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Thesis Prospectus Draft

Introduction

Growing up in the American South, I have always been aware of the role racial

stratification and discrimination can play in society. Although I gleaned from my studies that

racial perceptions vary regionally, it was not until I studied abroad that I began to understand. In

one class, we used Michael Banton's *Racial Theories* (1987) as the theoretical base upon which

to base our discussion of racial perceptions in other countries. We talked about the mestizaje

narrative which many Latin American countries share. Peru, where I studied abroad, is very

much a racially mixed country. Many of my classmates had indigenous ancestry, but it is still

uncommon that someone from a rural indigenous community gets access to university to

compensate for economic disparity. In the US, affirmative action policies were created in the

60s and 70s to compensate for racial barriers to education. I could not help but wonder if similar

policies existed in Peru, and if they did, if they would be effective. This prompted me to explore

racial perceptions and social inclusion policies in Peru and Latin America more broadly.

Background

Ethnoracial inequality in Latin America, contrived from discrimination of peoples' skin

tones and/or cultural practices, is an increasingly important topic of study. In the last part of the

twentieth century, the region saw a shift in racial perceptions from the nationalist narrative of

mestizaje to one of multiculturalism driven by representative democracy (Telles 2014). The

mestizaje narrative emerged when nationalist movements sought to homogenize Latin American peoples to prove that they were one people, a single, mixed-race (Bernand 2008; Wade 2016). This narrative stood in stark contrast to the race relations of the region's northern, segregated neighbor, the United States. Although mestizaje ideologies shed a positive light on racial mixing, they masked white supremacist ideologies and did not actually make societies more egalitarian (Miller 2004; Wade 2016). Mestizaje has been criticized for covering up racial inequalities. By claiming there were no races, but rather a single, mixed race people, it made any claims to racial discrimination illegitimate (Miller 2004).

Throughout the 70s, 80s, and 90s, the region began to shift towards more neoliberal forms of economic development and move towards democratization (Telles 2014). Increased external forces pressured the region to acknowledge human rights abuses and take action. As democracy is founded on the idea of representing the people, Latin American countries had to acknowledge different ethnoracial groups and claim to represent them and their rights (Telles 2014). Rather than claiming that a country was made of a mixed race people, governments have moved towards officially claiming to be "multicultural" and recognizing ethnoracial groups (Telles 2014). The distinction between the socio-political ideologies of mestizaje and multiculturalism is important, because multiculturalism recognizes the presence of distinct ethnoracial groups and conversely allows for the recognition of ethnoracial inequalities and discrimination.

Since ethnoracial discrimination has been recognized, at least officially, inter and intra regional pressures to create equal opportunities have grown (Telles 2014). Different forms of social inclusion policies, although some more symbolic than transformative, are taking shape throughout the region. Buvinic (2004) points to the Colombian constitution of 1991, affirmative

action policies in higher education in Brazil, antidiscriminatory legislation in Mexico, and a 1997 law in Peru which made discrimination a crime. Brazil's affirmative action in higher education policies are seen as the most radical form of race-based social inclusion policy within the region, there have been similar policies in higher education in other countries within the region, most notably in Colombia (Leon 2004).

Research Question

My research question is: To what extent do popular perceptions and attitudes about race create opportunities for adopting race-based social inclusion policies? Given the recent shift from a narrative of mestizaje to multiculturalism, are race-based social inclusion policies accepted among the general population given their previous socialization to mestizaje ideology?

More importantly, is there a certain cultural attitude that makes race-based social inclusion policies more politically viable? Which demographics of the population are more or less likely to support race-based social inclusion policies? What might be their motives?

I will focus on race-based social inclusion policies generally and also specific types more narrowly. Although a person supports affirmative action policies, they might not support that the government should establish stricter laws to prevent discrimination. How does support for race-based social inclusion policy vary across its different forms? What demographics are more likely to support one form than another? Are those with higher education levels more or less likely to support affirmative action? Are people who would more likely benefit from affirmative action policies more or less supportive?

I will also explore how various other social beliefs correlate with support for race-based social inclusion policies. Since mestizaje is linked with nationalism, are people with stronger

nationalistic beliefs less likely to support affirmative action and other race-based social inclusion policies? How does religious belief correspond to support? Do those who hold more strict views of women's roles in society also hold more strict opinions about the social role of afro-descendants and indigenous peoples?

Methodology

Using data collected by the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA) in 2010, I will perform simple statistical analysis to explore whether popular attitudes on questions of race and ethnicity would make race-based social inclusion policies politically viable. PERLA was created and directed by Dr. Edward Telles "in an effort to collect and analyze survey data to explore a wide range of ethnoracial issues in the region" (Telles 2014). The PERLA survey questionnaires are cross-national, allowing not only analysis within a country, but also the first cross-national comparison of race and ethnicity within the region. The project analyses Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Brazil; four countries in which there have been significant indigenous and afro-descendant demands to be recognized and included in national censuses.

Each survey questionnaire is composed of approximately 180 questions: Brazil with 171, Colombia 176, Mexico 181, and Peru 190. Although the surveys contain overlapping questions, the Brazilian and Colombian questionnaires have more questions pertaining to afro-descendants while the Mexican and Peruvian questionnaires focus more on indigenous peoples. The total number of individual survey responses tally 5,500: 1,500 responses each for Colombia, Mexico, and Peru and 1,000 responses for Brazil. Individual responses are traceable across the different questions, therefore it is possible to cross-tabulate specific answers to questions on race-based social inclusion policies to other general attitudes.

The questionnaire contains three different measures of one's race/ethnicity: the interviewer chooses from a list which ethnoracial identity they consider the participant to be, the interviewer uses a color palette to rate the facial skin tone of the participant, and the participant chooses from a list. It also contains questions on education level - of survey taker, their spouse (if applicable), and their parents. Beyond this, there are general questions about religion practiced, job type, and conditions of the house. There are opinion gauging questions on a variety of topics across education of all levels as well as questions about support of minority group political movements. For my thesis, I will be doing both bivariate and multivariate analysis of different question sets while controlling for demographics by age, gender, race, education level, etc. in order to gauge what type of person is the most supportive of race-based social inclusion policies and consequently, what type of environment might be the most welcoming for such policies.

For example, when answering the question of whether those who rank as being very nationalist also claim to support race-based social inclusion policies, I will group questions into sets to measure certain variables. To measure nationalism, I will observe the questions "The history of Mexico/Colombia/Peru/Brazil fills me with pride," "I am proud of the Mexican/Colombian/ Peruvian/Brazilian government," and "I am proud of being Mexican/Colombian/Peruvian/ Brazilian." To measure support for race-based social inclusion policies, I will observe the questions "Universities should guarantee places to indigenous/black/poor students," "The government should establish stricter laws to prevent unjust treatment of indigenous people/afro-descendants," and those pertaining to indigenous/afro-descendant political movements. I will use belief in mestizaje as a control and measure it by looking at the questions "The mixture of people of different origins or races is

good for Mexico/Colombia/Peru/Brazil," "Indigenous people should marry with white people to 'better the race,'" and "Would it bother you if your son or daughter married an indigenous person?"

Outlook

Dr. Telles and his team found that in Brazil, where there have been significant affirmative action policies implemented, there is still 79% and 80% support for affirmative action policies for indigenous peoples and blacks respectively. This contradicts the notion that a greater emphasis on race-based social inclusion policy would lead to social resistance as similar policies have in the United States. When conducting cross-tabulation, I expect to also find surprising and conflicting results about what demographics report the most and the lowest support for various race-based social inclusion policies. The previous research conducted in this region has been mostly theoretical as extensive empirical data on ethnoracial issues has been mostly nonexistent. I am interested to see what insights can be gleaned from the PERLA data and what they can tell us about the social climate surrounding race-based social inclusion policy in Latin America.

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