# ELECTORAL DISCRIMINATION
## The Relationship between Skin Color and Vote Buying in Latin America

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ABSTRACT

Under what conditions do elections produce racially discriminatory outcomes? This article proposes electoral discrimination as an electoral mechanism for racial marginalization in indigenous and Afro-descendant Latin America. Electoral discrimination occurs when voters are mobilized under differential terms of electoral inclusion based on their observable characteristics. Using the 2010–2014 rounds of the AmericasBarometer and a conjoint experiment, the author finds that skin color is a robust predictor of vote buying across countries in the region with large, visible black and indigenous populations. A significant portion of the relationship between skin color and vote buying is due to the disproportionate impacts of race-neutral targeting criteria on dark-skinned voters. Observed differences in wealth, political and civic engagement, partisanship, political interest, interpersonal trust, and geography together explain a portion of the skin color–client gap, although the individual contribution of each of these factors differs by country. In addition, the author finds an independent relationship between skin color and vote buying over and above these race-neutral factors. The argument and findings in this article speak broadly to the consequences of electoral mobilization in ethnoracially stratified states in Latin America and beyond.

IN ethnoracially stratified states, group membership determines the distribution of status, material benefits, and political rights.[1] This article examines the microfoundations of political marginalization in Latin America and shows how electoral mobilization within stratified states becomes a likely venue for institutionalized discrimination.[2] Centuries of colonialism, nation-building, and migration created culturally and phenotypically diverse citizens in Latin America within a robust system of pigmentocracy—that is, stratification by skin color. Skin color remains the principal predictor of ethnoracial group membership and status in the region,[3] yet relatively little is known about the

[1] Horowitz 1985; Kohler-Hausmann 2011.

[2] Omi and Winant 1994.

[3] Canache et al. 2014; Sidanius, Peña, and Sawyer 2001; Telles and Paschel 2014. I use the terms "race" and "ethnicity" interchangeably in this article to refer to the social and political dimensions of distinction based on ascriptive traits (Brubaker 2009). I lump these terms because the article investigates the political significance of the sticky, ascriptive characteristics that define membership in ethnic and racial groups alike. Brubaker 2009; Chandra 2006.

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electoral salience of racial stratification. The near-universal conditions of social and economic stratification based on color in Latin America produce the likely conditions for electoral discrimination—the unequal terms of electoral mobilization for members of racially marginalized groups. Through a closer examination of the predictive power of skin color, this article uncovers independent and persistent effects of racial discrimination on Afro-Latin and indigenous electoral mobilization.

I focus on a particular manifestation of electoral discrimination: vote buying. I find that skin color is a robust predictor of vote buying across countries in the region that have large, visible black and indigenous populations. Voters with dark skin color are over-targeted for vote buying because of the disproportionate impacts of the superficially race-neutral criteria that patrons use to target clients, for example, partisanship or wealth, and because of differential treatment based on heuristics that dark skin provides over and above these familiar criteria.

This article is rooted in the representation gap for indigenous and Afro-descendant people in Latin America. In contrast to other regions where political parties articulate central racial and ethnic cleavages, ethnicity is a marginal cleavage in many Latin American party systems. Color-blind racial discourse has been an important barrier to the programmatic deconstruction of colorism and white supremacy in the region,[4] and because of this programmatic silence on race, most scholarship on the region overlooks an important venue of ethnic politics—vote buying. In this context of limited descriptive representation and ethnic electoral salience, vote buying is a symbolic form of electoral discrimination. The provision of private, targeted benefits based on skin color maintains the pluralistic (ironically color-blind) linkages to parties. The limited political centrality of ethnicity in the electoral arena sets color-based vote buying apart from the collective benefits frame in the ethnic patronage literature.[5] This article is not a corrective to the "who gets bought" literature, nor does it aim to pit skin color against the central explanatory variables in this debate. The goal here is to shed light on the ethnic implications of vote buying in Latin America that have been overlooked until now. This article shows that the instrumentalist logic of targeting tends to over-target black and brown voters. Moreover, the article demonstrates that there is a substantial degree of targeting that can be explained by stereotypes alone.[6]

[4] Clealand 2017; Hanchard 1994; Marx 1998.
[5] Chandra 2004; Conroy-Krutz 2013 ; Kramon 2016; Posner 2005.
[6] I thank the anonymous reviewer who helped to illuminate this contribution in the manuscript.

I test this argument using the 2010, 2012, and 2014 rounds of the AmericasBarometer (a survey of the Latin America Public Opinion Project, LAPOP) in eleven Latin American democracies with large, visible black and indigenous populations.[7] The 2010 LAPOP survey was the first to incorporate a unique measure of each respondent's skin color based on the survey enumerator's observation. The subsequent survey rounds have since included this skin-color measurement. These rounds of the LAPOP survey also asked about vote buying—whether the respondent was offered a material good in exchange for his or her vote in a previous election. I use the observational analysis to probe the degree of the skin-color gap in client targeting that can be explained by the disproportionate impact of race-neutral factors and the degree to which this can be attributed to differential treatment based on ascription. To demonstrate the independent effect of skin-color cues on patrons' decisions of whose vote to buy, I present the results of choice and rating tasks from an original online conjoint experiment that instructed participants to buy the votes of fictional voters who differed based on skin color, gender, occupation, likelihood of voting, and partisanship.

I begin by examining the sociopolitical consequences of racial stratification in Latin America and then unpack the theory of electoral discrimination, situate vote buying within this theory, and explicate the observable implications of the argument. Subsequently, I introduce the multicountry study and present observational evidence of electoral discrimination for eleven Latin American democracies with large black and indigenous populations, and then use evidence from an online conjoint experiment conducted in Panama that shows how skin-color cues affect how clients are targeted. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of this argument to the regional salience of race and ethnicity and to the general study of ethnicity and race in comparative politics.

## The Sociopolitical Consequences of Racial Stratification in Latin America

What happens when sticky and visible characteristics in a population overlap with social, political, and economic marginalization? In ethnoracially stratified societies, group membership functions as the criteria for the distribution of status, material benefits, and political rights.[8]

[7] I thank LAPOP and its major supporters (the United States Agency for International Development, the United Nations Development Program, the Inter-American Development Bank, and Vanderbilt University) for making the data available.

[8] Kohler-Hausmann 2011.

At the macrolevel, the burden of oppression disproportionately impacts the most marginal communities. Muslims in India, for example, have been on the losing side of persistent gaps in wealth and education since the colonial era.[9] In the United States, African Americans have been disproportionately affected by the growth of the carceral state.[10]

In stratified societies, ostensibly race-neutral factors like socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and incarceration are encoded with ethnoracial significance. These attributes, which themselves are not descent-based,[11] are woven together with ethnicity. Voter ID laws in the United States that are commonly understood to be race neutral nevertheless create systematic barriers to electoral participation for ethnoracial minorities because of unequal access to eligible forms of identification.[12] The disproportionate incarceration rates of African Americans transform state laws that deny voting rights to people with felony records into institutional mechanisms for black disenfranchisement.[13] Ethnoracial stratification facilitates disproportionate-impact discrimination by encoding ethnoracial significance into politically consequential criteria and institutions.

At the microlevel, the conjunction of sticky and visible traits that signal membership in socially and economically marginal categories is encoded in stereotypes. These stereotypes in turn inform behavior and interactions within and across ascriptive boundaries. Racial stereotypes in the US about black partisanship and issue preference influence voter mobilization strategies,[14] constituent services,[15] and voters' expectations of candidates.[16]

Centuries of colonialism, nation-building, and migration in Latin America have created a robust system of ethnoracial stratification. Legacies of forced labor and white supremacy have deeply entrenched ethnoracial patterns of inequality and marginalization for indigenous peoples and people of African descent. One major consequence of this is that blackness, indigeneity, and the ascriptive characteristics that encode membership in these groups are strongly correlated with social status. Skin color is strongly associated with individual well-being and social status and perceptions of discrimination.[17] Skin color is an im-

[9] Bhaumik and Chakrabarty 2006; Kuran and Singh 2013.
[10] Middlemass 2017.
[11] Chandra 2006.
[12] Barreto, Nuño, and Sanchez 2009; Hajnal, Lajevardi, and Nielson 2017.
[13] Behrens, Uggen, and Manza 2003; Wacquant 2005.
[14] Hersh 2015.
[15] Butler and Broockman 2011.
[16] Lerman and Sadin 2016.
[17] Lovell and Wood 1998; Sidanius, Peña, and Sawyer 2001; Telles and PERLA 2014; Villarreal 2010; Bailey 2009; Canache et al. 2014.

portant predictor of wealth and educational attainment for indigenous people,[18] as it is for Afro-descendants across much of the region.[19]

The relationship between skin color and poverty is quite strong. According to LAPOP, 29 percent of people having very light skin tone are impoverished compared to 50 percent of respondents with medium and dark skin tone and to 46 percent of respondents with very dark skin tone. Even though people with the darkest skin tone are not the poorest, on average, perceptions of class-based discrimination and color-based discrimination increase monotonically with darker skin tone. Additionally, over 40 percent of very dark-skinned respondents perceive skin-color discrimination compared with less than 10 percent of very light-skinned respondents.[20] The significance of race in Latin America is intertwined with, rather than reducible to, its powerful correlation with socioeconomic status. Poverty creates significant barriers to education, health, and security for dark-skinned voters. In addition, dark skin color carries a perception of marginality over and above observed differences in wealth.

Ethnoracial categories are interwoven with ostensibly race-neutral factors beyond class. There is some evidence of ethnoracial and partisan overlap in several countries across the region.[21] The electoral support for the Brazilian Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores) is strong in the predominately poor, predominately black, northeast region,[22] but there is little evidence that race drives black (*preto*) and brown (*pardo*) partisanship.[23] Beyond Brazil, the contemporary relationship between blackness and partisanship is largely underexplored, fortifying the assumption that black identity politics occur outside of the electoral arena. The literature has had much more to say about the role of partisanship for indigenous voters. Small, regional, indigenous parties have been moderately successful in Colombia and Venezuela, winning local representation and seats in their national legislatures, and larger parties have achieved electoral success at the legislative and executive levels in Bolivia and Ecuador.[24] Ethnicity is an important determinant of electoral support for these ethnic parties, so we might hesitate to consider partisanship as race neutral in these contexts. But even in party systems

[18] Telles and PERLA 2014; Flores and Telles 2012; Villarreal 2010.

[19] Monk 2016; Telles and Paschel 2014; Telles and PERLA 2014.

[20] These estimates come from the eleven countries in this study, but they are similar to region-wide trends.

[21] Cannon 2008; Madrid 2014; Priestley and Barrow 2008; Van Cott 2010.

[22] Bohn 2011; Loftin 2018.

[23] Samuels 2006.

[24] Madrid 2014; Van Cott 2007.

with strong indigenous parties, I consider partisanship to be race neutral because ethnicity crosscuts support for these multiethnic parties.[25] As a result, partisanship should not be conflated with descent-based attributes.

Ethnoracial stratification is reflected in the unequal distribution of power and influence across racial groups. Systematic evidence on descriptive representation in the region is limited, but several country-level studies and regional analyses point to large gaps between the ethnoracial composition of the population and the national executive and legislative branches.[26] In addition, ethnoracial gaps in representation coexist with wealth gaps in descriptive representation across the region.[27] Natália Bueno and Thad Dunning's extensive effort to code the race of Brazilian state and federal elected officials uncovered a notable disparity between the roughly 50 percent of the population that self-identifies as black (preto or pardo) and the 25 percent of elected officials who are black.[28] They ultimately attribute this disparity to a resource gap between white and black candidates. Disparities in personal assets and campaign contributions between blacks and whites systematically disadvantage black office seekers.[29]

Racial schema—socially shared understandings of the content and meaning of racial categories[30]—become readily available heuristics for interpreting everyday interactions. Color certainly is a central determinant of experiences of discrimination and victimization in the region. Darker-skinned people in Latin America perceive color discrimination at greater rates than lighter-skinned people.[31] Matthew Cawvey and colleagues find that alongside perceived discrimination, Latin Americans with darker skin report being solicited more frequently to pay bribes than people with lighter skin tones.[32] In a field experiment of traffic policing in Mexico City, Brian Fried, Paul Lagunes, and Atheendar Venkataramani find the police are more likely to solicit bribes from drivers whose clothing, car, and skin tone together signal that they are lower class because the officers perceive that these drivers are less able

[25] Madrid 2014; Van Cott 2010.

[26] Beck and Mijeski 2006; Bueno and Dunning 2017; Johnson 2012; Madrid and Rhodes-Purdy 2016.

[27] Carnes and Lupu 2015.

[28] Bueno and Dunning 2017.

[29] Bueno and Dunning 2017, 357–58. The role that candidates' skin color plays in electability is an underexplored area of research in Latin America. Studies that have attempted to measure voters' biases against dark-skinned (black) candidates have found mixed evidence. Aguilar et al. 2015; Bueno and Dunning 2017; Contreras 2016.

[30] Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004; Gravlee 2005; Roth 2012.

[31] Canache et al. 2014; Cawvey et al. 2018; Telles and PERLA 2014.

[32] Cawvey et al. 2018.

to exact legal retribution against corrupt policing.[33] This new frontier of research on skin color and discrimination in Latin America demonstrates that cognitive expectations of status (stereotypes) are independently associated with skin color and thus operate in ways that may defy expectations based on a person's objective social status or position.

## Electoral Discrimination and Vote Buying

An action is discriminatory if it disadvantages or differentiates between individuals based on their observable characteristics.[34] This definition is notably different from one founded on individual motivation or intent.[35] Adjudicating motive-based discrimination is prone to generating false negatives because it obscures the disproportionate impacts of objective institutional processes. The definition proposed in this article works from a sociological perspective that classifies an action as discriminatory based on the broader social structure in that society. An action is racially discriminatory when disadvantageous differential treatment or disparate impacts of the same treatment are situated within a broader pattern of stratification.[36] Furthermore, we can say that discrimination is based on race when we observe a direct relationship between the act and the target's race or the race-neutral factors that correlate with race. Discrimination includes differential treatment based on ethnoracial stereotypes and the disproportionate impacts of prima facie race-neutral processes, an important central contribution of this argument in a context where race and ethnicity are presumed not to be central to electoral politics.

Building on the general conceptualization of discrimination, I define electoral discrimination as the situation in which voters are mobilized under differential terms of electoral inclusion based on their observable characteristics. Electoral discrimination occurs when candidates and parties employ electoral mobilization strategies based on voters' race or the correlates of race within a broader system of ethnoracial stratification in the electoral arena. Under these conditions, differential mobilization strategies and disproportionate impacts of the same mobilization strategies are sufficient evidence for electoral discrimination.

The terms for democratic representation of black and indigenous (dark-skinned) voters in Latin America differ in systematic ways from those for representation of light-skinned, mixed race (*mestizos*) and

[33] Fried, Lagunes, and Venkataramani 2010.
[34] Kohler-Hausmann 2011.
[35] Allport 1954.
[36] Pager and Sheppard 2008.

whites.[37] The growing social and institutional recognition of the racist roots of this stratification has not yet been accompanied by central political articulation of policy along ethnoracial lines in most party systems. The electoral discrimination argument in this article brings into sharper focus the disjuncture between the equivalent rates of electoral participation of subaltern and privileged groups and the limited articulation of subaltern identity politics. Electoral discrimination is more likely to occur where candidates and parties manipulate electoral processes and outcomes because the differential targeting and disproportionate consequences of these strategies (re)produce the systematic disadvantages of subaltern groups, even in the absence of explicit racial motivation. In Latin America, this systematic disadvantage for black and indigenous people is rooted in the limited electoral articulation of their collective interests.

Vote buying is an important manifestation of electoral discrimination because it is symbolic of the color-blind model of citizenship, the cornerstone of racial hegemony in Latin America.[38] *Mestizaje*—the myth that centuries of race mixture deconstructed ethnoracial categories—transformed raceless discourse into the dominant frame for interest aggregation and articulation in postcolonial and post-emancipation Latin America.[39] As a consequence, it enshrined a system of ascriptive stratification that simultaneously deconstructed subaltern identity politics. Even though a plurality of states in the region has adopted multicultural citizenship regimes, we have not observed the same shift in the electoral arena. Parties segment their linkage structures to core and noncore constituencies in deeply stratified societies as a means to assert a consistent programmatic message to core voters (typically, middle-class mestizos) while still mobilizing the support of noncore voters (typically, subaltern).[40] Under the color-blind logic of mestizaje, black and indigenous voters are not core constituents. Consequently, parties and candidates are more likely to mobilize these voters through nonprogrammatic means, preserving pluralistic rather than collective linkages with voters in these communities.[41]

Figure 1 shows the level of clientelism and ethnic targeting in party

[37] Figure 1.2 in the supplementary material shows that respondents with darker skin color tend to self-identify as black, indigenous, or mestizo; Johnson 2019b. The assumption is that the 15 to 60 percent of darker-skinned respondents who self-identify as mestizo could also self-identify as either black or indigenous.

[38] Hanchard 1994; Hooker 2005; Loveman 2014.

[39] Telles 2004; Wade 1993.

[40] Luna 2014.

[41] Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015 argue that vote buying through interest organizations has the potential to foster collective linkages to parties rather than to atomize linkages, but this does not appear

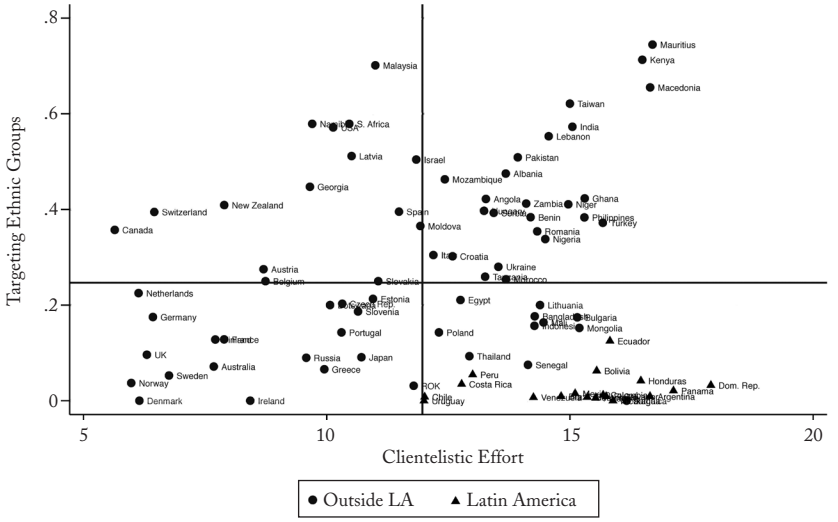


FIGURE 1
ETHNIC TARGETING BY PARTY SYSTEM AND PATRONAGE [a]

SOURCE: DALP 2014.

[a] The figure shows the average effort that political parties make to attract specific ethnic groups with targeted inducements (B8_3 from the DALP) by the total level of clientelistic effort in the party system (B15 from the DALP). The horizontal line represents the global average of ethnic targeting. The vertical line represents the global average clientelistic effort.

systems worldwide using data from the Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project (DALP).[42] The figure shows that Latin American party systems are more clientelist than the global average but put less-than-average effort into intentionally targeting specific ethnic groups with patronage.[43] What appears to be the low salience of ethnicity to clientelism in the figure masks the reality of electoral discrimination—the de-articulation of ethnoracial politics through individualistic exchange. Vote buying as a form of electoral discrimination is distinct from vote buying as a form of ethnic patronage. In the literature on ethnic patronage, clientelism is framed as a selective benefit to the individual recipient and a collective benefit or signal to the group as a whole.[44] Kanchan

to be the case for ethnicity (see Figure 1). Moreover, the predominant ethnic parties in the region, Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) and Pachakutik, explicitly campaigned against clientelism and corruption. Van Cott 2007, 12.

[42] Kitschelt 2014.

[43] See Appendix 1, Section A, in the supplementary material for question wording for the DALP variables; Johnson 2019b.

[44] Chandra 2004; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Eifert, Miguel, and Posner 2010; Inglot and Pelissero 1993; Posner 2005.

Chandra contends that the shared understanding that ethnicity conditions membership in the electoral distribution network incentivizes parties to target coethnics to "[signal] to all group members that [they] will favor individuals in their group over others" and voters to "organize collectively in the pursuit of individually distributed goods."[45] She adds that even those coethnic voters who receive no individual goods derive psychic benefits because others see them as members of "the same group as the elite."[46]

The group-based, beneficial framing of ethnic patronage is not likely to apply in Latin America because ethnicity is not a central frame for interest articulation. Most parties in the region are nonethnic. The limited levels of descriptive representation also mean that indigenous and black voters cannot count heads of party leadership to interpret the private distribution of goods as a signal of collective targeting.[47] Moreover, the psychic benefits derived from coethnicity with the elite would also not apply if black and indigenous voters are ultimately clients of noncoethnic, color-blind parties. Individual benefits that go to black and indigenous voters do not scale up to the group level. Thus, racial and ethnic vote buying in this stratified and color-blind context embodies and reinforces the pluralistic linkage structure in the electoral arena, even where black and indigenous voters are over-targeted as clients.

There are two forms of electoral discrimination that make dark-skinned voters more likely to be targeted for clientelism. These processes are not competing explanations, but likely work in tandem. First, the race-neutral criteria that patrons use to target potential clients disproportionately impact marginal ascriptive communities. Electoral discrimination occurs, in part, because there is substantial overlap between the criteria that patrons use to target clients and the sticky and visible characteristics of subaltern groups. Socioeconomic stratification is probably the most theoretically robust path connecting skin color (and ascription) to vote buying in Latin America. Where dark-skinned voters are disproportionately poor, they are likely to be over-targeted for vote buying. Relatedly, where race and ethnicity overlap with rural geography, we should expect disproportionate impacts of vote buying on subaltern groups. Traditional patron-client relationships are easier to maintain in rural areas. Lower population density makes it easier for patrons to monitor compliance with preelectoral transactions.[48] Higher

[45] Chandra 2004, 56, 54.
[46] Chandra 2004, 64.
[47] Chandra 2004.
[48] Rueda 2017.

levels of economic precarity outside of the major urban centers in addition to more hierarchical social relationships make rural geographies into "low maintenance constituencies," thereby increasing the efficiency of patronage.[49]

The literature on the logic of targeting has dedicated much effort to the relationship between partisanship and vote buying.[50] Whether elites are purchasing swing votes, the turnout of core supporters, or the continued loyalty of partisans, if race correlates with partisanship and if partisanship is a key driver of whose vote to buy, the outcome per electoral discrimination would be the same: disproportionate impacts on dark-skinned voters. But this partisanship is not a likely source of electoral discrimination. The few studies that look into the relationship between ethnoracial identification and partisanship document little evidence of a large ethnoracial gap in partisanship.

Brokers are central actors in the clientelism literature, but they vary in their degree of embeddedness and private interest in rent seeking. Debates over brokers' compliance with candidates and party patrons and their ability to monitor client compliance under the secret ballot have generated a host of powerful and generalizable explanatory factors. Brokers embedded in interest associations play an important role in maximizing the returns to particularistic benefits and monitoring compliance.[51] They target individuals with large, informal conversation networks to buy their ability to mobilize the support of their peers.[52] Brokers are also interested in rent seeking and may target voters indiscriminately.[53] It is not clear ex ante that one of these forms of targeting would be more likely to create disproportionate impacts on darker-skinned voters compared with the other factors discussed above. Still, the implications under the electoral discrimination argument would be the same. Where these prima facie race-neutral criteria of targeting overlap with race and ascription, they disproportionately impact black and brown clients. Thus, the disproportionate-effects hypothesis:

[49] Anderson, Francois, and Kotwal 2015; Diaz-Cayeros, Magaloni, and Weingast 2003; Fox 1994; Gibson and Calvo 2000.

[50] Anderson, Francois, and Kotwal 2015; Dixit and Londregan 1996; Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, and Nichter 2014; Nichter 2008; Schaffer and Baker 2015; Stokes 2005; Stokes et al. 2013. Several studies identify the likely endogenous relationship between vote buying and partisanship: early transactions shift clients' partisan preferences, converting them into core supporters. What we observe in cross-sectional, observational data is really an artifact of posttreatment measures of partisanship. Guardado and Wantchekon 2018; Schaffer and Baker 2015.

[51] Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015.

[52] Schaffer and Baker 2015.

[53] Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015; Stokes et al. 2013; Szwarcberg 2012.

> —H1. Patrons will target darker-skinned voters at higher rates than lighter-skinned voters because of average differences in their race-neutral characteristics.

When controls for the social and political criteria are introduced to the model, the relationship between skin color and vote buying attenuates.

The second form of electoral discrimination—differential treatment—occurs when a voter's observable characteristics predict vote buying over and above the seemingly nonracial factors that determine targeting. Ideally, patrons would have perfect information about voters' preferences, their record of turnout and vote choice, and their likelihood of future compliance. But access to much of this information comes with high costs in effort and resources. In stratified societies where status, material benefits, and political rights are determined by ethnicity, ascriptive cues function as information shortcuts that potentially resolve this problem. Ascriptive cues are cheap, meaning that they convey information simply through observation.[54] Thus, under conditions of high information uncertainty, patrons will use ascription as a heuristic cue—a stereotype—for politically salient targeting criteria.

Stereotypes overgeneralize and create a trade-off between the availability and accuracy of information. Patrons using ascriptive heuristics to proxy politically salient information are thus likely to inaccurately estimate clients' true characteristics. Assuming that all the relevant factors that would drive the decision of who gets bought are accounted for, a significant skin-color coefficient signals that patrons are either intentionally targeting voters based on their race or are using ascriptive heuristics to approximate race-neutral criteria with some error. Skin color contains a host of potential cues related to vote buying that differ in terms of accuracy and salience. Although it is possible that patrons target dark-skinned voters as an explicit strategy to buy indigenous and black votes, it is not likely because most parties in the region are nonethnic. Ultimately, it is beyond the scope of this article to parse the explicit motivations for ascriptive targeting. The key to my argument is that independent of motive, the outcome observed is the same: differential treatment that rests on descent-based attributes. Thus, the differential-treatment hypothesis:

> —H2. Voters with darker skin color will have a higher probability of being targeted for a vote buy than lighter constituents after controlling for race-neutral covariates.

[54] Chandra 2004, 38.

To recap, the central claim of this argument is that in ethnoracially stratified societies, where candidates and parties tend to manipulate electoral processes and outcomes, electoral discrimination is likely to occur through two interrelated processes: (1) the overlap of ascription and race-neutral targeting criteria (disproportionate impact), and (2) differential treatment based on stereotypes of descent-based attributes (differential treatment). The two forms of electoral discrimination are not mutually exclusive, but each form is likely to predominate under different circumstances. The key distinction between the two mechanisms is the availability of information on voters' politically salient, race-neutral characteristics. As a result, we should observe more prevalent use of stereotypes (differential treatment) where patrons lack the information to target clients based on politically salient characteristics. By contrast, where patrons have the capacity to target voters more precisely, we should primarily observe electoral discrimination through disproportionate impacts of race-neutral criteria, or not at all if ascription is weakly associated with targeting criteria. The clientelistic-efficiency hypothesis follows:

> —H3. We should primarily observe differential-treatment discrimination in countries with less efficient patronage systems and disproportionate-impacts discrimination in countries with more efficient patronage systems. In efficient patronage systems, we should observe no relationship between skin color and client targeting if ascription is weakly associated with more politically salient characteristics.

I am pitting the electoral discrimination hypotheses against the status quo expectation that clientelistic mobilization in Latin America is orthogonal to race and ethnicity. Given the limited salience of ethnic articulation and ethnic patronage in the literature, we might expect that ethnicity and racial mobilization primarily occur outside the electoral arena. If there is no relationship between skin color and vote buying prior to accounting for race-neutral factors, then we cannot reject this null hypothesis.

In the subsequent analysis I assume that all voting-eligible adults in Latin America provide the same (potential) service to vote-seeking candidates because all Latin American democracies provide de jure rights to universal suffrage. I also assume that the votes of different ethnoracial communities count equally, as all eleven countries in this study provide some form of proportional representation for the legislature. Although the mixed-proportional, vote-counting rules in countries like Panama and Mexico potentially diverge from the principal of

one person, one vote, to my knowledge there is no evidence of a systematic discrepancy between the voting power of black and indigenous voters and white mestizo voters.

## Study 1: Multicountry Observational Evidence of Electoral Discrimination

Under what conditions do elections produce racially discriminatory outcomes? In particular, how do voters' ascriptive characteristics factor into client targeting? And how much of this relationship can be explained by disproportionate impact versus differential treatment? This first study uses observational data to test the relationship between voters' skin color and the reported incidence of vote buying. The analysis presents nested logistic regression models of skin color on vote buying. These models test the disproportionate-impact and differential-treatment hypotheses by observing how the magnitude and significance of the skin-color coefficients change with a full set of covariates.

Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants can be found in all eighteen electoral democracies in the region, but the magnitude and visibility of these populations vary. I limit the case selection to eleven Latin American democracies with large, visible black and indigenous populations. The countries include the six democracies with the largest Afro-Latin American populations—Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Panama, and Venezuela—and five of the six countries with the largest indigenous populations—Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru. Each of these countries has a population of approximately 10 percent or more self-identified black or indigenous according to their national census and LAPOP samples.[55] The Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL) estimates that indigenous peoples comprise 1.8 million (11 percent) in Chile,[56] but I exclude Chile from the main analysis because less than 3.5 percent of the pooled LAPOP sample for Chile self-identified as indigenous. CEPAL estimates that indigenous peoples number 1 million (7 percent) in Ecuador. Just 4.1 percent of the pooled LAPOP sample for Ecuador self-identified as indigenous, but I leave it in the analysis for two reasons. First, it is theoretically one of the central cases of successful indigenous social movement and electoral mobilization in the region and is therefore a crucial theoretical case to include in the analysis.[57] Second, Ec-

[55] In this study, black includes *negro* and *mulato* (preto and pardo in Brazil).
[56] CEPAL 2014.
[57] Birnir and Van Cott 2007; Mijeski and Beck 2008; Van Cott 2007.

uador is also an important case of Afro-Latin politics.[58] Approximately 6 percent of the pooled LAPOP sample for Ecuador self-identified as black, meeting the 10 percent minority threshold applied in the other ten cases.[59]

These cases allow me to assess the shared dimensions of marginalization for indigenous and black populations and to address an important lacuna in the political science literature, which tends to examine identity politics for these minority groups separately. There have been good reasons to disaggregate the study of black and indigenous politics, because these citizens have been incorporated into national identity and citizenship in different ways.[60] But people of indigenous and African descent encounter a shared reality of color-based discrimination.[61] Given my focus on discrimination based on observable characteristics, this analysis examines Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples together to explore the political significance of ascription that exists at the union of race and ethnicity. The following analysis uses pooled samples to speak to the shared theoretical expectations for political marginalization of black and indigenous voters. The analysis also reports results from separate country models to confirm the generalizability of electoral discrimination and to account for cross-national variation in the relationship between skin color and vote buying.

## Observational Study Design

The data for this study come from the 2010, 2012, and 2014 rounds of the LAPOP surveys. Beginning in 2010, LAPOP partnered with the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA) to include questions on racial attitudes and identification. LAPOP also includes PERLA's skin-color measure, which provides an observer measure of the respondents' phenotype as scored by the interviewer. The survey thus provides direct evidence to test the electoral discrimination hypotheses.

My primary dependent variable, *client*, is binary and takes a value of 1 if the respondent was targeted for vote buying in a previous election and a value of 0 if not.[62] Ezequiel González-Ocantos and colleagues caution that people tend to underreport vote buying in direct survey ques-

[58] Andrews 2004; Johnson 2012.

[59] The main results of the analysis do not change when Chile and additional cases with smaller black and indigenous populations are included in the analysis (El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras).

[60] Hooker 2005.

[61] Telles and PERLA 2014.

[62] See Appendix 1, Section A, in the supplementary material for question wording from the LAPOP surveys. Using the original three-category variable for *client*, the results are consistent with the model featured in this article. Johnson 2019b.

tions.[63] They find that 2 percent of their sample in Nicaragua reported that they were offered a vote buy when asked directly, compared to 24 percent when the question was embedded in a list experiment. While the direct measure is a limitation of the LAPOP survey, mean reporting across the eleven countries in my research is substantially higher than 2 percent.

The main threat of bias to the interpretation of my results is systematic over- or underreporting by skin color. If darker-skinned people are more frequently exposed to bribery, as recent research in Latin America suggests,[64] they may attach less stigma to it. Consequently, people with lighter skin tone who are bribed would feel a relatively stronger stigma and be more likely to underreport. An observed inequality in the stigma of vote buying across skin color would be consistent with the expectations of my argument, but it would still present an inferential problem if light-skinned voters are actually being targeted for vote buying at substantially higher rates than reported. Figure 1.3 in the supplementary material presents the predicted probabilities from a logistic regression of *client* on the interaction of *bribes_OK* and the skin-color variables.[65] The results support the basic integrity of the main results in this study. More tolerant attitudes toward bribery boost the likelihood of reporting vote buying across skin color. Still, darker-skinned voters are over-targeted as clients. This more conservative test should reduce the concern that the article's main finding is an artifact of social desirability bias.[66] I also control for the interviewer's skin color, *color_I*, to account for the possibility that respondents may systematically underreport vote buying as a function of the interviewer's skin tone.

I construct my primary independent variable using the interviewer's classification of the respondents' skin color. The original variable in the data set ranges from one (the lightest category) to eleven (the darkest category).[67] Following Damarys Canache and associates, I standardize

[63] González-Ocantos et al. 2012.

[64] Cawvey et al. 2018; Fried, Lagunes, and Venkataramani 2010.

[65] *Bribes_OK* is a dichotomous measure of whether the respondent believes that sometimes it is okay to pay a bribe. Attitudes about whether bribery is justified are a proxy for respondents' sensitivity to the vote-buying measure. For the figure, see Johnson 2019b.

[66] One important difference between the main model in this article and the interacted model in the supplementary material is that people with the darkest skin tone do not have the highest predicted probability of being targeted for vote buying among respondents who believe that sometimes paying bribes is okay. They are significantly more likely to be targeted than very light-skinned voters (consistent with the main finding in this article), but their probability is roughly equivalent to light- and medium-toned voters who believe that sometimes bribery is okay. It is important to note that the confidence interval for the *very dark-bribes_OK* interaction is quite large.

[67] See the image of the scale at https://perla.princeton.edu/perla-color-palette/, accessed August 26, 2019.

the original variable at the regional level.[68] Then, I create a dummy variable for each of the six standardized color categories: *very light*, *light*, *medium light*, *medium dark*, *dark*, and *very dark*. I refer to these variables collectively as *skin color*. *Very light* is the reference category for *skin color* in the regression analysis. Standardized *skin color* allows me to account for the fact that dark or light skin tone is dependent on local context.[69] The analysis in Study 1 compares the *skin color* coefficient across nested logit models. All models include country survey–round fixed effects. The simple model tests the null hypothesis that *skin color* is orthogonal to *client* (and thus that there is no electoral discrimination). This first model controls for *gender*, *age*, *urban*, and *color_I. Gender* is dichotomous and coded as 1 if the respondent is female. Age is a continuous variable from eighteen to ninety-nine years. *Urban* is a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 if the respondent lives in an urban area.

The second model includes a full list of covariates to assess the relative strength of the evidence in favor of the disproportionate-effects and differential-treatment hypotheses (H1 and H2, respectively). *Partisan* is a dichotomous variable that takes a value of 1 if the respondent reported partisan support for any party. *Participation index* is a proxy for whether the person is a likely voter or abstainer based on his or her general levels of political engagement.[70] It is also an additive index of dichotomous measures of protest participation, attendance at a local council meeting, and whether the person would vote if the next presidential elections were being held that week. *Participation index* ranges in value from 0 to 3. Proximity to broker networks is another important explanatory factor in the literature on vote buying. Following Alisha Holland and Brian Palmer-Ruben,[71] I create a civic-engagement scale, *civic*, an additive index of four dichotomous variables measuring engagement in resolving community problems and attendance at school board meetings, religious meetings, and community improvement meetings. *Civic* ranges in value from 0 to 4.[72]

[68] Canache et al. 2014. *Standardized* $Color_{ir} = \frac{Color_{ir} - \overline{Color_r}}{Stand.\ Dev.\ Color_r}$, where $r$ refers to region $r$ in the respondent's country. *Color* is the original eleven-point variable from LAPOP. *Very light* ($Color_{ir} \leq -2$ std. dev. [below the regional mean]); *light* (between −1 and −2 std. dev. below the mean); *med. light* (between −1 and 0 std. dev.); *med. dark* (between 0 and +1 std. dev.); *dark* (between +1 and +2 std. dev.); *very dark* (≥ +2 std. dev.). I combine *very dark* and *dark* in Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru because of the small sample size.

[69] The results in this article are consistent with models using various constructions of *skin color*.

[70] Schaffer and Baker 2015.

[71] Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015.

[72] The Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015 coding of *civic* ranges from zero to six, and includes additional dichotomous measures for attendance at professional association meetings and mothers' meetings. These measures were taken only in Argentina and the Dominican Republic in 2014 and contain a lot of missing data for most countries in the 2010 and 2012 samples, so I do not include the original Holland and Palmer-Rubin measure in the main analysis. Using the original *civic* variable, the results

To account for voters' level of reciprocity,[73] I control for *interpersonal trust*, a measure of whether the respondent believes that people in his or her community are generally trustworthy. *Interpersonal trust* takes values from 0 to 3. *Voted* is a dichotomous variable that takes a value of 1 if the respondent voted in the most recent election before the survey wave. *Wealth quintile* is a five-category variable, reverse coded so that higher values are associated with less wealth. I constructed *wealth quintile* using principal component analysis of the household items that the respondent owns.[74] *Education years* is a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 18. *Registered* takes a value of 1 if the respondent is a registered voter or is waiting for his or her voter registration to be processed. *Political interest* measures interest in politics and takes values from 0 to 3. The full model includes nationally representative samples from each of the eleven countries, totaling 39,774 respondents.[75]

## Results

Figure 2 presents the predicted probabilities of *client* at each level of *skin color* for the pooled sample.[76] The predicted probabilities for *skin color* were estimated with all covariates at their observed values.[77] The results from the simple model are plotted with the solid line. Each skin-tone category is associated with an increase in *client*, relative to very light skin tone.[78] Voters with very dark skin tone are 66 percent more likely to be targeted than voters with very light skin tone ($p = 0.007$). The results are consistent in country models. Overall, we can reject the null hypothesis in eight of the eleven cases. I find no evidence of a relationship between skin color and vote buying in Guatemala and Colombia. In Costa Rica, I find a marginally significant relationship between *light* and *client*, but no relationship at darker skin tones. Given the privileged position of light-skinned Costa Ricans (*light* is between one and two standard deviations lighter than the average voter), I contend that

are consistent with the model featured in this article. In addition, the results do not change when including requester (Nichter and Peress 2016), persuasion frequency (Schaffer and Baker 2015), and the big-five personality measures (Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015). I exclude these variables from the main analysis to reduce the number of observations lost to listwise deletion.

[73] Finan and Schecter 2012.

[74] Córdova 2009. The results of the model are largely unchanged using *Q10* (household income).

[75] Descriptive statistics for the entire sample are included in Table 1.1 in the supplementary material; Johnson 2019b.

[76] Results for the separate country models are available in Appendix 1, Section C, in the supplementary material; Johnson 2019b.

[77] The full logistic regression table for the nested models is reported in Table 1.2 in the supplementary material; Johnson 2019b.

[78] Predicted probabilities for *medium light* and darker-tone variables are all significantly different from the predicted probability for *very light*.

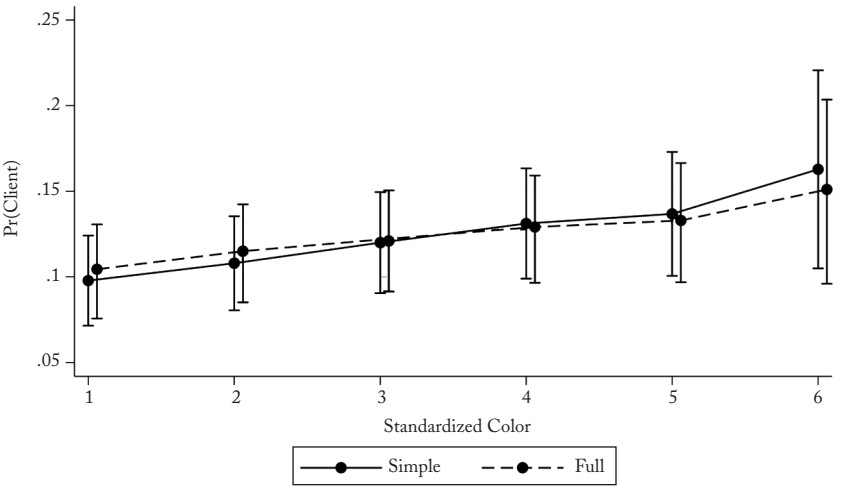


FIGURE 2
PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF CLIENT BY SKIN COLOR, NESTED MODELS [a]

SOURCE: LAPOP 2010–14.

[a] The figure shows the predicted probability of *client* at six levels of skin color from nested logit models for the pooled sample. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals reported. Models include country-round fixed effects. Covariates are at observed values.

the relationship between light skin and vote buying is qualitatively different from the racial discrimination argument in this article. As such, Costa Rica does not constitute a case of electoral discrimination.

The simple model alone does not allow us to adjudicate between disproportionate impacts and differential treatment. The dashed line plots the predicted probabilities for *skin color*, controlling for the full set of race-neutral covariates. It does appear that the omission of several of the race-neutral covariates inflated the predictive power of *skin color*, most notably for *very dark*. Compared to the simple model, the predicted probabilities decrease by roughly 3.5 percent for *medium dark* and *dark*, and roughly 8 percent for *very dark* in the full model. On average, the central, nonracial factors that predict who is bought disproportionately impact voters with darker skin tone. Disproportionate impacts account for nearly all the statistical association between *skin color* and *client* in three of the eight cases with evidence of electoral discrimination. In Peru, the marginally significant relationship between *dark* and *client* loses significance. In Brazil and the Dominican Republic, the 43 percent greater probability of client targeting for *very dark* relative to *very light* in the simple model is reduced by 53 percent, and is no longer significant.

The results from the pooled model and five of the country models

also support the differential-treatment hypothesis. Race-neutral factors do not displace the role of skin color in predicting who is targeted for vote buying. Voters with very dark skin tone still have a 45 percent greater probability of being targeted as clients after the full set of controls is introduced into the model ($p = 0.035$). The difference in predicted probabilities between voters with very dark and very light skin tone is greater than the predicted difference between the minimum and maximum values on *wealth quintile*, *partisan*, *political interest*, *interpersonal trust*, *voted*, *registered*, *education years*, *gender*, and *urban*.[79]

In Ecuador, Mexico, and Panama, the full-country models show a robust independent association between *skin color* and *client* with little change in the magnitude and significance of the predicted effect of dark skin color across the simple and full models. In Bolivia, relative to *very light*, all skin-color categories (*light* and darker) are significantly and positively associated with *client* in the full model, but their predicted probabilities are not statistically different from one another. In Venezuela, the model predicts that people with very dark skin color are three times more likely to be targeted as clients than people with very light skin tone.

DALP provides expert measures of the level of effort that parties put into clientelistic mobilization through the distribution of consumer goods (*clientelistic effort*) and how effective parties are in mobilizing voters with targeted benefits (*clientelistic efficiency*). Cross-country variation in the strength and form of electoral discrimination largely supports the clientelistic-efficiency hypothesis (H3) and illustrates a clear story of why and how electoral discrimination occurs. Figure 3 presents the marginal effect of very dark skin on the likelihood that a voter receives a vote-buy offer in a more effective system (panel (a)) and a less effective system (panel (b)) for the simple and full models.[80] As predicted by the clientelistic-efficiency hypothesis, the evidence for differential treatment is most robust in places with low clientelistic efficiency. Four of the five cases of differential treatment are in the low-efficiency group (Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela), in which we would expect candidates and brokers to be most reliant on low-cost information shortcuts to target voters. In high-efficiency systems, electoral discrimination either does

[79]The predicted probabilities for key model covariates are presented in Figure 1.4 in the supplementary material; Johnson 2019b.

[80]Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala are highly effective vote-buying systems. Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela are less effective systems. Based on the DALP's mean clientelistic efficiency score, I classified countries as high and low clientelistic efficiency based on the position of countries' mean efficiency score relative to the regional mean efficiency score. Note that the expert surveys on each country were conducted in 2008 and 2009. Some parties that were included in the DALP survey no longer existed and some new parties had formed by the time the LAPOP surveys were conducted.

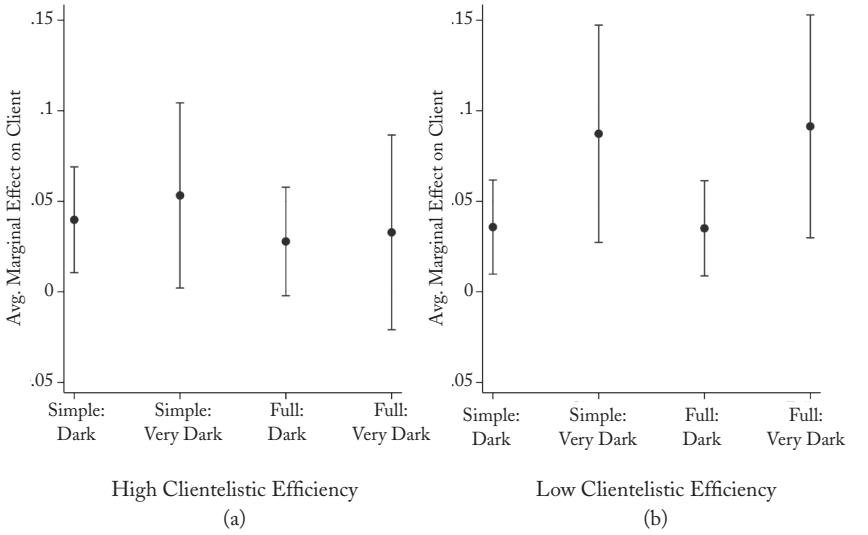


FIGURE 3
AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECT OF SKIN COLOR ON CLIENT BY CLIENTELISTIC EFFICIENCY[a]

SOURCE: LAPOP 2010–14.

[a] The figure plots the average marginal effects of *dark* and *very dark* on *client* from nested logit models in efficient (panel (a)) and less efficient (panel (b)) patronage systems. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals reported. Models include country-round fixed effects. Covariates are at observed values.

not occur or primarily occurs through disproportionate impacts of race-neutral targeting (Bolivia being the exception). The two strongest cases of disproportionate-impact discrimination, Brazil and the Dominican Republic, are high-efficiency systems. It is in these contexts that patrons have the information to target more effectively and that electoral discrimination is best understood as a second-order effect of targeting on race-neutral criteria. In addition, Colombia and Guatemala—two of the three cases in which the null hypothesis could not be rejected—are also high-efficiency systems. The three variables that most strongly predict *client* in Colombia are *participation*, *political interest*, and *civic*, but *skin color* is only weakly associated with these three variables.[81] Likewise, *political interest* and *civic* are key predictors of *client* in Guatemala, but are weakly associated with s*kin color*.[82] In addition, in Costa Rica, a borderline case of clientelistic efficiency, overall reporting of cli-

[81] *Participation*: $r = 0.008$ ($p = 0.64$); *political interest*: $r = -0.048$ ($p = 0.002$); *civic*: $r = 0.06$ ($p = 0.000$).
[82] *Political interest*: $r = 0.006$ ($p = 0.715$); *civic*: $r = 0.056$ ($p = 0.000$).

ent targeting is low (roughly 5 percent of the Costa Rican sample report being targeted as clients), and the variables that do predict client targeting—*political interest*, *civic*, and *interpersonal trust*—are only weakly associated with *skin color*.[83] As a result, we do not observe a skin color–client relationship where parties have the capacity to target voters on politically salient variables and these variables are not associated with skin color.

Ecuador is an interesting case. With roughly equivalent shares of black and indigenous people in the LAPOP sample (and in the 2010 national census), but distinct histories of political incorporation for both groups, we can examine the potentially heterogeneous effects of electoral discrimination for black and indigenous voters. Most studies of identity politics in the region tend to address the politics of these groups separately. Figure 4 shows that skin color functions in similar ways for indigenous and black voters. Very dark indigenous and black voters are 66 percent and 58 percent, respectively, more likely to be targeted as clients than medium-light indigenous and black voters. Skin color is independently associated with client targeting for black and indigenous voters. This finding is important as a validation of the shared theoretical expectations of sociopolitical marginalization for both communities.[84] An important difference is that black voters have a higher predicted probability of being targeted relative to indigenous voters at every level of skin color.

The results from the nested regression models support the disproportionate-impact and differential-treatment hypotheses and demonstrate their contextual specificity. Much of the explanatory power of skin color can be attributed to overlapping race-neutral factors. In the less efficient systems, where we tend to see electoral discrimination through differential treatment, we also see some evidence of disproportionate impact (slight reductions in the magnitude and significance of skin-color coefficients). This raises a question: Which race-neutral factors produce disproportionate impacts? The answer is likely to differ from country to country. Still, a decomposition of the client gap for people with light and dark skin tone in Brazil, which is a strong case of disproportionate impacts, and Panama, which is a strong case of differential treatment, can shed light on the similarities and differences of disproportionate impacts in these prototypical contexts. Tables 1.3 and 1.4 in the supplementary material present the results of twofold Oaxaca-

[83] *Political interest*: $r = -0.073$ ($p = 0.000$); *civic*: $r = 0.009$ ($p = 0.653$); *Interpersonal trust*: $r = -0.021$ ($p = 0.280$).

[84] Van Cott 2010.

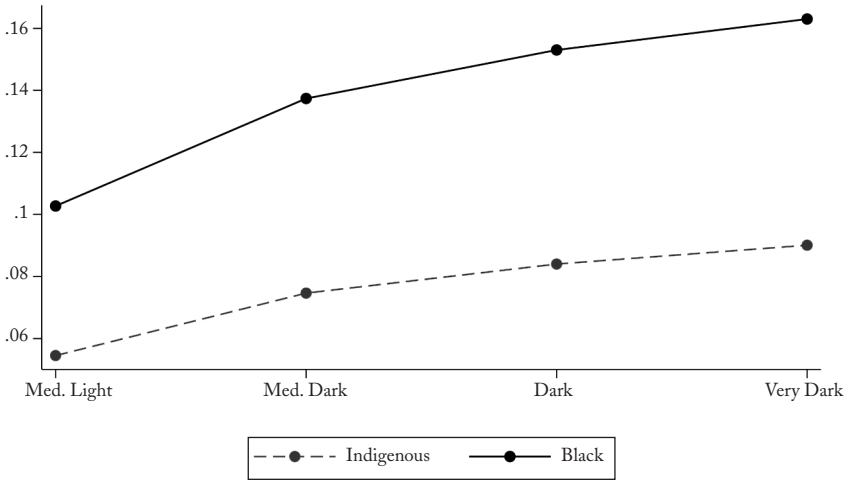


FIGURE 4
PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF CLIENT BY SKIN COLOR FOR INDIGENOUS AND BLACK VOTERS IN ECUADOR[a]

SOURCE: LAPOP 2010–14.

[a] The figure shows the predicted probabilities of *client* as a function of skin tone for self-identified indigenous and black respondents. Models include country-round fixed effects. All covariates are held at their observed values.

Blinder decompositions of the client gap for respondents with light and dark skin tone in both countries.[85] On average, 15 percent of Brazilians with dark skin tone report vote buying compared with 11.3 percent of Brazilians with light skin tone, a difference of 3.7 percentage points. Of this total difference, 37 percent (1.4 percentage points) can be explained by average differentials in race-neutral covariates across light- and dark-skinned voters. Moreover, 77 percent of the total explained difference (1.1 percentage points) is due to the wealth gap. In other words, the higher rates of poverty for dark-skinned Brazilians explain approximately 30 percent of the total skin-color gap in vote buying. In Panama, 21.8 percent of dark-skinned voters report vote buying compared with 11.5 percent of lighter-skinned voters. Of this total difference, just 15 percent (1.6 percentage points) can be explained by race-neutral covariates. Dark-skinned Panamanians are slightly wealthier on average than much of the population and, consistent with expectations

[85] Johnson 2019b. Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition estimates the size of the differential in the outcome of interest across two groups (Blinder 1973; Oaxaca 1973). The Oaxaca-Blinder method breaks down this gap into the portion that can be explained by average group differentials in the values of the covariates and a residual portion that cannot be explained.

in the literature, this wealth reduces the observed client gap, whereas a higher concentration in urban areas contributes to approximately half of the explained portion of the client gap. The portion of the gap that remains unexplained after taking covariates into account lends support to the differential-treatment hypothesis.

The Oaxaca-Blinder analysis is illustrative because it shows that race-neutral factors create disproportionate racial impacts on client targeting in contexts where electoral discrimination occurs primarily through disproportionate impacts or differential treatment. Meanwhile, the existing literature overlooks the ethnoracial correlates of targeting decisions on clientelism and electoral politics more generally. The Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition also shows the complementarity of both forms of discrimination. In Brazil and Panama, most of the skin color–client gap is unexplained, although it has much greater implications in Panama, where the gap is much larger. My results show a robust, observed relationship between dark skin color and vote buying (electoral discrimination) across a large portion of indigenous and Afro Latin America. The main limitation of this analysis is that it ultimately leaves open the question of omitted variable bias. Do patrons actually target clients based on skin color—in effect, on the basis of stereotypes? In Study 2, I turn to experimental evidence in Panama, which is a clear case of electoral discrimination through differential treatment, to isolate the independent causal role of voter's skin color on patrons' decisions of whose votes to buy.

## Study 2: The Effect of Skin Color on Vote Buying: Evidence from Panama

The overlap of race-neutral, client-targeting criteria and voters' ascriptive characteristics explains an important portion of the skin color–client gap, but a nontrivial portion of this gap remains unexplained. In the context of ethnoracial stratification, differential treatment based on race is a compelling explanation for this gap (differential-treatment hypothesis). To test this hypothesis convincingly, the research design needed to address the possibility of omitted-variable.

Maya Sen and Omar Wasow's exposure-study research design provides a solution to this causal identification problem.[86] In an exposure study, subjects are exposed to racial cues (for example, skin color) through a randomized treatment. This randomization allows research-

[86] Sen and Wasow 2016.

ers to estimate the causal effect of racial cues on the outcome of interest. In Study 2, I use a conjoint experiment to isolate the average marginal component effect of voters' skin tone on client targeting. The subjects in my experiment were presented with pairs of fictional voters having randomized traits, including skin color. I estimate the effect of exposure to voters' skin color on the choice of whose vote to buy. The experiment is a hard test of the differential-treatment hypothesis. The conjoint design provided complete information about voters' socioeconomic status, partisanship, and intended turnout alongside skin color. A significant average marginal component effect (AMCE) for skin color is compelling evidence of the independent causal effect of skin color on the decision of whose votes to buy.

### Experimental Design

I recruited an online sample of voting-eligible Panamanians to participate in a conjoint experiment as proposed and reformulated by Jens Hainmueller, Daniel Hopkins, and Teppei Yamamoto.[87] Conjoint experiments consist of choice tasks. For each choice task, respondents are presented with two or more profiles that differ along a defined number of traits, and they select their preferred alternative. The traits of each profile vary independently within and across choice tasks, allowing the researcher to accurately estimate their individual causal effect.

Participants in my experiment were told to imagine that they were hired by a candidate for the National Assembly, who was of their same political affiliation, to allocate supermarket vouchers to fictitious voters in exchange for their votes.[88] They were then presented with six conjoint tasks. For each task they were presented with a pair of voters who varied by skin color, gender, probability of voting, partisanship, and occupation. The survey included ten pictures of fictional voters, five female and five male, who differed by skin color.[89] Table 1 shows the possible values for each trait except skin color. A sample of the pictures used to cue skin color and gender is included in Table 2.3 in the supple-

[87] Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014.

[88] The National Assembly is the legislative branch of Panama.

[89] I selected the pictures from the Chicago Face Database (Ma, Correll, and Wittenbrink 2015) and pretested them with fifty-seven Panamanian academics, bureaucrats, and friends to ensure that within gender, the pictures differed only by skin color. I also pretested the pictures to ensure that all photographed individuals appeared to be Panamanian, were within the age range of 25 to 40, and appeared to be equally friendly, trustworthy, or angry.

Given the primary focus on skin color in this analysis, I cluster the profiles of male and female fictitious voters within skin color groups. I note some significant relationships between gender and vote buying for dark- and light-skinned profiles that signaled that women are more likely to be preferred for vote buying than men. See Figure 2.2 in the supplementary material; Johnson 2019b.

TABLE 1
TRAITS OF FICTIONAL VOTER PROFILES FROM THE CONJOINT EXPERIMENT[a]

| | *Traits* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | female | male | | | | |
| Occupation | cashier | secondary-school teacher | lawyer | | | |
| Likelihood of voting, if the election were today | I would *not* vote | I would *perhaps* vote | I *would* vote | | | |
| Party membership | Panameñista | Partido Popular | MOLINERA[b] | PRD[c] | CD[d] | None |

[a]This table shows the possible values for each of the traits of the fictional voter profiles in the conjoint experiment. The table does not include the skin-color trait. See Table 2.3 in Johnson 2019b for the dimensions of this trait.

[b]Movimiento Liberal Republicano Nacionalista.

[c]Partido Revolucionario Democrático.

[d]Cambio Democrático.

mentary material.[90] The participants were instructed to select one voter from each pair to offer the supermarket voucher to and to state the likelihood that they would offer the voucher to each voter.[91]

I report the AMCE of each trait by estimating an ordinary least squares regression clustered by respondent.[92] The first dependent variable, *vote buy choice*, is a dichotomous measure of whether the respondent selected the profile for the voucher. The second, *vote buy rating*, is a one to seven rating of the likelihood that they would offer the voucher to the fictional voter. The unit of analysis is the profile-task-respondent. This design allows me to address the issue of causality directly by incorporating orthogonal measures of partisanship, turnout, social class (operationalized through occupation), gender, and skin color. It also bypasses the issue of reporting bias by focusing on the participant's decision of whether to make a vote-buy offer to a particular voter.

The following analysis focuses on Panama, an on-the-line case of differential treatment,[93] to test the validity of the differential-treatment hypothesis—that skin color affects client targeting more than central race-neutral factors like partisanship, turnout, and socioeconomic sta-

[90]Johnson 2019b.

[91]I provide an in-depth description of the experimental procedure, including question wording and the survey sampling method in Appendix 2, Section A, in the supplementary material; Johnson 2019b.

[92]Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014.

[93]Lieberman 2005.

tus. The experimental design is contrived, but it also holds an important degree of external validity. Panama is a case of high-effort, low-efficiency vote buying.[94] In a survey of voters after the 2014 election, more than 40 percent reported that they saw political operatives buying votes in their community.[95] Voters implicated all three major parties and several of the smaller parties. The level of sophistication in vote buying ranges from long-running, patron-client relationships in captured districts to independent candidates in one-off, anonymous exchanges.[96] Moreover, voters fear little retribution for incomplete transactions. Although the low-information environment for patrons in the experimental setting contrasts with the embedded-broker model prominent in the literature, it is consistent with yield-based targeting in low-efficiency settings.[97] In these contexts, high-visibility cues like ascription are salient heuristics for patrons.

A random sample of brokers would have been the ideal sample for this experiment. Given the resource constraints for this project, I was unable to reach this population. As an alternative approach, I collaborated with UNIMER, a Central America marketing research firm, to recruit an online sample of 803 voting-age Panamanians, of whom 504 completed at least one conjoint task. Through this convenience sampling approach, I was able to gather 127 respondents with campaign experience (95 of whom completed at least one conjoint task), a large enough sample to run the conjoint analysis on just their responses to compare with the analysis of the full sample, which increases confidence in the external validity of the experimental findings. The campaign workers in my sample reported a range of different responsibilities, including canvassing, monitoring the polling stations, recruiting party membership, and, as one respondent put it, "promoting loyalty to the party."[98]

## Results

In Figure 5, I present the AMCEs for the full sample (504 respondents) from the first task of an original conjoint analysis. Consistent with the differential-treatment hypothesis, I find a significant marginal effect of *skin color* on *vote buy choice*. For the analysis, I grouped the pictured voters into five skin-color categories represented by the variables *very light*,

[94] Kitschelt 2014.

[95] I thank David Nickerson and his colleagues for sharing their data on vote buying and voter intimidation in Panama.

[96] López 2013; Bustamante 2014.

[97] Guardado and Wantchekon 2018; Kramon 2016.

[98] Table 2.2 in the supplementary material shows the demographic characteristics of campaign workers and noncampaign workers; Johnson 2019b.

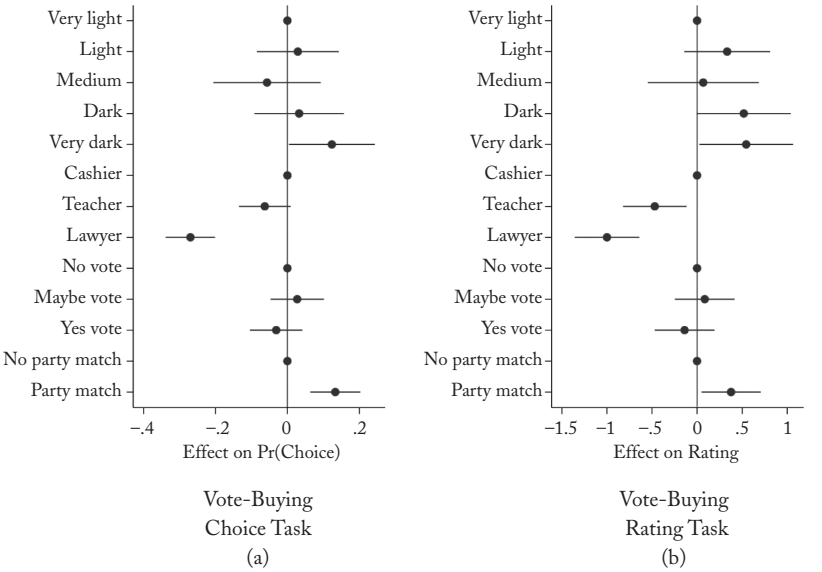


FIGURE 5
AMCEs CHOICE AND RATING TASKS (FULL SAMPLE)[a]

[a] The figure represents AMCEs of fictional voter traits on the choice and rating tasks (task one only). Ninety-five percent confidence intervals reported.

*light*, *medium*, *dark*, and *very dark*. Panel (a) shows that very dark voters (for example, Black Female 2 and Black Male 2) have a 12 percentage–point greater probability of being preferred for a vote-buy offer than the very light voter (for example, Mestiza Female 1). The results for the rating task (panel (b)) also support the differential-treatment hypothesis. The AMCEs of *dark* and *very dark* are 0.52 and 0.55 points, respectively, on *vote buy rating*, as shown in panel (a).

The AMCEs for occupation on the vote-buying choice task are significant and have the expected sign, providing evidence that respondents did consider class in their calculus of whom to bribe. The effect on the probability of *vote buy choice* increased by 20 and 27 percentage points when comparing a lawyer with a secondary school teacher or a cashier. The experimental evidence is less consistent with turnout buying. While I do find that fictional voters undecided on turnout had a 3 percentage–point greater probability of *vote buy choice* than abstentionists, this effect is not significant. In addition, fictional voters who reported they would vote had a 3 percentage–point lower probability of *vote buy choice*, but this effect is not significant. Last, I find that respon-

dents were more likely to target copartisans (13 percentage points) than someone from another party.

I find similar results when I limited the sample to respondents with campaign experience. To compensate for the reduced number of observations, I placed the skin-color categories into three groups: (1) very light and light skin tones, (2) medium skin tone, and (3) dark and very dark skin tones.[99] Panel (a) of Figure 6 shows that the AMCE of dark skin on the vote-buying choice task was similar in direction and magnitude to the results for the full sample. *Dark* and *very dark* increase the probability of *vote buy choice* by 11.5 percentage points, but this difference is marginally insignificant at the 0.1 level. It is notable that the AMCE for copartisanship is also insignificant for the choice task, although like skin color, it has the expected sign and direction. Panel (a) shows that the AMCE of *medium dark* and *dark* on *vote buy rating* is 0.84 points for the subsample of campaign workers. These results increase confidence that the experimental results are externally valid because skin color had a significant effect on the vote-buying calculus of respondents with campaign experience.

The experimental design does come with important trade-offs between internal and external validity. For example, the setup to the experiment asks participants to play the role of broker and to target fictional voters who are by design unknown to them. This means the experiment cannot speak to the causal effect of skin color in contexts where brokers have in-depth knowledge about their clients' preferences. At the risk of reduced external validity, this design provides more control over the intended manipulation in the experiment—the marginal effect of key voter traits alongside skin color.

In Study 1, I intentionally selected voter traits that would proxy for the key rival explanations for color-based vote buying: class and economic marginality, partisanship, and likelihood of turnout. In focus groups, pretests, and posttests, I made sure that each trait and trait value was interpreted the way that I intended them to be understood. The posttests show that my grouping of the skin-color categories in the conjoint analysis (very light, light, medium, etc.) corresponds with the points at which respondents noted significant differences in the fictional voters' skin color. After the participants completed the conjoint tasks, I asked them to explain how they chose the voters for the supermarket vouchers. From these free responses, I am confident that the respondents understood the political significance of intended turnout.

[99]The results are directionally the same with the original five skin-color categories.

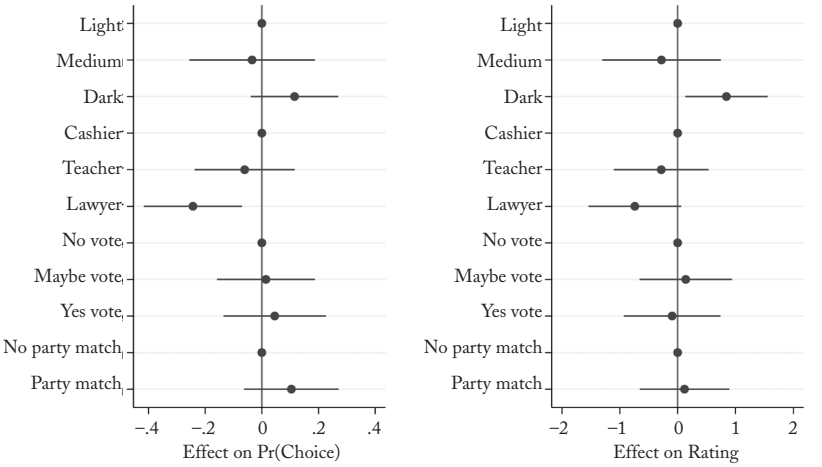


FIGURE 6
AMCEs CHOICE AND RATING TASKS (CAMPAIGN WORKERS) [a]

[a] The figure represents AMCEs of fictional voter traits on the choice and rating tasks (task one only). Ninety-five percent confidence intervals reported.

Likewise, the respondents understood the political significance of co-partisanship. Last, respondents ranked the occupations in terms of expected salary in the way that I intended them to: (1) lawyer, (2) teacher, and (3) cashier. The free responses that mentioned occupation also support the inference that the respondents used occupation to infer critical information about class.

With each of these cues comes the possibility that the participants inferred additional information from the voter traits beyond what I specifically intended. For example, some participants read Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD) partisanship as a specific cue about the person's proximity to the party's clientelist network. It is also likely that occupation cued information in addition to class and income. For example, the cashier occupation might also signal that the voter is more likely to use informal problem-solving networks to get the things that they need to subsist and thus would be less ethically opposed to vote buying. Consistent with my argument, it is also likely that participants in my experiment used skin color to infer additional political and class cues. As one PRD campaign worker explained, "I could see it in their

faces, the needs that they may have and based on that I offered the voucher." The fact that each trait contains a host of different potential cues related to vote buying increases the external validity of my results. It is what happens in the real world. A single trait does not cue only one piece of information but, rather, many different pieces of information that vary in terms of accuracy and salience. If we base the standard of evidence for differential treatment on proof of a person's exact thought process, it would be nearly impossible to ever substantiate a claim of discriminatory treatment. Instead, we can substantiate the claim with a rigorous but attainable metric that is an independent effect of ascriptive traits—skin color.

The manipulation of skin-color traits was the central treatment in my experiment, and social desirability bias is a concern when asking people about race. In the first task (the first pair of fictional voters for which the respondent completed the choice and rating tasks), social desirability should present a relatively minimal threat to inferences, because respondents did not have enough information to ascertain that the pictures were intentionally included to cue racial stereotypes. By the second task (the second pair of voters for which the respondent completed the choice and rating tasks), respondents probably started to identify the intended treatment, increasing the likelihood of social desirability bias. Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto warn that carryover effects occur when profile traits from previous tasks influence responses in subsequent tasks.[100] If the respondents were aware that racial variation was a central treatment in the experiment and moderated their responses in the latter rounds to be seen as less racially biased, then this bias would have carryover effects in the subsequent conjoint tasks, which would lead to a reduction in the AMCE of darker skin.

Figure 2.1 in the supplementary material shows the results of the vote-buying choice tasks and rating tasks for the first, third, and sixth pair of voters.[101] Dark skin color is significant only in the first task. Additionally, Table 2.4 in the supplementary material presents the AMCEs of *vote buy choice* on the interaction of each skin-color category with each conjoint task for the full sample. The F-test for the joint significance of the interaction is significant ($p = 0.02$), so I reject the null hypothesis that the AMCEs of skin color are statistically indistinguishable across conjoint tasks.

Table 2.5 in the supplementary material lends even more evidence to the conclusion that the subsequent conjoint tasks had racial carry-

[100] Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014.
[101] Johnson 2019b.

over effects.[102] It presents the AMCEs of *vote buy rating* regressed on the interaction of each skin-color category and a dummy variable, *black_round1*, that takes a value of 1 if the respondent saw two dark or very dark voters in the first conjoint task. The results show two important trends. First, respondents who did not see two dark-skinned profiles in the first task were significantly more likely to rate light, dark, and very dark profiles higher than very light profiles on the one to seven likelihood scale. Second, respondents who saw two dark-skinned profiles in the first task had a significantly higher intercept (or baseline rating in subsequent tasks) compared to respondents who did not see two dark-skinned profiles in the first round (as shown by the positive and significant coefficient for *black_round1*). This suggests that these respondents attempted to correct for their racial bias against the black voters in the first round of the experiment by rating all voters higher on the likelihood scale in subsequent tasks. As a result, I am more confident in the internal validity of the significant AMCEs for dark skin from the first round than in the insignificant AMCEs for dark skin in the subsequent rounds.[103]

A less-generous interpretation of the attenuated skin color AMCEs in the latter tasks is that trait randomization failed in the first conjoint task. For example, if the randomization in the first conjoint task produced a disproportionate share of dark-skinned cashiers, this could potentially inflate the dark-skin AMCE in the first round. But this was not the case. The traits were successfully randomized in the first task, as shown in Table 2.1 in the supplementary material, so it is unlikely that the skin-color AMCEs from the task are artificially inflated.[104]

## Conclusion

In this article, I contend that the conditions of ethnoracial stratification in Latin America imbue seemingly color-blind politics with significant implications for ethnoracial representation. Black and indigenous social and economic marginalization and political underrepresentation together facilitate electoral discrimination. Under these conditions, differential mobilization strategies and disproportionate impacts of the same mobilization create systematic disadvantages for representation based on race. Color-blindness is the dominant form of interest aggre-

[102] Johnson 2019b.

[103] Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014, 22, advise using the results from the first task to avoid carryover effects.

[104] Johnson 2019b.

gation and articulation in Latin America, but we know that this universalist framing in the political arena has disproportionately reduced the ability of black and indigenous communities to contest their marginalization and invisibility. Vote buying embodies electoral discrimination in the region because targets receive selective benefits in the absence of the explicit articulation and mobilization of group identities. This article makes a novel contribution by identifying vote buying as an important and overlooked form of ethnic politics in the region that is nevertheless distinct from the group-based targeting and cues analyzed in the ethnic patronage literature.

I find evidence of electoral discrimination in eight of the eleven countries in this study. Electoral discrimination occurs through two concordant processes—disproportionate impacts and differential treatment. A significant portion of the skin color–client gap is due to the disproportionate impacts of race-neutral targeting criteria on voters with dark skin tone. Observed differences in wealth, political and civic engagement, partisanship, political interest, interpersonal trust, and geography together explain part of the skin color–client gap, although the individual contribution of each of these factors differs by country. In addition, I find an independent relationship between skin color and vote buying over and above these race-neutral factors. Through the comparison of nested regression models, Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition, and a skin-color exposure study, I find evidence of differential-treatment discrimination in five of the eleven countries in this study. While some of the skin-color effect could possibly be produced by omitted variables, the conjoint experiment supports the conclusion that a substantial degree of client targeting can be explained by stereotypes alone.

Electoral discrimination occurs in party systems that vary in clientelistic efficiency, but an important difference emerges in the mechanism driving the skin color–client relationship in high and low efficiency systems. As we might expect, in efficient systems in which elites know their clients and have the capacity to monitor their compliance, much of the skin color–client gap can be attributed to the disproportionate impacts of race-neutral targeting. In high-efficiency cases, I find either no relationship between skin color and vote buying (Costa Rica, Colombia, and Guatemala) or disproportionate-impact discrimination (Brazil and the Dominican Republic). Bolivia is the only high-efficiency case in which I find evidence of differential-treatment discrimination. Differential-treatment discrimination is more common where client targeting is less efficient (Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela). Peru is the only low-efficiency case in which I find evidence of dis-

proportionate-impact discrimination. Further research is needed to investigate whether the representational consequences of electoral discrimination differ between high- and low-efficiency systems.

One might contend that vote buying is not discriminatory. After all, subaltern voters who risk getting nothing at all in return for their vote at least walk away with something. Context is incredibly important. Skin color–based vote buying is particularly detrimental to indigenous and black voters in Latin America because it exists within a broader political arena in which black and indigenous citizens are descriptively and substantively underrepresented in politics. Electoral manipulation strategies that differentially target and disproportionately affect these communities constitute likely mechanisms for the continued dearticulation of their collective interests and voices from the highest levels of elected office. Further research should investigate alternative manifestations of electoral discrimination, such as ballot stuffing, turnout suppression, and onerous voter registration requirements.

I find evidence of disproportionate-impact and differential-treatment discrimination in two key cases of indigenous party success: Bolivia and Ecuador. Where ascriptive gaps in client targeting exist alongside strong ethnic parties, this pattern may be more consistent with ethnic patronage than with electoral discrimination. In the case of Ecuador, it is not likely that this study conflates ethnic patronage and electoral discrimination as Pachakutik, the emblematic indigenous party of the 1990s and early 2000s, has seen its vote share decline sharply since 2006. Movimiento al Socialismo, however, continues to be a dominant force in Bolivian politics. In rhetoric, if not fully in practice, MAS has rejected the patronage model of political mobilization and representation and presents a programmatic alternative. As a result, it is more likely that client targeting based on skin color is a form of electoral discrimination than it is a form of ethnic patronage. This study cannot completely rule out the ethnic patronage argument in those cases where ethnicity is more central to party politics. More research is needed to interrogate the evidence in Latin America for ethnic patronage as a form of in-group favoritism that we encounter in the ethnic politics literature on other regions.

My argument speaks generally to the consequences of electoral mobilization in ethnoracially stratified states beyond Latin America. Electoral discrimination is the product of differential terms of mobilization in a context where ethnoracial traits overlap with social, economic, and political marginalization. I operationalize ethnoracial traits narrowly in this article, focusing on skin color. A more general version of the

electoral discrimination should apply where sticky, visible traits provide cues for subaltern group membership and political elites neglect the interests of subaltern groups. The broader reality of racial stratification outside of the region should make this article's argument and findings of general interest to scholars of race and ethnic politics.

## Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887119000145.

## Data

Replication data for this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/YR4EQH.

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