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Understanding Latin American Beliefs about Racial Inequality¹

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

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

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