report discrimination. However, each additional child raises the probability of perceiving that one has been discriminated against by 2.6 percent.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, older people are less likely to report discrimination, while those reporting a decrease in household income are more likely to perceive discrimination. Urban or rural residence is insignificant; however, residents of the Center-West region are significantly more likely to report discrimination than residents of the Northeast, Southeast, and South.

Thus it is clear that phenotype—in particular, skin color—is powerfully related to perceived ill treatment. But what forms of perceived discrimination is skin color related to more specifically? Figure 3 presents results from bivariate analyses assessing how the predicted probability of reporting race, class, and gender discrimination varies across the range of skin tone (here left on its original 1–11 scale). It is evident

Figure 2. Determinants of Any Perceived Discrimination in Brazil, 2010



Notes: Logistic regression model. All independent variables recoded 0–1. Ranges are 95 percent confidence intervals.

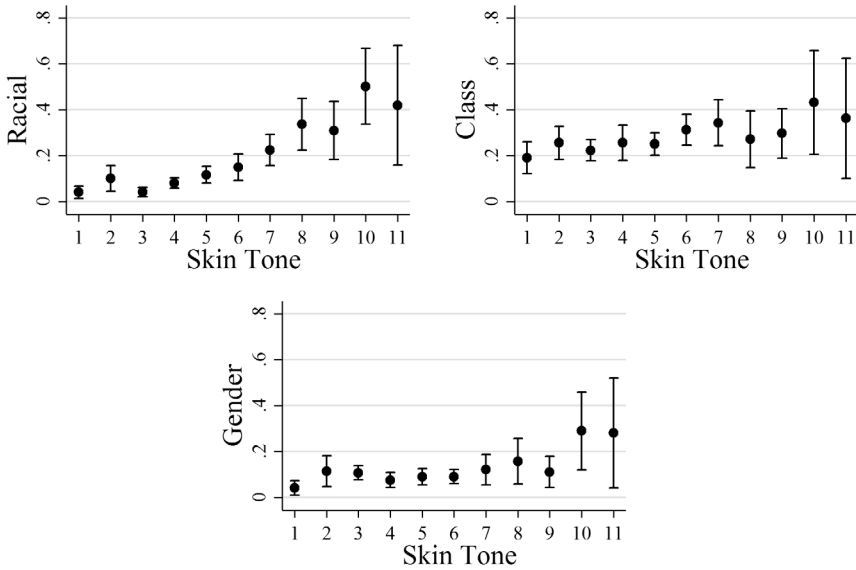
Source: AmericasBarometer 2010.

that skin color is strongly correlated not only with perceived racial discrimination but also with perceived discrimination on the basis of class and gender.

Of course, given the strong association between skin tone and social status in Brazil, these bivariate associations might result from some factor other than race. In table 1, multivariate models of the three forms of perceived discrimination test the central hypotheses of this study. Models 1 through 3 present baseline analyses to test hypotheses 1, 2A, and 2B, while models 4 through 6 present the analyses with interactions between gender and skin tone to test hypothesis 3. Not surprisingly, model 1 (racial discrimination) shows the strong effect of skin tone on racial discrimination. Moving from the lightest to the darkest skin tone results in a 34.4 percentage point increase in the predicted probability of reporting race-based discrimination, all else equal.

Turning to the other variables in the model, level of education is positively associated with race-based discrimination. More educated respondents may be more likely to report perceived racial discrimination because they are more aware of changing public norms acknowledging racial discrimination.<sup>13</sup> However, the substantive effect of education is quite small: the predicted probability of reporting racial discrimination increases by a mere 6.8 percentage points, moving from the average respondent with no education to the average respondent with postsecondary education.

Figure 3. Bivariate Relationship Between Skin Tone and Perceived Race, Class, and Gender Discrimination in Brazil, 2010



Note: Ranges are 95 percent confidence intervals.  
Source: AmericasBarometer 2010.

Respondent age is negatively associated with race-based discrimination, though the substantive effects are again rather small. Each additional year of age corresponds with an estimated 0.1 percentage point decrease in the predicted probability of reporting racial discrimination. Therefore, although the average 18-year-old respondent has a predicted probability of reporting racial discrimination of 14.2 percentage points, the average 78-year-old respondent’s corresponding predicted probability falls to 7.3 percentage points.

In model 2 (class discrimination), we again find that skin tone significantly predicts reported class discrimination. Even controlling for four measures of economic class and status, moving from the lightest to the darkest skin tone results in a 12.7 percentage point increase in the predicted probability of reporting class-based discrimination. For comparison, moving from the highest to the lowest quintile of household wealth is associated with only a 7.3 percentage point rise in this predicted probability (significant at  $p < 0.058$ ), and each additional child living at home is predicted to increase the likelihood of reporting class discrimination by 2.3 percentage points.

Beyond measures of race and class, age is again negatively associated with reporting discrimination. Each marginal year is associated with a 0.3 percentage point drop in the predicted probability of reporting class discrimination, so that the average 18-year-old has a 32.7 percent predicted probability of reporting class dis-

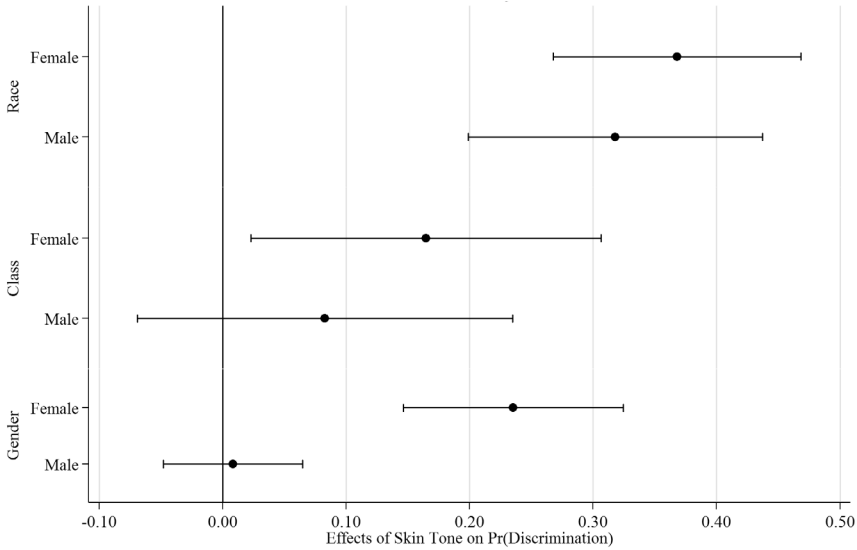
Table 1. Determinants of Perceived Discrimination on the Basis of Race, Class, and Gender in Brazil, 2010

	(1) Race	(2) Class	(3) Gender	(4) Race	(5) Class	(6) Gender
Age	-0.014* (0.005)	-0.015*** (0.004)	-0.012* (0.006)	-0.014* (0.005)	-0.015*** (0.004)	-0.012* (0.006)
Female	0.213 (0.132)	0.025 (0.134)	1.142*** (0.274)	0.198 (0.317)	-0.134 (0.232)	0.455 (0.412)
Skin tone	3.740*** (0.476)	0.686* (0.317)	1.515*** (0.330)	3.721*** (0.646)	0.448 (0.409)	0.165 (0.567)
Female*Skin tone				0.034 (0.597)	0.439 (0.475)	1.823** (0.666)
Level of education	0.250* (0.116)	0.034 (0.094)	0.171 (0.141)	0.250* (0.116)	0.031 (0.095)	0.159 (0.145)
Quintile of wealth	-0.066 (0.063)	-0.098^ (0.051)	0.071 (0.059)	-0.066 (0.063)	-0.100^ (0.051)	0.066 (0.061)
Number of children at home	0.051 (0.059)	0.127*** (0.032)	0.065 (0.059)	0.051 (0.059)	0.125*** (0.032)	0.059 (0.058)
Interpersonal trust	-0.290 (0.310)	-0.220 (0.189)	-0.097 (0.219)	-0.290 (0.311)	-0.216 (0.188)	-0.087 (0.222)
Loss of household income	0.164 (0.201)	0.514** (0.173)	0.245 (0.243)	0.164 (0.201)	0.511** (0.173)	0.230 (0.246)
Increase household income	-0.134 (0.185)	0.013 (0.164)	0.036 (0.186)	-0.134 (0.184)	0.012 (0.163)	0.030 (0.186)
Urban	0.474 (0.336)	-0.029 (0.476)	0.640 (0.444)	0.474 (0.336)	-0.028 (0.476)	0.650 (0.444)
Northeast	-0.558^ (0.319)	-0.637^ (0.374)	-0.355 (0.633)	-0.558^ (0.319)	-0.640^ (0.374)	-0.369 (0.641)
Center-West	0.347 (0.356)	0.246 (0.351)	0.289 (0.563)	0.348 (0.356)	0.252 (0.353)	0.316 (0.574)
Southeast	-0.308 (0.250)	-0.385 (0.286)	-0.105 (0.501)	-0.308 (0.248)	-0.392 (0.288)	-0.133 (0.512)
South	0.170 (0.393)	-0.702* (0.336)	0.162 (0.592)	0.169 (0.393)	-0.709* (0.336)	0.140 (0.598)
Constant	-3.442*** (0.615)	-0.140 (0.614)	-4.12*** (0.936)	-3.431*** (0.653)	-0.036 (0.633)	-3.54*** (0.935)
Number of observations	2,109	2,106	2,105	2,109	2,106	2,105
Wald test (F-statistic)	13.426***	6.757***	4.739***	12.270***	6.637***	6.130***

\*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05; ^p < 0.10

Note: Design effect-based logistic regression estimates reported. Standard errors in parentheses.  
Source: AmericasBarometer 2010.

Figure 4. Effects of Skin Tone on Men’s and Women’s Likelihood of Reporting Race, Class, and Gender Discrimination in Brazil, 2010



Note: Ranges are 95 percent confidence intervals.  
Source: AmericasBarometer 2010.

crimination, whereas the average 78-year-old has only a 16.9 percent probability of doing so. Loss of household income is also positively associated with perceived discrimination; households that have recently lost income are 10.2 percentage points more likely to report perceived class discrimination.

Furthermore, in model 3 (gender discrimination), we again find the significant impact of skin tone. Independent of all other factors, moving from the lightest to the darkest skin tone increases the predicted probability of reporting gender discrimination by 12.9 percentage points. Women are 9.2 percentage points more likely than men to report gender discrimination, all else equal. Again, older respondents are significantly less likely to report gender discrimination, with a marginal decrease of 0.1 percentage points per year. This means that the average 18-year-old has a predicted probability of reporting gender discrimination of 12.1 percent, whereas the average 78-year-old has a predicted probability of reporting gender discrimination of 6.6 percent.

It is notable, looking at the regional fixed effects variables across all the models, that residents of the Northeast are consistently the least likely to report discrimination when compared to residents of all other regions. The only exception is in the case of class discrimination, where residents of the South region are the least likely to report such treatment, all else equal. By contrast, residents of the Center-West region are consistently the most likely to report discrimination of all kinds.

Models 4 through 6 are largely similar to models 1 through 3, but they include an interaction term between the variables for gender and skin tone. Given that substantive interpretations of most of the coefficients are largely unchanged from the first three models, we focus on the interactive coefficients for gender and skin tone. Figure 4 helps to interpret the interaction terms. It shows the estimated marginal effect and 95 percent confidence interval of skin tone (the effect of moving from the lightest skin tone to the darkest skin tone, given that the variable is coded to range from 0 to 1) on the predicted probability of men and women's perceiving each type of discrimination. There is no statistically significant difference between men and women in the effects of skin tone on reporting either racial or class discrimination, though skin tone is significantly associated with perceived class discrimination only among women. Moving from the lightest to the darkest skin tone is associated with an estimated 31.8 percent increase in the probability of reporting racial discrimination among men and a 36.8 percent increase among women. In addition, moving from the lightest to the darkest skin tone increases women's predicted probability of reporting class discrimination by 16.5 percent.

Furthermore, there is a strong interaction effect between gender and skin tone in model 6 (see the bottom two rows of figure 4). Moving from the lightest skin tone to the darkest skin tone is associated with a 23.5 percent increase in the probability of reporting gender discrimination among women. For men, there is no statistically significant relationship between skin tone and reporting gender discrimination. In other words, reports of gender discrimination are largely concentrated among darker-skinned women.

## DISCUSSION

These results provide empirical support for hypotheses 1, 2A, and 3 and fail to support hypothesis 2B. The results for skin tone, in particular, suggest that racial discrimination is pervasive in Brazil. Skin tone is such a powerful determinant of perceiving discrimination that the difference in the predicted probability of reporting gender discrimination between those with the lightest and darkest skin tones is greater than the difference between men and women.

Both an asset-based measure of wealth and educational level are relatively weak predictors of perceived discrimination in Brazil, contradicting the claim that Brazil suffers from economic but not racial discrimination. If discrimination in Brazil were due only to class, we would expect to observe a more consistent effect of wealth on individual experiences of discrimination. However, these models instead provide evidence of the prevalence of racial bias in Brazil. The results accord with a very large number of studies cited above—studies consistently showing the disadvantages that accrue to those with dark skin color in Brazil and strongly suggesting the existence of discrimination (e.g., Telles 2004). Our results complement this research by indicating that such discrimination is often misperceived as unrelated to race, even among those on the receiving end of discriminatory treatment. Brazilian women who have darker skin may face a particularly heavy burden. They face discrimina-

tion based on their race, they are also the predominant target of gender discrimination, and their race makes them likely targets of economic discrimination.

The methodological individualism inherent in the use of survey data can foster a perception that discrimination is a matter of atomized victims and perpetrators. Discrimination is, of course, a social phenomenon perpetuated through systemic and institutional forces. The affective and cognitive roots of racial discrimination developed over centuries of institutionalized exploitation of the African continent and of people of African descent. Gender discrimination, likewise, has very long roots in historical gendered divisions of labor and, in recent decades, in resistance to rapidly changing social and economic structures. Both forms of bias are nourished in present times through intergenerational socialization. Moreover, the lived realities of women and people with darker skin appear to corroborate discriminatory intuitions passed from parents to children. Steep regional inequalities, low social mobility, uneven and inadequate public education systems, and highly segmented rural and urban labor markets all contribute to very real correlations between economic status, on the one hand, and gender and skin color, on the other. Absent popular understandings of these structural forces, however, disadvantage itself seems to justify and reinforce stereotypes of the darkest, the poorest, and women.

What do these results mean for politics? The persistent myth of racial democracy and failure to recognize the historical and structural roots of inequality not only exacerbate stereotypes but also inhibit political organizing. Women and Afro-Brazilians have increasingly been organizing to demand change since the 1970s (Caldwell 2007; Htun 2002, 2015; Johnson and Heringer 2015; Pereira 2013; Perry 2013). Nevertheless, activists have encountered persistent difficulties in organizing the masses of citizens in their constituencies. Building stable and broad coalitions of the disadvantaged requires that individuals first recognize the way their shared characteristics affect their fortunes. To the extent that adherence to national norms or cross-cutting group identities have hindered such acknowledgment, the political organizing of women and Afro-Brazilians has been less likely to produce real social change. Still, social inclusion is gradually expanding, due in large part to the efforts of these activists. As social inclusion deepens—as university race-based quotas continue to operate, as women’s representation in office gradually increases, as wages and social mobility slowly improve—the daily experiences of women and Afro-Brazilians may also slowly change.

## CONCLUSIONS

How do disadvantaged Brazilians perceive their disadvantage? To what extent and on what basis do they believe that they experience discrimination? Using 2010 AmericasBarometer data, this study has found that about a third of respondents report experiencing discrimination. However, there is some discrepancy between respondents’ demographic characteristics and the perceived bases of discrimination. In line with the national myth of racial democracy, respondents are much more likely to report class-based than race-based discrimination. However, interviewer-

coded skin color is strongly associated with reporting class as well as race and gender discrimination. Moreover, the intersection between female gender and color intensifies the likelihood of experiencing gender discrimination.

Future research on discrimination in Brazil should expand in two directions—one drilling down to understand microlevel mechanisms, and the other crossing levels of analysis to understand democratic impacts. First, the moment is ripe for a deeper investigation into the political psychology of racial attitudes and racial discrimination in Brazil (Sacco et al. 2016). In the context of Brazil's national racial myth, implicit attitude measures hold particular promise for understanding how and when discrimination occurs. A few studies have examined implicit attitudes in Latin American countries, including Chile and Caribbean nations (Peña et al. 2004; Uhlmann et al. 2002), but to date only a single study has used implicit measures in Brazil (Lima et al. 2006; see Sacco et al. 2016 for an excellent review and a call for further research). Second, future research should explore more fully the question of how individual-level prejudices and stereotypes—attitudes held by the disadvantaged and the advantaged alike in Brazil—shape reactions to political organizing in Brazil. Through such research, activists and allies may begin to understand how to build stable and broad coalitions for change in the country of “racial democracy.”

## NOTES

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1. A few of these studies are Andrews 1992, 2014; Cacciamali and Hirata 2005; Heringer 2002; Lovell 1994, 2000; Márquez García et al. 2009; Osório 2008; Reichmann 2010; Ribeiro 2006; Salardi 2013; Santos 2005; Telles 2004, 2014.

2. It is interesting that even one of the most prominent academic debates over the reality or fiction of this national myth involves dueling interpretations of one anecdote, a high-profile episode in which a white mother and son beat up the black daughter of the governor of Espírito Santo State, whom they mistook for a maid (Fry 1996; Hanchard 1994).

3. Quotas were used at the household level. The sample was stratified by region and urban-rural status; all estimates are adjusted for survey design effects.

4. The questions are shown in the order they were asked in the questionnaire; the numeric coding does not correspond to the questionnaire order. The interviewers were instructed to repeat the answer alternatives after each question. In Portuguese the questions read, “Pensando nos últimos cinco anos, alguma vez se sentiu discriminado ou tratado mau ou de maneira injusta...DIS11. Por sua cor da pele? O sr./sra. diria que isso aconteceu muitas vezes, algumas vezes, poucas vezes, ou nunca? DIS13. Por sua condição econômica? DIS12. Por seu gênero ou sexo?”

5. Note that these variables also allow us to model frequency of discrimination. To do so, we employ ordinal logistic regression, recoding responses on a 0 to 3 scale where 3



indicates experiencing discrimination “many times.” See table A1 in the online appendix for models using ordinal logit estimates with this four-value dependent variable based on frequency.

6. The survey also included a self-identification question based on the Brazilian census measure discussed above. See table A2 in the online appendix for the results of the models using this measure in place of the skin tone variable.

7. See figure A1 in the appendix. These cards were printed at a single location to ensure consistent skin tones across the survey.

8. For details on the use of this index in AmericasBarometer surveys, see Córdova 2009.

9. In Portuguese the question reads: “Nos últimos dois anos, o salário ou renda de sua casa: (1) Aumentou? (2) Ficou igual? (3) Diminuiu?”

10. All calculations of predicted probabilities are made using Stata’s margins command.

11. Using the count of affirmative responses to each of the three discrimination questions as the dependent variable and using a Poisson regression model produces a different result for the gender variable: in addition to the significant correlations shown in figure 2, female gender has a statistically significant effect on the number of affirmative responses (see table A6 in the appendix). A negative binomial model would produce similar estimates.

12. A separate analysis (see table A5 in the appendix) failed to find evidence of an interaction between number of children and skin tone.

13. An interaction term between education and skin color is statistically insignificant in the model of racial discrimination (see table A4 in the appendix).

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting materials may be found with the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

1. Online Appendix

For replication data, see the author's file on the Harvard Dataverse website: <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/laps>