# Colonialism, Path Dependency, and Comparative Racial Identification in the Americas[*]

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**Abstract**

*This paper advances our understanding of how colonization shaped the construction of race in the Americas. An influential first generation of race scholarship attributed contemporary understandings of race to the cultural legacies of different colonizers whereas a second generation has emphasized the different post-colonial racial ideologies adopted by elites. Bridging these two generations of scholarship, this paper theorizes a path dependent process connecting different initial conditions - pre-colonial population density and suitability for wheat production - which shaped colonial European demography, and in turn the post-independence racial ideologies adopted by elites. I test this theory using survey data on racial identification and skin color from 23 countries and find that both colonizer identity and colonial European demography predict contemporary racial boundaries and the direction of status-driven racial fluidity. As such, this paper integrates the fields of comparative-historical sociology and comparative race and ethnicity and reconciles the discordant findings of two influential generations of race scholarship.*

# Introduction

Racial identities across the Americas can be remarkably inconsistent. As Hoetink (1973) put it, the same person considered black in the United States in the 1970s would likely have been considered colored in Jamaica or white in Puerto Rico. Moreover, the extent to which skin color is the sole or even main criteria for race varies (Wagley, 1965) and wealth and education may 'whiten' an individual in one context and have no effect on race in another (Telles, 2014). The 'boundaries' of racial identities - the criteria delimiting membership in different racial groups - in this way vary substantially across countries (Barth, 1969).

Why do understandings of race differ so significantly across the Americas? An influential first generation of scholarship - motivated by differing understandings of race in Brazil and the United States - placed great importance on the cultural legacies of different colonizers. Specifically, it was long held that because 'miscegenation' rates were high and mixed race individuals had greater status in Iberian colonies such as Brazil, more fluid notions of race persisted in countries colonized by Spain and Portugal in the post-independence era (Freyre, 1946; Tannenbaum, 1947; Harris, 1970; Degler, 1971; Hoetink, 1973; Horowitz, 1973). However, a more recent generation of scholarship has instead downplayed the notion that colonization pre-determined racial boundaries. Rather, contemporary scholars have attributed understandings of race to divergent post-colonial national projects across the Americas that emphasized, for example, racial mixture (*mestizaje*) or whiteness as essential features of national personhood (Sue and Golash-Boza, 2009; Wade, 2010; Telles and Flores, 2013; Loveman, 2014; Telles, 2014; Telles and Paschel, 2014).

Yet, because recent scholarship has examined the construction of race in the post-independence period without ruling out the claims of the earlier generation of scholarship, we are thus presented with a number of puzzles. Do colonial legacies matter for understandings of race or do they not? If they do matter, how do they matter? Colonial history is far from deterministic yet, at the same time, elites in the post-colonial period were not presented with blank slates with which to forge new nations. As such, to bridge these two generations of scholarship and better understand how different racial boundaries developed across the Americas, we need to both test whether colonizer identity actually matters for racial identification and probe precisely how colonial legacies shaped the post-colonial national projects adopted by elites.

To do so, this paper draws on a number of disparate literatures to theorize the historical sequence connecting colonization to contemporary racial boundaries and then tests this theory using the best available quantitative data. Building on the comparative-historical theo-

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retical tradition (Lange, 2012; Mahoney and Thelen, 2015)[1], I theorize how different initial conditions refracted European colonization into different forms. Specifically, arbitraging a concept from political economy, I theorize that different 'factor endowments' (Engerman and Sokoloff, 1997, 2002) - broadly conceived as the density of pre-colonial indigenous populations and suitability for sugarcane relative to wheat production - shaped patterns of colonial European demographic predominance. Connecting racial formation across the colonial and post-colonial eras, I contend that colonial demography then path dependently shaped the racial ideologies - whiteness or *mestizaje* - adopted by national elites because in areas where European-descent populations were relatively small and there was a socially significant mixed-race population, post-independence elites sought to better secure social order by promoting a revisionist ideology of racial mixture. In light of the path dependent process connecting pre-colonial initial conditions, the incidence of colonial European settlement and post-colonial racial ideologies, I therefore predict that (i) the boundaries of whiteness and blackness are today most expansive, and (ii) mixed race identities least expansive in countries of substantial colonial European settlement where pre-colonial populations were scarce and sugarcane suitability is low relative to wheat. Moreover, given that I theorize the expansion of whiteness occurred through the reclassification of high-status mixed-race individuals as white, I predict that socio-economic whitening is most prevalent today in countries of substantial colonial European settlement. Similarly, I predict that socio-economic *mestizoization* is most prevalent today in countries of little colonial European settlement.

Bringing quantitative data to bear on these theoretical predictions, this paper finds that measures of pre-colonial initial conditions and colonial European demography do indeed predict the location of racial boundaries and direction of status-driven racial fluidity across the Americas today. Using survey data from over 100,000 individuals across 23 countries and only comparing respondents with the same interviewer-reported skin color and colonial heritage, I find that the boundaries of whiteness and blackness do indeed tend to be *more* expansive and mixed-race identities *less* expansive in countries with substantial colonial European settlement. Furthermore, the results show that socio-economic status 'whitens' but *only* in countries characterized by colonial European demographic predominance. Elsewhere, higher socio-economic status actually *mestizoizes* the racial identification of phenotypically similar respondents. Finally, consistent with the claims of the first generation of race scholarship, individuals with the same interviewer-reported skin color are also signif-

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[1]The method of this paper, whilst employing quantitative analysis, follows the comparative-historical tradition which is defined by the systematic comparison of historical sequences rather than qualitative case study analysis *per se* (Falleti and Mahoney, 2015).

icantly more likely to identify as mixed-race and less likely to identify as black in former Iberian colonies.

Hence, this paper juxtaposes and reconciles the discordant findings of two influential generations of scholarship on race in the Americas. There is evidence of average differences in understandings of race across former Iberian and non-Iberian colonies but, as the second generation of scholarship has noted, there remains substantial variation in racial identification beyond colonizer identity. This paper finds that the patterning of contemporary racial boundaries and status-driven racial fluidity across countries with the same colonizer in the Americas - for example, between Uruguay and Peru or Jamaica and the United States - can be traced in part to colonial European demographic predominance insofar as this shaped the post-colonial racial ideologies adopted by national elites. As such, the importance placed by the first generation of scholarship on colonizer identity and the second generation of scholarship on the ideologies of national elites as comparative explanations for racial boundaries in the Americas are both not incorrect so much as partial and incomplete. By drawing out the continuities across the colonial and post-colonial eras and by bringing a comparative-historical perspective into the study of racial boundaries, this paper advances our understanding of how colonization shaped contemporary patterns of racial and ethnic identification across the Americas.

## Literature Review: Two Generations of Race Scholarship

Cross-national comparison of racial identity in the Americas has a long intellectual heritage. The standard base for scholarly comparison has been between racial construction in the United States and Brazil. Motivated by the apparently more fluid and multi-dimensional nature of race in Brazil relative to the United States, a generation of scholars in the mid-twentieth century emphasized different colonization experiences as the source of difference in understandings of race.

Perhaps most notably, Gilberto Freyre (1946 [1933]) proposed the theory of luso-tropicalism. Freyre hypothesized the existence of a particularly Portuguese capacity to accept and embrace racial difference and argued that Portuguese colonization was characterized by greater racial mixing between colonizer and colonized. Freyre thus attributes contemporary Brazilian racial democracy to the cultural legacies of Portuguese colonization.

Whilst luso-tropicalism clearly rests on a number of problematic assumptions including the myth of Brazilian racial democracy (Telles 2004) or the idea that Portuguese colo-

nization was any less coercive than other forms of colonization (e.g. Nobles 2000; Bergad 2007), the idea that the incidence of inter-racial mixing during the colonial-era shaped contemporary understandings of race in the Americas remained influential for some time. Although they disagreed over whether higher levels of mixing in Iberian colonies were due to different cultural, legal, and religious traditions (e.g. Freyre 1946; Tannenbaum 1947; Degler 1971; Hoetink 1973) or to more imbalanced sex ratios of the colonizers (Horowitz 1973), there was consensus among this first generation of modern scholarship that differences in racial boundaries between Iberian colonies and Northern European colonies were due to different levels of inter-racial mixing. The broadly shared assumption was that, due to the existence of a privileged 'mulatto' or 'mestizo' group, skin color differences cut across colonial-era status divides which in turn enabled more fluid racial boundaries to persist in former Iberian colonies (Harris, 1970; Degler, 1971; Hoetink, 1973).

The assumption of persistence across the colonial and post-colonial eras is, however, not entirely supported by the historical record. Specifically, we cannot ignore the historical junctures that followed colonial independence and the end of slavery, which was a period of great changes in racial identity in the Americas (Marx, 1998; Gullickson, 2010). More recent scholarship has tended to trace patterns of racial identification to the ideological projects of *criollo* elites across the Americas in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Post-independence leaders in Latin America responded to racialized notions of personhood in the late nineteenth century by seeking to discursively construct ethno-racially unique and homogeneous nations (Wimmer, 2002; Telles, 2014; Loveman, 2014). Yet, not all nations were constructed alike (Itzigsohn and Vom Hau, 2006). In some countries, officials depicted the nation as homogenously white whilst in other countries the prototypical national character was predicted to be an off-white mestizo type. Moreover, countries whose elites adopted an ideology of national whiteness such as Argentina or the United States tend to be the most white-identified today whereas identification as *mestizo* tends to be most significant and as black least significant in countries such as Mexico, Brazil or Peru whose elites adopted ideologies of *mestizaje* or racial mixing (Sue and Golash-Boza, 2009; Telles and Flores, 2013). Contemporary patterns of racial identification have in this way been compellingly attributed by scholars to divergent nation-building projects across the Americas.

Yet, a focus on the ideologies of national elites remains incomplete as a comparative explanation for racial boundaries in the Americas. Specifically, in order to rule out the the claims made by an earlier generation of scholarship, we need to actually test whether understandings of race differ systematically across former Iberian and non-Iberian colonies. Moreover, we need to theorize why elites in some countries came to adopt ideologies of racial mixing whilst others adopted ideologies of whitening. It is true that, as Loveman

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(2014, xiv) argues, "neither colonial legacies nor the brute facts of ethnic demography pre-determined the racialist constructions of nationhood that crystallized in postcolonial Latin America" - yet, equally it is far from coincidental that homogenously white conceptions of nationhood came to dominate the high-latitude countries of the Americas such as Canada, the United States, Chile, and Argentina. In order to explain the path dependent development of racial boundaries in the Americas, I instead draw on the comparative-historical tradition and arbitrage the notion of factor endowments from political economy which has proven productive in theorizing how different forms of colonization shaped contemporary economic development in the Americas (Engerman and Sokoloff, 1997, 2002). Whilst colonial legacies are far from all-determinative, colonial demographic composition nevertheless path dependently shaped contemporary understandings of racial identity.

## Theory

To understand the comparative historical sequence connecting pre-colonial factor endowments and contemporary racial boundaries, it is necessary to understand the rationale behind the racialization of indigenous and African populations. Processes of racialization in the Americas were informed by contestation over the legal status of non-European populations. Racialization was intimately linked to the development of different forms of labor: serfdom for Indians, slavery for blacks, and wage labor for whites (Quijano, 2000).

Given that racial identities were initially formed to regulate labor, different racialized social systems then developed throughout the Americas over the colonial period as labor systems were shaped by pre-colonial factor endowments. I here follow Engerman and Sokoloff (1997, 2002) as broadly conceiving factor endowments as including climate, soil, and the density of indigenous populations and typologizing colonization into one of three forms. First, in settings of high pre-colonial population densities[2] such as Peru or Mexico, large blocs of land, mineral resources, and indigenous labor were granted to early settlers (Haring, 1957). These settlers extracted labor from the indigenous population and remained relatively few in number due to restrictive Spanish immigration policies (Altman and Horn, 1991; Eltis, 1983). Reflecting subsequently high rates of inter-racial mixing, by the mid-eighteenth century a large and important social stratum of mestizos had emerged to occupy an intermediate place in the political and economic hierarchy (Twinam, 2015; Quijano, 2000).[3] Systems of racial stratification characterized by relatively small European-descent

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[2]To the extent that high population density largely matches onto pre-colonial societal complexity, this distinction is consistent with the one drawn by Mahoney (2010).

[3]According to the Spanish *castas* system, individuals were taxed and assigned office

populations and a sizeable privileged mestizo class thereby came to characterize countries with high pre-colonial population densities such as Mexico or Paraguay by the late colonial period (Wimmer, 2002; Telles, 2014).

Second, in settings with relatively low pre-colonial population densities but which were nevertheless suitable for sugarcane production such as Jamaica or Hispaniola, labor systems based on chattel slavery came to predominate (Smith, 1965; Dunn, 1972; Engerman, Haber and Sokoloff, 2000). In the absence of a large captive indigenous labor force, colonists increasingly turned to the importation of slaves from sub-Saharan Africa to work on their plantations. The most important and lucrative crop grown on these plantations was sugarcane - indeed, almost all of the four million slaves brought to the Caribbean were used to cultivate sugarcane (Engerman, 1982). In sugarcane-suitable areas, African-descent populations overwhelmingly dominated demographically, manumission rates were relatively high and mixed race mulattos came to occupy a privileged position in the racial hierarchy (Knight, 1990). In the absence of a successful slave rebellion of the form in Haiti, by the late colonial period sugarcane-suitable countries such as Jamaica were also characterized by relatively small European-descent populations and a sizeable intermediate mixed race class (Engerman and Higman, 1997).

Finally, in areas of the Americas that were neither suitable for sugarcane nor which had dense pre-colonial populations, European settlement was relatively late and economically orientated towards pastoralism and the production of cereal crops (Eltis, 1983). Given the seasonality of wheat production, wheat cultivation was most profitably undertaken by owner-occupiers who could hire temporary labor. European settlement to areas of the Americas which were more suitable for wheat production thus tended to be be characterized by whole-family resettlement onto frontier and small-scale farms (Adelman, 1994). Given indigenous populations in such areas had relatively little value as a stationary agricultural labor force and were the main competitors for land, they were coercively excluded from the colonial state. By the late colonial period, areas of the Americas that were neither suitable for sugarcane nor which had dense pre-colonial populations thus came to be demographically dominated by European-descent populations (Engerman and Sokoloff, 1997).

The different ways in which colonization was refracted through initial conditions or factor endowments in turn shaped post-colonial racial boundaries in the Americas in a path dependent reactive sequence (Mahoney, 2000). The nation-states of the Americas that emerged from colonial wars of independence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were founded on lofty principles of popular sovereignty (Wimmer, 2002). Given that legit-

according to the proportion of European blood that they carried (Katzew, 2004).

imate political authority was vested in the people, a key dilemma facing post-independence leaders lay in defining precisely who "the people" of the nation were (Loveman, 2014). In a broad sense, areas that were predominated by European-descent populations at independence tended to define full membership in the nation-state based on whiteness. Given that indigenous populations still presented a threat to European settlers insofar as they possessed legitimate pre-colonial claims to land, indigenous populations in areas such as the United States, Uruguay, Argentina, Costa Rica and Chile were denied a place in the homogeneously white nation-state (Frederickson, 1982; Otero, 2006; Loveman, 2009).

On the other hand, areas that were predominated by non-European descent populations tended to adopt a view of the prototypical national member as racially mixed or non-white. This is for a number of reasons. First, whilst American-born white elites (*criollos*) in areas such as Colombia or Ecuador may have had an interest in preserving the colonial privileges of whiteness, they were nevertheless sometimes obliged to introduce more inclusive national ideologies in the process of mobilizing non-whites for the fight for independence (Roitman, 2008; Telles, 2014).[4] Second, in areas where Europeans were a small minority, *criollo* elites sought to better secure social order against the threat of revolution by broadening out the racially normative population to mixed race individuals. In such cases, intercourse between European and non-Europeans and revisionist historical narratives of aracialism such as luso-tropicalism were actively promoted by the post-colonial state to forestall successful non-white political mobilization.[5] Finally, in areas where European-descent populations were relatively scarce after independence, mixed race individuals often already occupied large landholdings and important positions of power. As such, ideologies that represented mixed race persons as the ideal or prototypical members of the nation-state simply reflected existing elite alliances and networks (Itzigsohn and Vom Hau, 2006; Wimmer, 2013).

These divergent and path dependent post-colonial trajectories are responsible in large part for contemporary variation in racial boundaries across the Americas. To graphically represent the different phenotypical expansiveness of racial identities across the Americas, we can posit the existence of two ideal typical racial boundaries (Figure 1). Type A represents a racial boundary characterized by a white/non-white binary whereas Type B

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[4]Similarly, Francisco Madero and Emiliano Zapata established a new ideology of *mestizaje* in Mexico after mobilizing non-whites in the course of the Mexican Revolution.

[5]For example, as Cuban founding father Jose Antonio Saco put it, "miscegenation is needed to neutralize, to a certain degree, the terrible influence of the three million Negroes surrounding us, millions that keep on multiplying, and that may swallow us up in their near future" (Saco, 1958, 201) as quoted in Martinez-Echazabal (1998).

represents a racial boundary characterized by normative mixed-race identities.

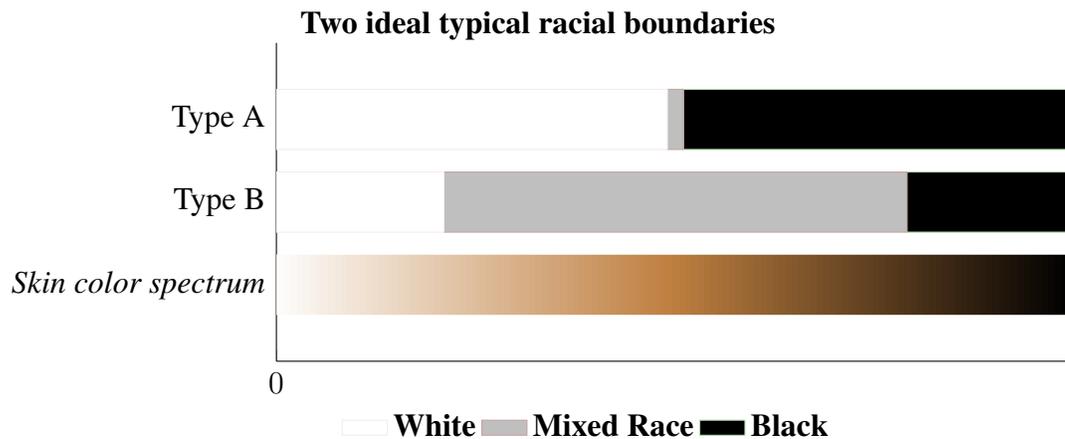**Two ideal typical racial boundaries**

Figure 1: A graphical representation of different ideal typical racial boundaries against the skin color spectrum

In Type A countries characterized by substantial European settlement and a relative white/non-white binary such as the United States,[6] Chile or Argentina,[7] not only is the population phenotypically lighter on average but whiteness as an identity has also become particularly phenotypically expansive (Telles and Flores, 2013). The boundaries of whiteness have expanded in such areas because phenotypically ambiguous persons or persons not historically considered white have had an interest in performing whiteness in order to secure and advance their socio-legal status (Fox and Guglielmo, 2012; Ignatiev, 1995). For example, after New Mexico was ceded to the United States in 1848, high-status beached Mexican citizens in New Mexico began to perform their 'Spanish-ness' to gain rights and

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[6]To be sure, the United States was not always characterized by a racial binary. The theory of this paper specifically applies to the consequences of the divergent racial ideologies adopted by elites in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This paper seeks to connect the relatively expansive notions of whiteness and blackness in the United States today to the decisions of elites in the US over this period to institutionalize whiteness and a racial binary as part of Jim Crow.

[7]The racial binary in settings such as Chile, Uruguay or Argentina has historically been white/indigenous rather than white/black. This paper does not theorize the phenotypical boundaries of indigeneity as indigeneity is associated with language and rural residence (Wagley, 1965; Wade, 2010; Telles, 2014). Nevertheless, the theoretical mechanisms that have expanded notions of whiteness are comparable in settings where whiteness is defined in opposition to blackness or indigeneity - and a later section will moreover also demonstrate the predictive power of factor endowments for racial identification among individuals whose parents both speak an indigenous language.

status in the United States (Nieto-Phillips, 2004). Over time, this has led to a whitening of New Mexico as the boundaries of whiteness have expanded to encompass a phenotypically broader set of individuals relative to Mexico (Mora, 2011).[8]

In the broadest sense, therefore, because racially liminal persons in states where whiteness is normative have sought to reclassify themselves and their children as white, the boundaries of whiteness in such states are the most expansive today. Moreover, if this theory is correct we should expect the process of national 'whitening' to be driven by high-status mixed-race individuals who are most able to successfully re-classify themselves as white. As such, we should expect processes of socio-economic whitening to also be most prevalent in countries where whiteness is normative.[9]

On the other hand, in Type B countries characterized by non-European demographic predominance where mixed-race identities are normative, the boundaries of mixed-race identities such as *mestizo*, *pardo*, *moreno* and creole have expanded to encompass all but the lightest and darkest ends of the phenotypical spectrum. For example, in Brazil the mixed-race category of *pardo*[10] is a catch-all identity that can be used to refer to all but the very lightest and darkest individuals (Telles, 2002). The presence of expansive mixed-race identities in Type B countries has correspondingly meant that the phenotypical boundaries of blackness are narrower in such areas. This is because in countries lacking a white/non-white racial binary, high-status phenotypically dark individuals have historically disassociated themselves from the pejorative identity of black and have instead identified as mixed-race.[11] For example, blackness in countries that have adopted ideologies of *mestizaje* such

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[8]Similarly, after coercively becoming part of the United States in the late 1800s, Puerto Rico 'whitened' substantially over the next few decades as mixed-couples sought to reclassify their children as white (Loveman and Muniz, 2007).

[9]The phenomenon of socio-economic 'whitening' has long been an object of study in Brazil (e.g. Harris 1956; Carvalho, Wood and Andrade 2004; Nobles 2000; Telles 2002; Schwartzman 2007) but has been only recently begun to receive more scholarly attention in countries such as the United States where individual reclassification has historically been treated as the exception to the rule. Using linked panel records, Nix and Qian (2015) find that approximately one-third of American men changed racial classification from white/black in the early twentieth century and Saperstein and Penner (2012) have found that approximately one-fifth of Americans shifted racial classification between 1979-2002. In both samples, improvements in contextual and individual socio-economic status respectively were robustly associated with individual reclassification from black to white. Davenport (2016) has also similarly found that both individual and contextual affluence significantly 'whitens' identification among biracial American college students.

[10]43 percent of Brazilians identified as *pardo* in its 2010 census.

[11]For example, in Brazil improvements in socio-economic status more robustly predict

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as Colombia has historically been invisible (Paschel, 2016) and in Mexico tends to be applied only to individuals on the very darkest end of the phenotypical spectrum (Sue, 2013). Hence, the boundaries of blackness should *less* phenotypically expansive in Type B countries characterized by normative mixed-race identities. Moreover, if this theory is correct we should expect the process of national *mestizoization* to be driven by high-status dark individuals who are most able to successfully re-classify themselves as mixed-race. As such, we should expect that processes of socio-economic *mestizoization* are most prevalent in countries where mixed-race identities are normative.

Given that pre-colonial factor endowments systematically shaped the distribution of European demographic predominance which in turn shaped the racial ideologies adopted by post-independence *criollo* elites, the observable implications of this theoretical framework are that:

**H1:** The boundaries of whiteness are more expansive in countries with less dense pre-colonial populations, that are less suitable for sugarcane relative to wheat production, and which were characterized by greater colonial European settler predominance

**H2:** The boundaries of mixed race identities are more expansive in countries with denser pre-colonial populations, greater suitability for sugarcane relative to wheat production, and which were characterized by less colonial European settler predominance

**H3:** The boundaries of blackness are more expansive in countries with less dense pre-colonial populations, that are less suitable for sugarcane relative to wheat production, and which were characterized by greater colonial European settler predominance

**H4:** Socio-economic whitening occurs to a greater extent in countries characterized by greater European settler predominance in the colonial era

**H5:** Socio-economic *mestizoization* occurs to a greater extent in countries characterized by greater European settler predominance in the colonial era

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reclassification from black to normative intermediate categories such as *moreno* or *pardo* than to white (Telles, 2002; Loveman, 2009); in Peru moving to an urban area is more closely associated with a change in identification from indigenous to mestizo rather than to white (de la Cadena, 2000); and in Mexico more educated individuals are actually more likely to identify as *mestizo* than white (Telles, 2014). Golash-Boza (2010) compellingly argues that racial fluidity is not significant for Afro-descent populations in a particular area of rural Peru but takes care to note that this may not be generalizable to Latin America as a whole (p. 154)

# Data

In order to test these hypotheses, this paper uses data from the 2012-2016 General Social Survey (GSS) rounds in the United States and the 2010-2014 AmericasBarometer (AB) survey rounds in Latin America. In these nationally representative surveys, my primary outcome of interest is individual ethno-racial identification. Individuals were asked in the AB survey "Do you consider yourself white, mestizo, indigenous, black, mulatto, or of another race?"[12] and in the GSS survey "What is your race? Indicate one or more races that you consider yourself to be".[13] Based on these responses, I coded binary outcome measures of whether an individual identified as white, mixed race,[14] or black.[15]

For all countries with the exception of Canada,[16] the sample contains information on the *interviewer-rated* skin color of the survey respondents. Interviewers measured respondent skin color after concluding their interview using similar 10-point (GSS) or 11-point (AB) scales with a common skin color palette (Telles, 2014) (Figure 2). To substantiate the validity of this measure for measuring racial boundaries, I have included a stacked comparison of the proportion of individuals identifying as white, black, and mixed-race in the United States and Brazil at each reported skin color (Figure 3). The data captures, as has long been recognized by scholars of race, that the phenotypical boundaries of both blackness and whiteness are significantly greater in the United States than in Brazil.

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[12]The option to identify as white was not given by enumerators in Guatemala so Guatemala is dropped from the analysis, however its inclusion does not change the results - available on request.

[13]Following Bailey, Saperstein and Penner (2014), I code those who identify with one or more categories in the United States as mixed-race. None of the results are contingent on the inclusion of the United States - available on request.

[14]I coded an individual who identified as *mestizo*, mulatto, creole or *moreno* as mixed-race. *Pardo* was not an option in the survey. In popular usage, there can be significant overlap between the black and *moreno* categories (Golash-Boza, 2010) but this question elicits which of the two the respondent feels better captures their identity and is thus an appropriate measure of the relative salience of blackness.

[15]Approximately 90 percent of the respondents identified with one of these categories.

[16]Given the historically prototypical nature of whiteness in Canada which is theoretically consistent with the predictions of this paper, its inclusion in the sample would have likely strengthened the results.
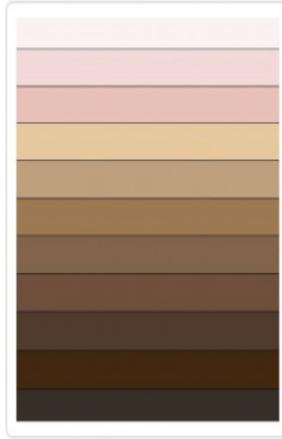
Figure 2: Color Palette. *Source*: The Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America at Princeton University. https://perla.princeton.edu/perla-color-palette/ accessed 02/26/2018
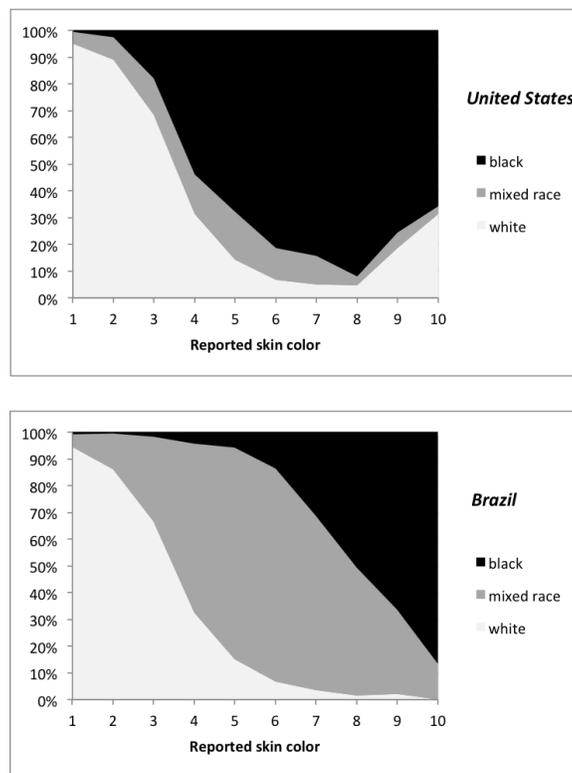


Figure 3: Proportion of individuals identifying as white, black and mixed-race at each reported skin color in Brazil and the United States.

AB interviewers also reported their own skin color according to the same scale. Based on the survey responses, I compiled measures of socio-economic status based upon both

individual education (years of schooling) and household income (a seventeen-point index of household monthly income, as reported in AB). I also compiled measures of gender (binary), age (in years) and whether the respondent lived in a rural or urban area (binary). I will generally not report specifications including these controls as they are measured 'post-treatment' but the results are not affected by the inclusion of these controls.[17]

I collected measures of my independent variables of interest from a variety of sources. With respect to factor endowments, a measure of pre-colonial population density was obtained from Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson (2002), who compiled estimates of the log population density of modern nation-states in the Americas in 1500. Using data from the the Global Agricultural-Ecological Zones project at the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (UN-FAO), indices of rain-fed wheat and sugar suitability were compiled at the national level.[18] The full sample with data on factor endowments and the skin color of survey respondents includes 23 countries.[19]

With respect to measuring historical European settlement, I compiled two different national-level measures of the demographic proportion of European settlers during the colonial era. Perhaps most directly, one could use historical census data to measure the proportion of European settlers relative to non-settlers. For example, using historical statistics, Easterly and Levine (2016) compiled a measure of the proportion of each country's population that was 'European' during the colonial era. To overcome the measurement challenge that colonization occurred at different times in different parts of the world, Easterly and Levine compiled a measure of the colonial proportion of European settlers that existed in each country approximately a century after initial European contact, but at least 50 years before independence.[20] I use Easterly and Levine (2016)'s main measure of colonial share

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[17]Available on request.

[18]This data is available at http://webarchive.iiasa.ac.at/Research/LUC/GAEZ/index.htm

[19]Mexico, the United States, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname, and the Bahamas. It is unclear how the inclusion of the smaller Carribean island states not surveyed by AmericasBarometer would change the results. However, the countries in the survey already constitute the vast bulk of the population in the Americas and so these results speak to racial identification amongst most of the population in the Americas.

[20]As they discuss, to validly measure colonial European settlement "we would like a date as early as possible after initial European contact to use European settlement as an initial condition affecting subsequent developments. At the same time, we do not want to pick a date that is too early after European contact since it is only after some process of conquest, disease control, and building of a rudimentary colonial infrastructure that it became possible to speak of a European settlement" (Easterly and Levine, 2016, 9).

of Europeans whilst cognizant that their methodology used to create historical measures of colonial European settlement is imperfect. Historical estimates of 'Europeans' are necessarily in part reliant on official classification as white and mixed-race in determining the population that is of European descent, and the criteria for classification as white across the colonial era was far from uniform across different colonies. Thus, whilst country-level measures of colonial 'European' populations based on historical census data are suggestive and will be used in this paper, they are also endogenous to pre-existing patterns of racial identification and so should be cautiously interpreted.

A second potential measure of historical European settlement is the share of European and sub-Saharan ancestry in the overall genetic admixture of a country today. These measures were compiled by Putterman and Weil (2010) who, using allele frequencies in genetic tests, constructed measures of the extent to which the admixture of genetic material in each country in the world in 2000 can be traced back to various other regions of the world. The use of genetics as independent variables in medical science and social science has two potentially major pitfalls. First, geneticists tend to reify existing racial categories such as 'Han' or 'Caucasian' rather than inductively create new population categories based on observed genetic variation (Duster, 2005). Second, the baseline genetic populations to which individual genomes are mapped are often far from representative of the population categories which they ostensibly measure (Bliss, 2012).[21] Whilst highly cognizant of these issues, the use of genetics to measure European demographic predominance in this paper nevertheless avoids these pitfalls because it treats race as the outcome variable, avoids assigning ancestry to any particular respondent and only generalizes about population flows,[22] and uses extremely wide continental population categories to overcome sampling biases.[23] Confidence in the predictive importance of European settlement is improved to the extent that the results are supported by these two measures of European demographic predominance, compiled from very different sources. Summary statistics for all these variables are provided in the Appendix (Table A.1).

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[21]For example, the use of baseline genetic material from Igbo Nigerians as a proxy for the whole of sub-Saharan Africa.

[22]As recommended by Jobling, Rasteiro and Wetton (2016).

[23]Whilst measurement error no doubt still exists, to the extent that an individual whose ancestors descended from Angola is still more closely related genetically to an Igbo from Nigeria than to a European, he or she will still be classed as having sub-Saharan African heritage and the issue of unrepresentative baseline genetic populations is minimized.

## Specification

The baseline logistic specification is

$$y_{ijk} = \alpha + \beta Context_{ijk} + \theta X'_{ijk} + \sigma_j + \mu_k + e_{ijk}$$

where $y_{ijk}$ is a binary indicator of whether individual $i$ of skin color $j$ identified as white, black or mixed-race in a country colonized by European country $k$, $Context_{ijk}$ are the independent variables of interest at the country-level, $X'_{ijk}$ is a vector of individual level controls, $\sigma_j$ are the skin color fixed effects, $\mu_k$ are the colonizer fixed effects and $e_{ijk}$ is the error term.

By including so-called 'skin color fixed effects' in all specifications, I maximally control for the effect of reported skin color on individual racial identification. Similarly, by including colonizer fixed effects in all specifications, we can test for cultural legacies of different colonizers as theorized by the first generation of scholarship and control for legacies such as luso-tropicalism on patterns of racial identification.[24] Hence, I am only testing the effect of colonial demography on racial identification among individuals with the same interviewer-reported skin color living in a country colonized by the same colonizer.

Finally, to account for non-independence, standard errors are clustered at the national-level.[25]

## Baseline results: Racial Boundaries

Table 1 reports the results of the baseline logistic model. The tables report odds ratios and standardized beta coefficients in parentheses to facilitate interpretation and comparison of effect size.[26] The results provide confirmatory evidence for hypothesis **H1**. Comparing only respondents with the same reported skin color living in a country colonized by the

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[24]A limitation of this design is that it assumes every country had only one colonizer which is not the case. Nevertheless, the results are not contingent on the inclusion of colonizer fixed effects - available on request. The colonizer fixed effect specification in effect takes the average of the effect of factor endowments on countries with the same colonizer weighted by the number of observations.

[25]Interviewer ID number is not recorded in the grand merged sample provided by LAPOP so I am unable to cluster on interviewer. However, clustering on the country level is a far more conservative specification.

[26]The beta coefficient records by how many standard deviations racial identification will change due to a one standard deviation increase in the independent variable.

same colonizer,[27] individuals are significantly more likely to identify as white in countries that are more suitable for wheat production and less suitable for sugarcane production, have a greater proportion of European ancestry in the genetic admixture, had a greater proportion of Europeans in the colonial era, and which was less densely populated in 1500 CE.

The effects of European demographic predominance on the contextual boundaries of whiteness in particular are of substantial magnitude. The odds of an individual identifying as white living in a country whose proportion European either during the colonial period or today is one standard deviation (or approximately 20 percentage points) higher is 2.5 standard deviations or 20-40 times greater than another individual with the same skin color living in a country colonized by the same colonizer (Columns 3 and 4). To be sure, and as Figure 4 makes clear, variation in skin color matters a great deal in predicting variation in racial identification - the likelihood an individual will identify as white declines substantially and near-monotonically with skin color. Nevertheless, demographic context also matters a great deal in predicting identification as white across all reported skin colors. Even among individuals with so-called 'very light' skin color, the likelihood that an individual will identify as white increases significantly as one moves from a country predominated by non-European descent populations to one predominated by European descent populations (Figure 4). Hence, we can interpret these results as confirming that the phenotypical boundaries of whiteness tend to be particularly expansive in settings of substantial colonial European settlement.

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[27]Colonial heritage and the skin color of respondents together account for approximately one third of the variation in racial identification

**White: The effect of factor endowments and demography on identification as white amongst individuals with the same reported skin color and colonial heritage**

| Predictor | Odds identify as white | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wheat Suitability Index | 28.87*** | | | |
| | (1.109) | | | |
| Sugarcane Suitability Index | 0.00227*** | | | |
| | (-1.336) | | | |
| Log pop density 1500 | | 0.505*** | | |
| | | (-1.764) | | |
| Prop. colonial European | | | 218.1** | |
| | | | (2.498) | |
| Prop. European ancestry | | | | 135.2*** |
| | | | | (2.547) |
| French colony | 0.0832*** | 0.107*** | 0.130*** | 0.861 |
| | (-0.940) | (-0.845) | (-0.805) | (-0.0576) |
| British colony | 0.420*** | 0.192*** | 0.0323* | 0.523*** |
| | (-0.733) | (-1.395) | (-3.020) | (-0.513) |
| Dutch colony | 0.0623*** | 0.00590*** | 0.0225*** | |
| | (-1.508) | (-2.789) | (-2.148) | |
| Portuguese colony | 1.893*** | 0.310*** | 1.464 | 0.396*** |
| | (0.308) | (-0.566) | (0.192) | (-0.455) |
| Observations | 111,901 | 111,901 | 107,499 | 101,563 |
| Colonizer FE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Skin color FE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Cluster SE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 1: ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .10$. Logistic regression: identification as white as the dependent variable. Skin color measured on a ten point scale and standard errors clustered at the country level. Spanish colony is the reference category. Odds ratios reported. Standardized beta coefficients in parentheses.
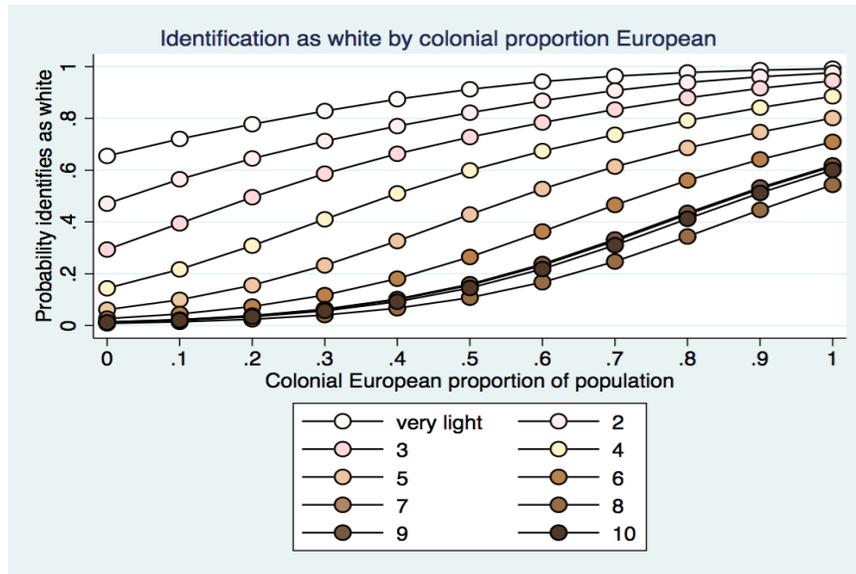
Figure 4: Predicted probabilities of identifying as white across individuals with the same reported skin color by proportion of the population that was European in a country during the colonial-era

There is also strong evidence in favour of **H2**. The phenotypical boundaries of mixed race identities are significantly narrower in countries that are more suitable for wheat production, that were less densely populated in 1500 CE, and that demographically have a smaller proportion of European-descent populations (Table 2). Though the effects of sugarcane and proportion colonial European are not statistically significant at the 10% level, the coefficients are of substantial magnitude, in the theorized direction and borderline significant. As Figure 5 illustrates, identification as mixed race among individuals of all skin colors is predicted to increase substantially when one moves from a country predominated by European settlers during the colonial era to a country where the proportion of settlers was relatively small.

**Mixed race: The effect of factor endowments and demography on identification amongst individuals with the same reported skin color and colonial heritage**

| Predictor | *Odds identify as mixed-race* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wheat Suitability Index | 0.0999*** | | | |
| | (0.0412) | | | |
| Sugarcane Suitability Index | 3.850 | | | |
| | (6.500) | | | |
| Log pop density 1500 | | 1.351** | | |
| | | (0.194) | | |
| Prop. colonial European | | | 0.332 | |
| | | | (0.367) | |
| Prop. European ancestry | | | | 0.0616*** |
| | | | | (0.0395) |
| | | | | |
| French colony | 0.00378*** | 0.00373*** | 0.00354*** | 0.00113*** |
| | (0.000615) | (0.000545) | (0.000506) | (0.000392) |
| British colony | 0.0866*** | 0.114*** | 0.124*** | 0.0495*** |
| | (0.0338) | (0.0578) | (0.0380) | (0.0283) |
| Dutch colony | 0.0844*** | 0.194*** | 0.109*** | |
| | (0.0268) | (0.0446) | (0.0155) | |
| Portuguese colony | 0.609*** | 1.324 | 0.649*** | 1.413** |
| | (0.0937) | (0.406) | (0.102) | (0.246) |
| Observations | 111,901 | 111,901 | 107,499 | 101,563 |
| Colonizer FE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Skin color FE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Cluster SE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 2: ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .10$. Logistic regression: identification as mixed race as the dependent variable. Skin color measured on a ten point scale and standard errors clustered at the country level. Spanish colony is the reference category. Odds ratios reported. Standardized beta coefficients in parentheses.
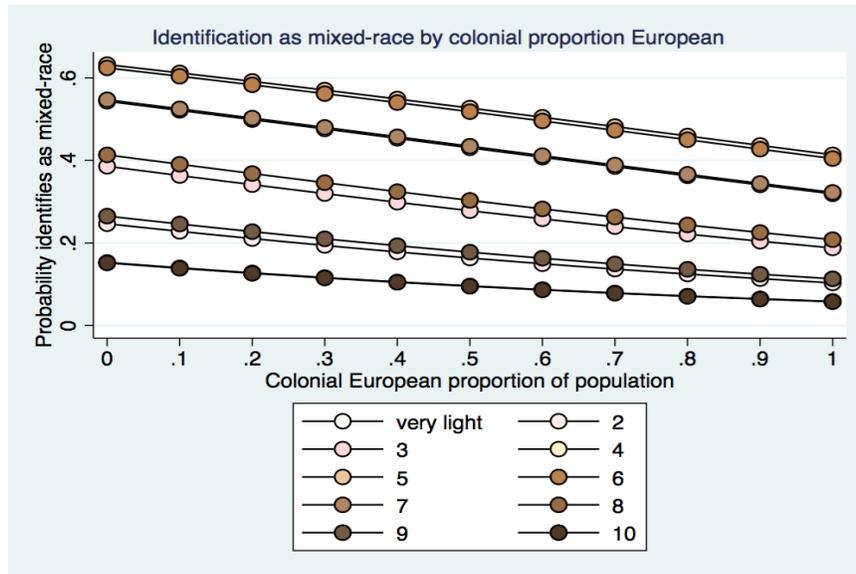
Figure 5: Predicted probabilities of identifying as mixed-race across individuals with the same reported skin color by proportion of the population that was European in a country during the colonial-era

Blackness also tends to be more phenotypically expansive in settings of substantial European settlement measured through either country-level aggregates of genetic ancestry or colonial demographic data (Table 3 Columns 3 and 4). As Figure 6 represents, almost all of the darkest-skinned respondents are predicted to identify as black in countries predominated by European settlers during the colonial era, whereas more than half are predicted to identify as white, mulatto, moreno or mestizo in countries populated by non-Europeans during the colonial era. This is consistent with the idea that, whilst white/non-white racial binaries developed in settings of colonial European settlement and only phenotypically liminal persons could potentially reclassify themselves as white, a broader range of racial identities are currently available to Afro-descent populations elsewhere in the Americas. Nevertheless, the effects of factor endowments tend not to approach statistical significance or be consistently in the theorized direction so the evidence in favour of **H3** is more mixed. The lack of robust significance likely reflects the fact that in response to successful black political movements, more educated mixed-race individuals since the 1990s in countries such as Colombia and Brazil are increasingly likely to identify as black (Telles, 2004; Francis and Tannuri-Pianto, 2013; Bailey and Telles, 2006). Further analysis of cross-national variation in blackness across the Americas is hence a productive site for future research (Sue and Golash-Boza, 2009; Paschel, 2016).

**Black: The effect of factor endowments and demography on identification as black amongst individuals with the same reported skin color and colonial heritage**

| Predictor | *Odds identify as black* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wheat Suitability Index | 2.091 (0.292) | | | |
| Sugarcane Suitability Index | 3.266 (0.312) | | | |
| Log pop density 1500 | | 1.709** (0.456) | | |
| Prop. colonial European | | | 17.90** (26.04) | |
| Prop. European ancestry | | | | 7.587** (6.226) |
| French colony | 1,071*** (3.170) | 790.1*** (199.2) | 1,760*** (509.7) | 3,433*** (1,582) |
| British colony | 27.56*** (3.375) | 44.28*** (23.66) | 19.33*** (14.08) | 42.37*** (21.12) |
| Dutch colony | 3.172** (0.754) | 9.560*** (5.366) | 4.481*** (1.103) | |
| Portuguese colony | 2.736*** (0.585) | 9.413*** (6.439) | 3.107*** (0.681) | 1.557 (0.436) |
| Observations | 111,901 | 111,901 | 107,499 | 101,563 |
| Colonizer FE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Skin color FE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Cluster SE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 3: $^*p < 0.01$; $^{**}p < .05$; $^{***}p < .10$. Logistic regression: identification as black as the dependent variable. Skin color measured on a ten point scale and standard errors clustered at the country level. Spanish colony is the reference category. Odds ratios reported. Standardized beta coefficients in parentheses.
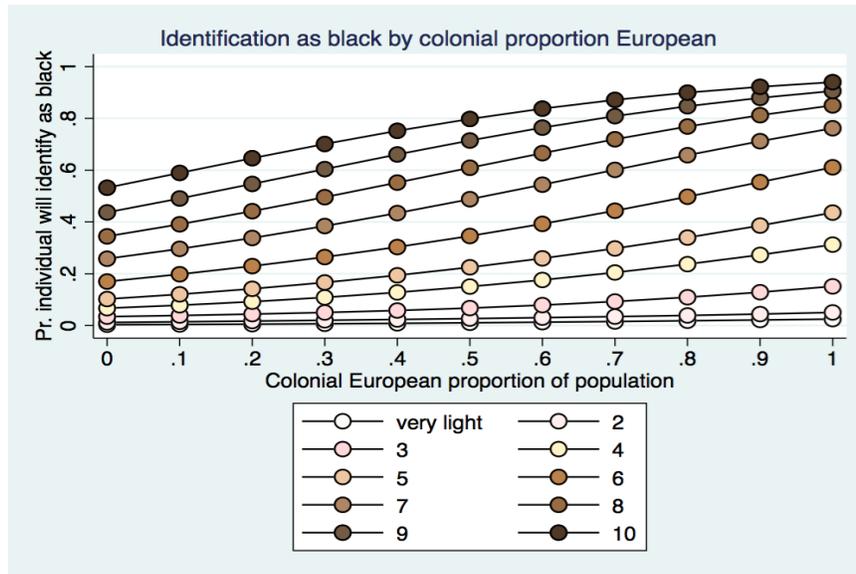
Figure 6: Predicted probabilities of identifying as black across individuals with the same reported skin color by proportion of the population that was European in a country during the colonial-era

Finally, there is empirical support for the long-theorized differences in understandings of blackness across former Iberian and non-Iberian colonies (e.g. Freyre 1946; Tannenbaum 1947; Harris 1956; Degler 1971). When examining the coefficients on different colonizers (in which Spanish colonies are the baseline), we see that individuals with the same interviewer-reported skin color are significantly less likely to identify as black and more likely to identify as mixed-race in countries colonized by either Spain or Portugal relative to the Netherlands, France or Great Britain. Thus, whilst there is substantial within-colonizer variation in understandings of race, the evidence suggests that colonizer-specific cultural legacies have also played an important role in shaping contemporary understandings of race across the Americas.

## Causal Mechanism: Status-Driven Racial Fluidity

In this section I will now test the theorized causal mechanism **H4-H5** - specifically, whether socio-economic status whitens or *mestizoizes* individual racial identity differently across countries with different factor endowments. The results of model specifications which include skin color and country fixed effects and an interaction between individual-level and country-level variables of interest are reported. Thus, we are only comparing ethno-racial identification among individuals with different income and levels of education in the same country with the same interviewer-reported skin color. Note that these measures of income and education are not relative measures in each country but are rather consistently measured according to years in school and dollar income.

Consistent with **H4**, both education and money 'whiten' but *only* in countries with low pre-colonial population densities with a relatively high proportion of European-descent in the genetic admixture such as the United States or Uruguay (Table 4). Figure 5 illustrates how the incidence of socio-economic whitening today is limited to countries predominated by European settlers during the colonial era. Rather, and consistent with **H5**, high socio-economic status is actually associated with racial *mestizoization* in countries with high pre-colonial population densities and low European colonial demographic predominance such as Mexico or Peru where ideologies of *mestizaje* have been adopted by the state (Table 5). As such, Figure 6 illustrates how the incidence of socio-economic *mestiziozation* today is limited to countries predominated by non-Europeans during the colonial era.

**White: The conditional effect of socio-economic status on
identification as white by factor endowments and demography**

| Predictor | Odds identify as white | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Education | 0.986* | | 0.954** | | 0.978*** | |
| | (-0.137) | | (-0.453) | | (-0.224) | |
| Education:Wheat Suitability | 1.077*** | | | | | |
| | (0.272) | | | | | |
| Income | | 1.014 | | 0.955* | | 0.999 |
| | | (0.130) | | (-0.419) | | (-0.006) |
| Income:Wheat Suitability | | 1.056** | | | | |
| | | (0.205) | | | | |
| Education:Prop. European ancestry | | | 1.074** | | | |
| | | | (0.523) | | | |
| Income:Prop. European ancestry | | | | 1.119*** | | |
| | | | | (0.799) | | |
| Education:Prop. Colonial European | | | | | 1.108** | |
| | | | | | (0.659) | |
| Income: Prop. Colonial European | | | | | | 1.147*** |
| | | | | | | (0.811) |
| Observations | 111,228 | 63,083 | 100,992 | 57,721 | 106,833 | 60,402 |
| Country FE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Skin color FE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Cluster SE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 4: ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .10$. Logistic regression: identification as white as the dependent variable. Skin color measured on a ten point scale and standard errors clustered at the country level. Odds ratios reported. Standardized beta coefficients in parentheses.
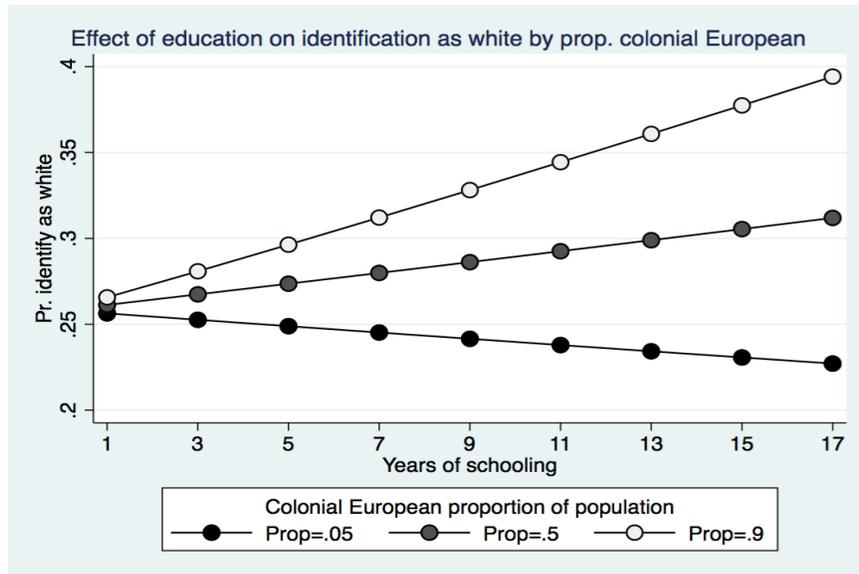
Figure 7: Socio-economic whitening by proportion colonial European. Marginal effect of education by different proportions of colonial European in a logistic model including respondent skin color and country fixed effects

**Mixed race: The conditional effect of socio-economic status on identification by factor endowments and demography**

| Predictor | *Odds identify as mixed race* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Education | 1.049*** (0.415) | | 1.140*** (1.138) | | 1.060*** (0.499) | |
| Education:Wheat Suitability | 0.866*** (-0.469) | | | | | |
| Income | | 1.028** (0.234) | | 1.107*** (0.860) | | 1.034*** (0.287) |
| Income:Wheat Suitability | | 0.878*** (-0.444) | | | | |
| Education:Prop. European ancestry | | | 0.827*** (-1.277) | | | |
| Income:Prop. European ancestry | | | | 0.842*** (-1.123) | | |
| Education:Prop. Colonial European | | | | | 0.853** (-0.887) | |
| Income:Prop. Colonial European | | | | | | 0.895** (-0.576) |
| Observations | 111,228 | 63,083 | 100,992 | 57,721 | 106,833 | 60,402 |
| Country FE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Skin color FE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Cluster SE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 5: ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .10$. Logistic regression: identification as mixed race as the dependent variable. Skin color measured on a ten point scale and standard errors clustered at the country level. Odds ratios reported. Standardized beta coefficients in parentheses.
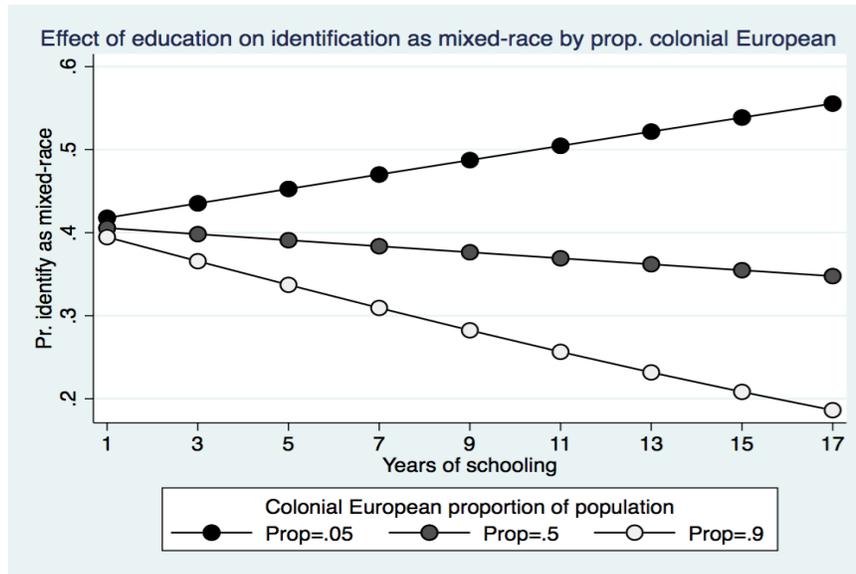
Figure 8: Socio-economic *mestizoization* by proportion colonial European. Marginal effect of education by different proportions of colonial European in a logistic model including respondent skin color and country fixed effects

Thus, whilst it is now well-established that the direction of status-driven racial fluidity is far from uniform across the Americas (e.g. Telles and Paschel 2014; Bailey, Saperstein and Penner 2014; Telles and Flores 2013), these results provide the first systematic evidence for *why* socio-economic status tends to whiten in some contexts and *mestizoize* in others. At least for self-identified race, higher socio-economic status whitens individuals of the same-reported skin color only in countries with low pre-colonial population densities, which are suitable for wheat production and which were predominated by European settlers during the colonial era. Elsewhere, where ideologies of racial mixture tended to be adopted by post-independence elites, socio-economic status today instead tends to *mestizoize* racial identity.

## Methodological concerns

One key methodological concern relating to these results is inconsistent application of the skin color palette across enumerators and respondents. Specifically, lighter-skinned enumerators may systematically report respondent skin color as darker than darker-skinned enumerators (Hill, 2002) which may bias these results. In order to try to control for imperfect inter-coder reliability, I checked the robustness of the results to specifications that included both *interviewer* skin color fixed effects using the full 10-point scale and that col-

lapsed *respondent* skin color into three main groups (light, medium, and dark) - together which should limit the influence of interviewer heterogeneity.[28] The reported regression results remain largely unchanged when doing so.[29]

We may similarly be concerned that these results are being driven by the fact that skin color is a potentially poor measure of individual ancestry. In particular, indigenous identity, unlike identity as black or white, has historically been more closely tied to possession of indigenous language rather than to phenotype (Wagley, 1965; Wade, 2010; Telles, 2014). If skin color is not adequately controlling for indigenous heritage, there may be a mechanical effect of living in a country demographically dominated by Europeans on identification as white even among individuals with the same skin color.

Fortunately, AmericasBarometer asked its respondents whether they or their parents spoke an indigenous language which means that we can directly test for conditionality in the effect of indigenous heritage on ethno-racial identification. Over 40 percent of respondents *both* of whose parents *only* spoke an indigenous language identified as white. Exploiting this variation, we can test for the contextual determinants of 'whitening' among persons with indigenous heritage in the Americas. Given the association between whiteness and possession of European heritage, we should expect that, all else equal, a respondent both of whose parents only spoke indigenous languages would be less likely to identify as white. Yet, given the relative phenotypical ambiguity of indigenous identity, we should also expect this effect to be conditional on country-context. In those countries with low pre-colonial population densities and historically high European settlement where possession of whiteness is particularly important, we should expect individuals with two indigenous parents to be no differently or even more likely to identify as white than other individuals in the same country.

This is indeed the case - the racial identification of respondents both of whose parents only spoke an indigenous language is conditional on country context. Such individuals are less likely to identify as white in countries less suitable for wheat production and with a lower proportion of Europeans, but actually are more likely to identify as white than comparable individuals in countries of substantial European settlement where whiteness has historically been normative.[30] The effect of both indigenous heritage and socio-economic status on racial identification in the Americas is thus entirely contingent on wider contextual factors; both the boundaries of racial identities and processes of status-driven racial

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[28]Because interviewer skin color was not reported in the GSS, this sample drops all respondents from the United States.

[29]Results available on request.

[30]Result available on request

fluidity in the Americas differ systematically according to factor endowments and colonial-era demography.

## Conclusion

Why do the boundaries of racial identities differ so substantially across the Americas today? Seeking to reconcile the discordant findings of two influential generations of scholarship on race in the Americas, this paper has theorized how colonization path dependently shaped contemporary understandings of race and ethnicity through the racial ideologies adopted by national elites. Drawing from across disciplinary boundaries, I have argued that initial conditions or 'factor endowments' shaped European demographic predominance in the colonial era which in turn shaped consequentially divergent national racial projects across the Americas. Using survey data from over 100,000 individuals across 23 countries, I have then provided evidence that the boundaries of contemporary racial identities and direction of status-driven racial fluidity across countries can be traced back to colonial European demography insofar as this shaped the post-colonial racial ideologies adopted by elites. I moreover find evidence for long-theorized differences in racial identification across former Iberian and non-Iberian colonies. As such, this paper shows that neither an exclusive focus on the colonial nor post-colonial eras is sufficient as a comparative explanation for racial formation across the Americas. Rather, by connecting racial formation across the colonial and post-colonial eras, this paper provides new theory and evidence for the determinants of contemporary racial identification and reconciles the findings of two influential generations of scholarship on race in the Americas.

The nomothetic theoretical exposition of this paper may nevertheless appear reductive to more idiographically-minded historical scholars. One may question whether it is even possible to productively generalize about complex socio-legal processes of racialization that have lasted for over half a millennia. Moreover, the capacity for colonial demography or factor endowments to explain racial boundaries may be very limited in any particular country-case. Yet, nomothetic reasoning remains essential to advance our understanding of race and ethnicity as it is only by identifying points of convergence that we can accurately assess the idiosyncratic nature of particular types of racial thought and practice (Loveman, 2009). For example, processes of racialization in the United States have long been thought of as unique relative to the other countries of the Americas (e.g. Degler 1971; Frederickson 1982; Marx 1998; Bonilla-Silva 2004). Yet, the expansive nature of both whiteness and blackness and prevalence of socio-economic 'whitening' in the United States is shared by

a number of other countries in the Americas and is, in fact, exactly as would be predicted given its colonial heritage and demography.[31] Nomothetic theory and evidence can thereby serve as the benchmark from which to assess the validity of claims to idiosyncracy and better direct where further idiographic research is particularly necessary.

The insight gained when placing individual cases in comparative context can also be seen with respect to the limitations of early work on race in the Americas. The first generation of literature tended to place great importance on Iberian/non-Iberian cultural legacies based on an exclusive comparison of Brazil and the United States (Freyre, 1946; Tannenbaum, 1947; Harris, 1956; Degler, 1971). Yet, although this paper indeed finds strong empirical support for the importance of colonizer identity for racial identification, when broadening out the base of comparison to the full set of countries in the Americas there remains substantial within-colonizer variation in understandings of race. This paper has argued and provided empirical evidence that colonial-era demography across countries colonized by the same colonizer - for example, between Uruguay/Peru or Jamaica/the United States - path dependently shaped post-colonial racial ideologies and thus contemporary understandings of racial identification today. Systematic data collection across a full set of relevant cases can therefore guard against potentially invalid generalizations and guide the direction of future research.

Beyond reconciling the discordant findings of two influential generations of literature on race in the Americas, this paper breaks new ground methodologically. Empirically, this paper helps answer the call for research that examines patterns of racial identification by combining different levels of analysis (Saperstein, Penner and Light, 2013) and does so by bridging the fields of comparative-historical sociology and comparative race and ethnicity. In the ethnicity and race literature, most studies tend to examine macro-level processes - or how power relations shape the racial order - in isolation from micro-level processes - or the factors that determine how a person identifies in a particular way, at a particular point in time. On the other hand in the comparative-historical literature, the relatively few works that analyse race and identity tend to examine differences in citizenship law (Brubaker, 1990), legalized racial exclusion (Stinchcombe, 1995; Marx, 1998) or census categories as the outcome of interest (Nobles, 2000; Loveman, 2014). The key empirical challenge when instead trying to understanding differences in racial and ethnic boundaries

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[31]This is not to suggest that *aspects* of racial practice in the United States have been idiosyncratic - for example, the extent of institutionalized discrimination against the black community (Davis, 1991). Rather, it is only to point out that when examining the factors that predict racial identification from a comparative perspective, it does not appear very anomalous.

across countries is that census categories are often detached from the porous and dynamic categories individuals actually use to distinguish themselves at the micro-level (Brubaker, 2004).[32] Whilst this paper theoretically takes a macro-level approach, I empirically follow recent micro-level work by treating race as a propensity rather than a characteristic (Saperstein and Penner, 2012) and, by controlling for the propensity-affecting confounders such as skin color, identify the role that macro-level national factors play in shaping individual racial identification. There is great scope for similar multi-level research designs to be used elsewhere to advance our understanding of racial boundary formation. For example, recent micro-level studies have analysed how the racial identities of Latin Americans are shaped by the experiences of migration to the United States (e.g. Roth 2012; Joseph 2015). It would be of great interest to extend such studies by collecting panel data tracking the racial identities of migrants across national borders including, ideally, migrants *from* predominantly destination countries such as the United States. The study of migration on the formation of racial identity is, in this way, ideally suited to a multi-level analysis and such a design would help address the empirical limitations of this paper by allowing for within-individual comparisons in racial identity over time.

Finally, there remains great scope for further research on the long-run construction of racial boundaries in the Americas. Given data constraints, I have only been able to examine racial self-identification as an outcome of interest. Yet, self-identification, whilst the norm for measurement of race today, is only one aspect of how race shapes one's life experiences (Telles, 2002; Saperstein, 2006; Campbell and Troyer., 2007). It remains to be seen whether pre-colonial factor endowments as robustly predict patterns of racial *ascription* amongst otherwise phenotypically similar individuals. Similarly, understandings of race are far from static. Responding to recent policy trends, there is evidence that phenotypically darker individuals have increasingly begun to identify as black and indigenous in settings such as Brazil and Mexico in part to secure the benefits of affirmative action (Francis and Tannuri-Pianto, 2013; Stephen, 1996). Similarly, there is evidence that, in response to political opportunities created by international and American cultural influence, younger and more educated Afro-Latin Americans and Carribeans are increasingly likely to identify as black rather than mixed-race (Thomas, 2007; Bailey and Telles, 2006; Paschel, 2010). As this paper has shown, however, contemporary racial boundaries across the Americas still remain highly geographically patterned due to the demographic legacies of the colonial era. Whilst research on shifting understandings of race in the contemporary era is therefore necessary

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[32]For example, Loveman (1999) compellingly critiques Marx (1998)'s analysis of racial exclusion in Brazil for using 'black' as a static category of analysis when most Afro-descent Brazilians do not identify as black.

and productive, there remains great scope for further work that can refine our understanding of the long-run construction of race and ethnicity across the Americas.

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# Appendix

**Summary Statistics**

| Variable | Mean | St. Dev | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 0.27 | 0.45 | 0 | 1 |
| Mixed race | 0.48 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 |
| Black | 0.16 | 0.37 | 0 | 1 |
| Respondent skin color | 4.75 | 2.06 | 1 | 10 |
| Interviewer skin color | 4.86 | 1.78 | 1 | 10 |
| Prop. European ancestry | 0.47 | 0.24 | 0.01 | 0.91 |
| Sugarcane Suitability Index | 0.14 | 0.09 | 0 | 0.46 |
| Wheat Suitability Index | 0.06 | 0.14 | 0 | 0.72 |
| Prop. colonial European | 0.15 | 0.21 | 0.03 | 0.81 |
| Log pop. density 1500s | -0.39 | 1.15 | -2.44 | 1.53 |
| Both parents indigenous | .098 | .29 | 0 | 1 |
| Years of schooling | 9.91 | 4.29 | 0 | 18 |
| Monthly household income (0-16 scale) | 8.46 | 4.25 | 0 | 16 |
| Urban | 1.31 | 0.46 | 1 | 2 |
| Female | 1.51 | 0.49 | 1 | 2 |
| Age | 39.79 | 15.91 | 16 | 101 |
| French colony | 0.03 | 0.17 | 0 | 1 |
| British colony | 0.18 | 0.38 | 0 | 1 |
| Netherlands colony | 0.06 | 0.24 | 0 | 1 |
| Portuguese colony | 0.05 | 0.22 | 0 | 1 |
| Spanish colony | 0.70 | 0.46 | 0 | 1 |

Table 1: Summary statistics for cross-country regression variables