Support for race-targeted affirmative action in Brazil

Stanley R. Bailey
Department of Sociology, University of California, Irvine, CA, USA

Fabrício Fialho
Department of Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Michelle Peria
Department of Sociology, University of California, Irvine, CA, USA

Abstract
Brazil is undergoing a paradigm shift in its approach to racial inequality. Once eschewing race, legislators and other policy makers are now vigorously implementing racial quotas in public institutions of higher education. In this paper, we explore public opinion on racial quotas using the 2010 and 2012 AmericasBarometer. In 2010, a surprising majority of Brazilians strongly supported these policies. Afro-Brazilians and individuals with lower levels of education were more likely to express strong support compared to whites and those with higher levels of education. In 2012, a question format change that set up a zero-sum game scenario between afro-Brazilians and others resulted in a dramatic fall in that support. Interestingly, those 2012 results show that education, and not race, contours support. We discuss possible explanations for these particular patterns of public opinion on racial quotas in Brazil.

Keywords
Brazil, affirmative action, racial quotas, race, antiracism

In April 2012, Brazil’s highest court ruled in favor of the constitutionality of racial quotas for admissions to higher education. This type of affirmative action places historically discriminated minority populations on separate admission tracks and

Corresponding author:
Stanley R. Bailey, Department of Sociology, University of California, 3151 Social Science Plaza, Irvine, CA 92697, USA.
Email: bailey@uci.edu
establishes acceptance quotas to mirror local racial population percentages. Racial quota policies have long been ruled unconstitutional in the United States where this approach is considered “extremely unpopular” (Bobo et al., 2012: 58). In contrast, racial quotas in higher education in Brazil have become very popular, at least among state and social movement actors, among others. Racial quotas can be found in several spheres of government and even private business, but their most widespread adoption is in admissions to higher education, in public state and federal universities, and in some private university systems. In the case of the admissions program at the University of Brasília (UnB), the federal university involved in the above-mentioned ruling of Brazil’s Supreme Court, its University Council resolved to “reserve for a period of 10 years 20% of their admission spots for negros [afro-Brazilians]” (Carvalho and Segato, 2003). The actual language establishing the racial eligibility of candidates under that policy reads: “To qualify for the quota system for negros, a candidate should be of brown [pardo] or black [preto] color, declare himself or herself negro, and specifically opt for the quota system for negros” (Bailey, 2008: 586).

The Court’s affirmation of this method for increasing the diversity of Brazil’s institutes of higher learning, which are traditionally predominantly white, comes on the heels of more than a decade of a fairly dramatic racial paradigm shift in this country that, up until recently, officially eschewed discussions of race and racial inequality. Brazil is not alone, however, in changing course on the relationship between state and race in Latin America. Indeed, Loveman (2014: 308) documents “tectonic ideological shift” across the Latin American region in the last decades: “Instead of insisting on the blending and disappearance of ethnoracial distinctions in their populations, Latin American states are now officially recognizing and institutionalizing clear, categorical divides.” In addition to and in conjunction with that shift, many states are reforming national constitutions to enable the struggle against racial inequality and enacting public policy to ensure positive outcomes (Hooker, 2005; Paschel, 2010; Paschel and Sawyer, 2008; Peria and Bailey, 2014).

Despite rapid diffusion of these policies in the case of Brazil, it is not clear how the state’s new “racial project” (Omi and Winant, 2014) resonates with ordinary Brazilians. Scholars’ explanations for Brazil’s shift to race-conscious affirmative action policies point most strongly to the galvanizing role of international events, specifically the work of Brazil’s social movements and state officials surrounding the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism (Htun, 2004; Maggie and Fry, 2002; Peria, 2004; Telles, 2004). Indeed, the work of social movements and state actors in preparation for the World Conference brought state and black movement actors closer together and helped to propel the rapid national policy shift. However, the initial wave of affirmative action policy, often in the form of executive orders and state legislation implementing racial quotas, occurred despite the near absence of public discussion about them (Bailey, 2008; Maggie and Fry, 2002; Peria and Bailey, 2014; Telles, 2004). In this paper, we address nationally representative surveys in 2010 and 2012 by the Latin American Public Opinion Project’s
AmericasBarometer (AB). Both of these survey years included questions gauging support for the new racial quotas regime and hence allow some exploration of public support for these policies.

The question of public support for race-targeted policy is intriguing due, in part, to the fact that many scholars have long framed the racial common sense in Brazil as contoured by the myth of racial democracy or of the belief that Brazil is a racially nondiscriminatory society. From this perspective, the belief in Brazil as a racial democracy induces color blindness or a denial of the pernicious effects of racism (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich, 2008; Twine, 1998; Winant, 1999). Hence, the hegemony of the racial democracy ideology would lead to the expectation that the Brazilian public would not support race-targeted interventions (Andrews, 1997; Hanchard, 1994). Scholarship also notes, though, that the myth of racial democracy viewed as a negation of racial discrimination may no longer be hegemonic (Telles, 2004); hence, attitudes toward race-targeted policy may well reflect a new awareness of embedded racial disadvantage. In addition, public opinion toward racial quota policies might well be one-sided: its intended beneficiaries (afro-Brazilians) may support them and whites may oppose them, a classic outcome predicted by group conflict theory (see Bobo, 1983). Although wide public support may not be necessary for the implementation of race-targeted public policy, opposition to those policies on the part of some groups or by the public at large could condition their longer term success, as the US case clearly suggests (Bobo et al., 2012; Pierce, 2012).

Background

Race-based policies directed at its citizens have been generally absent in post-abolition Brazil in terms of both negative and positive discrimination, much unlike post-abolition United States (Marx, 1998). Instead, in Brazil, state-level discourse touted a national population not beset by the types of discriminatory practices that would elicit race-based intervention. Indeed, much of the 20th-century elite discourse described Brazil as a blended nation—a mixture of descendants of African slaves, white Europeans, and Amerindians—and an example to the world of “ethnic democracy” (Freyre, 1946). By the 1950s, Brazil had acquired an international reputation for harmonious race relations, which influenced United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s decision to sponsor a series of studies about Brazil in an effort to understand how it might serve as a positive model in the struggle against racism in the post-World War II period (Andrews, 1996; Wagley, 1952).

Since the late 1970s, however, activists have mounted a growing challenge to the conventional wisdom on racial democracy, and a new generation of social scientists bolstered these efforts by providing heretofore absent quantitative evidence of systematic racial inequality (Hasenbalg, 1979, 1985; Silva, 1985). Progress toward a critical perspective on race in Brazil was also, in part, the result of a return to democracy in 1985 after 21 years of military dictatorship. Nonetheless, the
coordinated and persistent actions of social movements and their political allies were crucial (Andrews, 1991; Winant, 1999). Some of this work building a more critical approach to racial issues in Brazil began to pay off as early as 1988 when the National Constitutional Assembly transformed racism into a crime punishable by imprisonment.

However, it was not until Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s presidency (1995–2002) that the federal government began working more closely with social movements to develop proposals calling for race-targeted affirmative action. In 1995, on the occasion of the celebration of 300 years of the death of Zumbi dos Palmares, the most prominent leader of the 17th-century Quilombo of Palmares (the largest community of runaway slaves in Brazilian history), Cardoso met with black movement and union leaders who led a march on the capital. These activists presented him with their national plan to combat racial discrimination, including specific proposals for affirmative action for afro-descendants (Marcha Zumbi, 1996). On the very day of the Zumbi march, Cardoso announced the creation of the Inter-ministerial Work Group for the Valorization of the Black Population comprised of members of government ministries and social movements. The group was tasked with the development of proposals for affirmative action policies that could be undertaken by the Brazilian government. The following year, the Ministry of Justice launched the National Program of Human Rights that suggested specific policies directed at Brazil’s afro-descendants, including affirmative action in higher education. Although implementation of these early proposals was frustrated by, at least, a lack of allocated resources and absence of specific government agencies responsible for their success, they were a clear sign of a shift in the country’s official racial discourse in support of affirmative action policies.

It was, however, through Brazil’s extensive participation in the United Nation’s World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in 2001 in Durban, South Africa, that affirmative action policies were increasingly proposed, discussed, and implemented (Htun, 2004; Peria, 2004; Telles, 2004). Indeed, the organization and mobilization of social movement actors and sectors of the Brazilian government in the different stages involved in the planning and execution of the UN World Conference lent significant momentum to the discussion and development of an official national-level plan to combat racial inequality, as it also drew greater public attention to the issue of racial inequality.

On the heels of the 2001 World Conference, federal and state government officials quickly began implementing affirmative action policies by means of executive order and legislation. Brazil’s executive branch established affirmative action policies for afro-descendants in some government hiring. The first such instance was in September 2001 when the Minister of Agrarian Development enacted the first legally defined employment quotas for afro-descendants in the country, establishing a hiring quota of 20% in the institutional structure of the Ministry. Later, the Ministry of Justice and Federal Supreme Court announced similar policies. However, the policy developments with perhaps the greatest political impact in
the area of affirmative action for afro-descendants involve the approval of quotas for afro-descendants in public universities, starting with a law passed by Rio de Janeiro’s State Assembly in 2001, mandating quotas for afro-Brazilians in admissions to the State University of Rio de Janeiro and the State University of North Fluminense (Assembleia Legislativa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2001). In the months and years following, other public universities and state legislators moved to enact similar affirmative action policies, most often in the form of quotas for afro-descendants from public schools (considered a proxy for low socioeconomic status) or public school students, regardless of racial status. By 2005, 24 of the 95 public universities in Brazil had adopted affirmative action policy in admissions; by 2007 that number had grown to 37, and in 2012, 73 had implemented such a policy (Peria and Bailey, 2014).

Another important factor in the implementation of higher education quotas has been the advocacy of groups like Educafro (Education and Citizenship for Afro-descendants and the Needy), who, since the 1990s, have been organizing at the grassroots level for the greater inclusion of afro-descendant and poor students in public universities. Educafro students and leaders have been involved in the defense of new affirmative action measures in the courts and public debates. Indeed, although quotas for afro-Brazilian and public school students quickly spread throughout Brazil’s public universities, the policies have not been without controversy. As in the United States, some white students have challenged Brazil’s affirmative action programs in the courts. By 2003, hundreds of lawsuits had been filed by white students who felt that the racial quota system discriminated against them (Telles, 2004), and several cases contesting the constitutionality of race-targeted affirmative action were brought to the Supreme Court. The practical administration of racial quotas by universities has not always been easy. In 2004, a special committee was established at the UnB to evaluate the photographs of students applying to the University via the racial quotas program (Maio and Santos, 2005). In 2007, Brazil’s national media reported two identical twin brothers applied to the UnB; the committee verified the identity of one as black and the other as white (Bailey, 2008). Furthermore, opponents of the quota programs warned that these new policies risk creating racial divisions in a country that, unlike the United States, has not had organized racist movements or significant expressions of overt racial hatred (Fry et al., 2007).

**SEPPIR and the Racial Equality Statute**

In 2003, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva assumed the presidency, and his presence in the office significantly advanced the federal government’s commitment to the recognition and remediation of racial discrimination. Early on, Lula took the unprecedented step of naming four afro-Brazilians to his cabinet, and appointed an afro-Brazilian Supreme Court justice. Also in his first year of office, spurred by recommendations from the UN World Conference against Racism and pressure from the Black Movement, Lula established the Special Secretariat for the
Promotion of Racial Equality Policies (SEPPIR). Tasked with the coordination of national-level policies and programs to promote racial equality, this new federal ministry has concentrated its efforts in the areas of education, health, and securing the rights of quilombo communities—communities of descendants of escaped slaves. In the area of education, SEPPIR and the Ministry of Education prioritized the implementation of law 10.639, approved in 2003, that requires the teaching of “African and Afro-Brazilian History and Culture” in all primary and secondary schools. In addition, they have focused on increasing the access of the black population to higher education through programs like “University for All” (ProUni), which provide scholarships for public school students in private institutions of higher education. Importantly, afro-descendants must be included among the ProUni scholarship recipients in numbers mirroring their presence in local populations.

More recently, SEPPIR has worked to implement the provisions of Brazil’s new Racial Equality Statute. Passed by Congress and signed by Lula into law in 2010, this historic legislation calls for the establishment of affirmative action policies in education and employment, as well as programs to improve afro-descendants’ access to health care. The law also recognized the right of quilombos to receive title to their land.

**Supreme Court ruling**

Last year, in a much anticipated ruling, Brazil’s Supreme Court decided that racial quotas established by public universities are constitutional. The court’s unanimous decision arose from the above-mentioned case at the UnB brought in 2009 by the political party Democratas (Democratic Party, or DEM). The DEM argued that UnB, by introducing race as a criterion in selection, violated several fundamental principles of the Federal Constitution, notably the principles of equality and human dignity, the repudiation of racism, and provisions for universal access to education (ADPF 186, 2009: 3). The DEM also accused UnB, which uses a committee to verify a candidate’s declared racial status, of institutionalizing racism in the country. Furthermore, the DEM argued that racism was never institutionalized in Brazil in the post-abolition era, as it had been in countries like the United States and South Africa, rendering the use of race-targeted affirmative action policy unnecessary in the country.

In its unanimous decision, Brazil’s Supreme Court justices determined UnB’s use of race for selection of students not only constitutional, but an important duty of the country in its enforcement of equality. In his decision, the judge writing for the court, Justice Ricardo Lewandowski, stated: “[racial quotas] start from the premise that the principle of equality cannot be applied abstractly, but rather begins with choices guided by the concrete realization of social justice. In other words, this refers, especially in the environment of public universities, to employing selection criteria that consider a more equitable distribution of public resources” (Lewandowski, 2012). Similarly, Justice Rosa Weber argued that it is the State’s
duty to “penetrate in the world of social relations and correct distortions so formal equality regains its beneficial role” (Notícias STF, 2012).4

In stark contrast to the Brazilian Supreme Court’s strong embrace of affirmative action in the form of racial quotas, some of the most recent US Supreme Court rulings on affirmative action, Grutter v. Bollinger et al. (2003) and Gratz et al. v. Bollinger et al. (2003), pale in comparison. Those cases concerned the constitutionality of the University of Michigan’s Law School and Undergraduate admissions programs, respectively, and the Court ruled that although affirmative action was not justified as a way of redressing past oppression and injustice, it promoted a compelling state interest by obtaining the benefits of diversity at all levels of society. However, while the Court upheld the “narrowly tailored” use of racial criteria in admissions, it found that the point system used to rate students by the university’s undergraduate school resembled too closely a quota system, and would have to be modified.

However, shortly after the US Supreme Court’s decision, opponents of affirmative action in Michigan launched a campaign to ban such programs in the state, and in 2006, voters approved a ballot to amend the state constitution and bar affirmative action programs in higher education and public employment in Michigan. Groups in favor of affirmative action policies sued to have the amendment reversed, but in 2014, the US Supreme Court upheld Michigan’s constitutional amendment banning the use of affirmative action in admissions to the state’s public universities. In addition to Michigan, over the past two decades, several other states have banned affirmative action: Arizona, California, Florida, Washington, Oklahoma, Nebraska, New Hampshire, and Texas (Blume and Long, 2014; Hinrichs, 2012).

Law of social quotas

Following the Brazilian Supreme Court’s favorable decision, legislators moved quickly to enact the “The Law of Social Quotas.” As some of the most sweeping affirmative action in education in the Western hemisphere to date, the new law establishes a state-mandated program requiring all federal public universities to reserve 50% of their admission spots for public school students, which low-income students disproportionately attend. Within that 50% quota, the law requires universities to reserve seats for afro-descendants and persons of indigenous ancestry in numbers proportional to the color–race makeup of each of the states (Decreto 7.824, 2012). The policy further requires that 25% of quota students come from families with a per capita income equal to or less than 150% of the federally mandated minimum wage (Feres et al., 2014). Notably, the law is nearly universally popular among legislators, with only one of the country’s 81 senators voting against the bill. Brazil’s 59 federal universities have been given four years to implement the new law, which is expected to result in an increase in diversity. According to Luiza Bairros, the minister in charge of Brazil’s Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality, by 2016 officials expect the number of afro-descendants
admitted to these universities to climb to 56,000 from 8,700 (Gonçalves, 2012). See Table 1 for an outline of these major steps–events constituting Brazil’s paradigm shift toward the adoption of racial quotas for afro-descendants.

**Framing public support for racial quotas in Brazil**

The paradigm shift from the Brazilian state’s emphasis on harmonious racial dynamics to the rapid institutionalization of race-targeted policy in roughly the last decade (see Table 1) resulted from the convergence of social movement mobilization, an opening in the federal sphere of government favorable to change, and international events and actors focused on racial equality, as we detailed above (Bailey, 2008; Htun, 2004; Peria and Bailey, 2014; Telles, 2004). However, do the attitudes of the Brazilian masses reflect support for this turn? What elements drive public opinion on affirmative action in Brazil? Before turning to our data, we lay out salient framings in the social sciences addressing racial attitudes and support for race-targeted affirmative action.

Not surprisingly, the lion’s share of the research literature on public opinion and support for race-targeted affirmative action involves the US case (e.g. Bobo and Kluegel, 1993; Bobo et al., 2012; Schuman et al., 1997; Sears et al., 2000). In that context, the use of large-sample surveys of public opinion has a long history,
providing extensive data sources and allowing for longitudinal analyses and trend data. Moreover, opinions on racial issues have been a part of those surveys for decades, and their analysis has received ample attention from scholars. The resulting body of research generally documents the changing nature of public opinion on racial issues over time, including on affirmative action, and explores explanations for the various attitudinal configurations. The most salient contemporary framings adopt core elements of group conflict theory (see LeVine and Campbell, 1972; see also Blumer, 1958) to explore and explain support for affirmative action. The aptness of this theoretical tradition appears credible on its face because race-targeted policy involves notions of racial group-based inequality and the redistribution of resources along racial group lines. In group conflict framings of racial attitudes, racial identities are primary; racial interests are attached to them; and those identities and interests affect support for racially distributive policy (e.g. Bobo, 2000; Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Sidanius and Pratto, 1999).

Framings of contemporary racial attitudes in the US in this tradition posit the recasting of racial ideologies in the post-Civil Rights era along with their corresponding racial attitudes. These include, for example, Laissez-Faire racism (Bobo et al., 1997) and color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Omi and Winant, 2014), among others. As continuations of earlier biological or scientific and Jim Crow racist ideologies, the aims and effects of these “new racism” ideologies are the maintenance of white privilege amid changing societal conditions. Although formulated in the US context, the overall generalizability of the principal elements of these framings is extended to Latin America by many scholars (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich, 2008; Paschel, 2010; Sidanius et al., 2001), including to the Brazilian context (Twine, 1998; Winant, 1999), as we address further below.

At least two core explanatory threads run through these framings of racial attitudes. They posit the centrality of causal attributions for racial inequality in explaining attitudes toward race-targeted policy (e.g., Bobo and Kluegel, 1993). In addition, they hold that attitudes toward race-targeted policy reflect racial group-specific material interests and hence are divided along racial lines (e.g., Bobo, 2000). Regarding the first thread, beliefs about the causes of racial inequality (or stratification beliefs) refer to the actual explanations that individuals offer when confronted with the fact of racial inequality. For example, in the US General Social Survey (GSS), an item from the period of 1977–2008 asked respondents:

On the average (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people. Do you think these differences are: ‘mainly due to discrimination’; ‘because most (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) have less inborn ability to learn’; ‘because most (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) don’t have the chance for education that it takes to rise out of poverty’; or ‘because most (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) just don’t have the motivation or willpower to pull themselves up out of poverty?
Researchers categorize these differing explanations for racial inequality into two broad types: individualist and structuralist explanations. The former points to the internal inadequacies of black individuals that result in their poverty such as being less motivated or having less ability to learn. The latter, in contrast, points to elements of social structure to account for group-based inequality: blacks’ lack of access to good education or antiblack discrimination. Importantly, research shows that individuals who offer individualist explanations for racial inequality are less likely to support affirmative action than those who embrace structural explanations for the same (e.g., Bobo and Kluegel, 1993). Quite simply, individualist explanations tend to place the onus of inequality on those at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, a type of victim-blaming; hence, blacks are at fault and it is their own duty to do something about that inequality, not that of the State.

Contemporary research also reports that, in situations of racial hierarchy stratification, beliefs are likely to correspond with an individual’s racial status and the location of that status in the hierarchy (Bobo and Tuan, 2006; Sears et al., 2000). Members of dominant groups generally blame racial hierarchy on minorities themselves, not on structural racism (Bobo and Kluegel, 1993); members of disadvantaged minority populations, in contrast, are more likely to point to systematic discrimination or structural explanations (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996). That is, among minority populations, these framings posit the development of oppositional attitudes. These racially diverging perspectives represent differing lenses on (and interests in) the racialized social world. Hence conflict attitudes develop where perceived group-specific racial interests pit racial groups in zero-sum struggles for the allocation of available resources (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996). An exception would be the case where minorities take on dominant interpretations of racial dynamics. Group conflict framings explain this outcome as due to diffuse or confused racial consciousness among minorities (Hanchard, 1994; Sidanius and Pratto, 1999; Twine, 1998).

An especially salient and important example of a group conflict approach to framing racial attitudes in the US is “color-blind racism” (Bonilla-Silva, 2013) or “the racial ideology of colorblindness” (Omi and Winant, 2014). In their new 2014 edition of Racial Formation in the United States, the latter two scholars posit, for example, that “colorblindness is today the prevailing mode of the ‘racial commonsense’ [in the U.S.]” (p. 4). In his book on color-blind racism in the US, Racism without Racists, Bonilla-Silva (2013) defines color-blind racial ideology as, at its core, a justification for racial inequality through explaining it as the outcome of nonracial dynamics (p. 2). As such, he describes color blindness’ four main components: abstract liberalism, cultural racism, minimization of racism, and naturalization of racism. The first three components may be most clearly pertinent in the case of framing support for affirmative action in Brazil. Abstract liberalism is an ideology under whose influence individuals envision society as a meritocracy; each person reaps just rewards according to his or her own efforts. Cultural racism refers to a mind-set that views minorities as flawed, lacking a robust work ethic, or sometimes inherently inferior. Finally, the minimization of racism leads individuals...
to downplay or even deny the systematic effects of racism and discrimination that centrally structure racial hierarchy. All of them come together to constitute the ideology of color blindness.

Bonilla-Silva (2013) offers key empirical examples of how the color-blind ideology contours the racial attitudes of white and black Americans. In his sample of interviews in the US, 85% of whites expressly deny systematic racism as explaining black disadvantage, while only 6% of blacks do (p. 202). In terms of support for affirmative action, Bonilla-Silva writes that only about 12% of whites support it, whereas 94% of blacks do (p. 199). These results, which Bonilla-Silva states are in line with those from large-sample survey research on these issues in the US, clearly point to the dominance of color-blind ideology that leads to conflict attitudes (or attitudinal gaps or asymmetry) between whites and blacks on explanations for racial inequality and in support for affirmative action.

The possible salience of this color-blind ideology in Brazil and its effect on stratification beliefs and support for affirmative action is lent credence in the work of Bonilla-Silva who characterizes that region, including Brazil in particular, in the following way: “Latin Americans and Caribbeans do not believe race is a part of their social reality” (p. 229). Moreover, and in line with that view of Latin America, his highly cited theory of the Latin Americanization of US race relations (e.g., Bonilla-Silva, 2004) posits that the US context is becoming more like Latin America in terms of race-targeted contestation, among other ways: “As a Latin American-like society, any form of race-based contestation will become increasingly more difficult [in the US], which as in Latin America, will allow white supremacy to reign supreme, hidden from public debate” (p. 221). This characterization of Latin American racial ideologies as color-blind and hence resistant to race-based contestation is in line with much of the Latin American research literature referencing the myth of racial democracy as promoting a denial of racial discrimination (Twine, 1998; Winant, 1999) and as creating a context unamenable to race-targeted intervention (Andrews, 1997; Hanchard, 1994). Some scholars more recently, however, posit the retreat of the myth of racial democracy as a ruling ideology in Brazil (Guimarães et al., 2010; Telles, 2004). Hence, whether color blindness is hegemonic in Brazil as measured through the salience of denials of racism and or antipathy toward affirmative action is an empirical question we hope to address below.

Conflict attitudes, as those predicted by the ideology of color blindness, though, can form along any salient cleavage, such as gender or class (Gurin et al., 1980). Class may be most relevant in this discussion. Where the racial cleavage is very strong, as in the US, class may not be a factor that organizes attitudes toward affirmative action. Bobo et al. (2012), for example, report that class effects on racial attitudes are nearly absent in the US. Other scholars, however, report that class may matter in the US, but only among whites. For example, elite whites that appear progressive may endorse views that do not further white privilege, while lower class whites are more likely to hold reactive views toward black inequality and affirmative action (Bonilla-Silva, 2013).
We might certainly expect class effects in Brazil as it is one of the countries with the highest wealth inequality in the Western Hemisphere and one in which class has long been a salient divide (Bailey, 2009). In recent years, class coalitions and discourse were strongly mobilized, for example, in the successful political campaign of Brazil’s first “working-class” president, Lula da Silva, in 2002, and for Dilma in 2010. Class dynamics, then, cannot be overlooked in Brazil, even when the analysis centers on racial divides (Andrews, 2014; Bailey, 2004; Peria and Bailey, 2014). Class dynamics in that context, though, may be especially complex for at least three reasons: (1) there is a public association of poverty with darker skin tones, or what has been called parallelism between social and skin-color hierarchies (Reis, 1997; see also Azevedo, 1966); (2) notwithstanding that association, the fact is that the majority of white Brazilians are also nonelite, i.e. are poor and working class (Telles, 2004); and (3) studies demonstrate that racial gaps in income between whites and nonwhites are greater at the highest levels of income, but much lower at the working-class and working poor levels (Arias et al., 2004; Bailey et al., 2013; Santos, 2005). Hence, conflict attitudes along class lines could indeed influence support for racially redistributive policies in Brazil beyond race effects.

In sum, if group conflict framings like color-blind racism hold in Brazil, we would expect to see the dominance of individualist explanations for racial inequality and a rejection of race-targeted interventions. Moreover, these framings would posit substantial gaps between the attitudes of racialized populations in terms of explaining racial inequality as well as in support for race-targeted policy. If class conflict theories hold as well or instead, we might find substantial gaps in the attitudes of populations of differing educational levels or income (proxies for class in Brazil) toward racial inequality and race-targeted policy. To explore these hypotheses, we turn to our data.

Data and methods

We analyze data from the AmericasBarometer (AB) survey of Brazil for 2010 and 2012. AB is carried out every two years by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University. The survey is conducted in 26 countries from North America, Latin American, and the Caribbean. AB uses a national probability complex sample design of voting-age adults, taking into account stratification, clustering, and weighting procedures for data collection. The Brazilian rounds of the AB survey in 2010 and 2012 conducted, respectively, a total of 2482 and 1500 face-to-face interviews. The 2010 iteration uses sample weights to produce nationally representative results, while the 2012 sample is self-weighted.

In an effort to contextualize results from the AB Brazilian samples in 2010 and 2012, we compared some of these results to those obtained from the 2012 United States sample of the AB and the Cordial Racism survey conducted in 1995 and 2008 by the Brazilian survey institute DataFolha. In both rounds of the Cordial Racism survey, face-to-face interviews were carried out with representative samples of the population of adult Brazilians. The American wave of the 2012 AB was an.
online survey administered to a representative sample of the population of voting-age adults.

**Variables**

“Support for affirmative action” is our main variable of interest. Both the 2010 and 2012 AB waves ask respondents to use a 1–7 scale, 1 = “strongly disagree” and 7 = “strongly agree,” to express their support for affirmative action. However, the question is phrased differently in the two surveys. In the 2010 AB, respondents are asked: “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: It is fair for public universities to reserve spaces for afro-descendants (black [negro] or mixed-race [mulato] people).” In the 2012 AB, respondents are asked: “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Universities should reserve spaces for darker skinned students, even if that means excluding other students. [Probe to be used by the interviewer if necessary: Darker skin refers to blacks (negros), indigenous, and nonwhites in general].” For our analyses, we recode these variables into three categories: strongly against (1–2), some support (3–5), and strongest support (6–7).

Our analysis focuses on the three major Brazilian color–race groupings: blacks, browns, and whites (self-identified according to the categories of the national Census). These three groupings comprised 92.7% of all observations in 2010 and 94% in 2012. Survey respondents who self-identified in other categories (Asian, indigenous, or other) or who did not respond to the question were excluded from the analysis. Of the cases included in the 2010 analysis, blacks comprise 10.6% of the sample, browns 50.4%, and whites 39%. In 2012, blacks are 15.4% of the sample, browns 46.5%, and whites 38.1%. Brown is the reference category in the regression analyses.

Education is measured by the number of completed years of formal education, ranging from 0 (no formal education) to 17 (complete college or graduate degree). Household income is included in the analysis using four categories: up to one monthly minimum wage salary (reference category in regression models), from one to two minimum wages; from two to three minimum wages; more than three minimum wages. Gender is noted by the interviewer, male (reference category in regression models) or female. Age is collected as years of age and recoded into four groups: 18–24 years (reference category), 25–44, 45–64, and 65 or more.

Respondents were also asked about their “stratification beliefs,” i.e. concerning the reasons why black (negro) people tend to be poorer than the rest of the population. The following response options were offered in 2010: “they don’t work enough”; “they are less intelligent”; “they are treated unfairly”; “they have low levels of education”; and “they don’t want to change their culture.” In 2012, the response options were: “because of their culture” or “because they were treated unfairly.” Responses were classified into individualist explanations (2010: do not work, less intelligent, won’t change their culture; 2012: because of culture) and structuralist explanations (2010: treated unfairly and low levels of
Table 2. Survey items on support to affirmative action.

Brazilian surveys

Racial quotas

1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following phrase: It is fair for public universities to reserve spaces for afro-descendants (black [negro] or mixed-race [mulato] people). (AB, 2010)

   Seven-point scale:
   1 = Strongly disagree
   7 = Strongly agree

2. Universities should reserve spaces for darker skinned students, even if that means excluding other students. How much do you agree or disagree? [Darker skinned refers to blacks (negros), indigenous, and nonwhites in general]. (AB, 2012)

   Seven-point scale:
   1 = Strongly disagree
   7 = Strongly agree

3. Considering past and present discrimination against blacks, there are people who defend the idea that the only way to guarantee racial equality is to reserve a part university spaces and jobs in businesses for the black (negro) population. Do you agree or disagree with setting aside spaces in the university and jobs for blacks? Totally or in part? (Cordial Racism, 1995)

   Strongly agree
   Agree in part
   Strongly disagree
   Disagree in part

4. One of the articles of project [of the Statute of Racial Equality] establishes, at a minimum, that 20% of public and private university admissions spots be set aside for black people and afro-descendants, regardless of their score earned on the admissions test in relation to those that are not black (negros). Are you in favor or against quotas, that is, that spaces in universities be set aside for blacks and afro-descendants? (Cordial Racism, 2008)

   In favor
   Against
   Indifferent

Explanation for racial inequality

5. According to census data, black (negro) people are poorer, in general, than the rest of the population. In your opinion, what explains this? (AB, 2010)

   Don’t work enough
   Less intelligent
   Treated unfairly
   Low levels of education
   Unwilling to change their culture

6. According to several studies, people with darker skin are poorer than the rest of the population. What do you believe is the main reason for this? (AB, 2012)

   Their culture
   Treated unfairly
   Other answer

USA survey

Racial quotas

7. Universities ought to set aside openings for students who are racial or ethnic minorities, even if that means excluding other students. How much do you agree or disagree? (AB, 2012)

   Seven-point scale:
   1 = Strongly disagree
   7 = Strongly agree
education; 2012: because of unfair treatment). “Individualist explanation” is the reference category in the regression models. (See Table 2 for survey question wording.)

**Analytic procedures**

We report descriptive analysis of the variable of interest (support to affirmative action) and findings from multivariate multinomial regression analyses. All results are weighted when survey weights are available (i.e., for 2010 AB). For descriptive statistics, we estimate figures using the original premissing data imputation data set; for regression analysis, we imputed missing data to prevent information loss due to listwise deletion.

We run all analyses using the statistical software R 2.15 (R Core Team, 2012). Missing data used in regression analysis are imputed using Amelia II (Honaker et al., 2009, 2013; King et al., 2001); 10 “full” data sets are generated. Multinomial regression models are estimated using the R packages survey (Lumley, 2004, 2012) and nnet (Ripley, 2013; Venables and Ripley, 2002) using the “complete” (post-imputation) data sets. Regression estimates are bundled using the R package mitools (Lumley, 2012) to obtain Rubin’s coefficients and standard errors for imputed data (see King et al., 2001: 53). Akaike Information Criteria (AIC) (Akaike, 1974) and Bayesian Information Criteria (BIC) (Schwartz, 1978) are reported to compare model fit across different model specifications.

**Findings**

**Descriptive statistics**

We begin with frequency distributions of support for racial quotas in the 2010 AB survey. As presented in Table 3, first column, overall level of support among our sample is 55.3%. That is, our data suggest that, in 2010, a majority of Brazilians supported quotas for afro-descendants in public universities. It is an unexpectedly high percentage considering past scholarship on Brazil as a color-blind society. Moreover, a glance at additional data suggests that the percentage support we find is a fairly robust estimate. For example, as also presented in Table 3, the overall level of support for racial quotas for “negros” and “descendants of negros” from the 2008 Racismo Cordial national survey was 49%. (See Table 2, question 4.) Both of these questions, then, with slightly differing formats, but nonetheless seeking to measure support for race-targeted affirmative action in Brazil, suggest that a color-blind framing of the racial common sense may not describe well the perspectives of at least half of the Brazilian population.

As opposed to color blindness, this broad level of support may reflect a waning influence of the myth of racial democracy where there may be a growing level of recognition of racial discrimination on the part of Brazilians (Telles, 2004). In fact, on the question of how Brazilians explain racial inequality (see Table 2, question 5),
Table 3. Distribution of survey items on support to affirmative action in higher education and on explanation for racial inequality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Type</th>
<th>Total, %</th>
<th>White, %</th>
<th>Brown, %</th>
<th>Black, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazilian surveys, Support for Racial Quotas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AmericasBarometer 2010 (a)</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AmericasBarometer 2012 (a)</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racismo Cordial, 1995 (b)</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racismo Cordial, 2008 (c)</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazilian surveys, structuralist explanations for racial inequality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AmericasBarometer, 2010 (d)</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AmericasBarometer, 2012 (d)</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>89.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA survey, Support for Racial Quotas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AmericasBarometer 2012 (a)</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: AmericasBarometer 2010 and Cordial Racism 1995 data sets included survey weights and were utilized for these percentages. AmericasBarometer 2012 and Cordial Racism 2008 are self-weighted data sets. Figures are calculated before missing cases imputation.

(a) % responding 6–7 in the scale; (b) % in part or totally agreeing; (c) % in favor of racial quotas; (d) % structural explanation for why blacks are poorer.

Table 3 shows that overwhelming majorities across all racial groups offer structural reasons (89% in 2010). The changes that have taken place in the last decade, then, have placed racial discrimination under a veritable microscope and possibly increased its recognition. Hence, the Brazilian public may now be more open than in the past to confronting discrimination using race-targeted strategies. Placing in question that conclusion, though, is the 1995 Racismo Cordial survey that also revealed very high levels of the recognition of discrimination as causing black poverty, at 72% (see Table 3) (Bailey, 2002; Ventura and Turra, 1995). This was 18 years earlier, a time preceding even the 1996 Zumbi march. In addition, Bailey (2004) reports that a probabilistic survey in the State of Rio de Janeiro in 2000 also revealed similarly high levels of recognition of structural discrimination in Brazil. What is more, in 1995, fully 47.5% of Brazilians supported racial quotas (Table 3; see question format in Table 2, question 3). Hence, even before the paradigm shift in the last decade or so was in full swing, surveys suggest that large majorities of Brazilians recognized structural racism and that about half of them also supported a race-targeted approach to ameliorate racial inequality.

Beyond overall percentages, there are some differences between the levels of support expressed by whites, browns, and blacks. The highest levels of support are from blacks and browns in the 2010 data set, who in almost equal and majority numbers, at about 60%, favor racial quotas for Afro-Brazilians. In contrast, among white Brazilians, support for racial quotas for Afro-Brazilians does not quite reach...
a majority percentage, at 47%. These descriptive statistics revealing differences between blacks and browns on one side, and whites on the other, suggest an element of group-based interests. Whites may feel that their racial interests are threatened by policies that appear to disadvantage that population. However, viewed from a conflict perspective, even this level of support from whites for a policy that may disadvantage the white population in favor of afro-descendants is highly unexpected. Whites in the US, for example, generally express an overwhelming rejection of affirmative action for blacks (Bobo et al., 2012; Hunt, 2007). The high level of support among white Brazilians for racial quotas for afro-Brazilians, then, stands out as not fitting well the predictions of group conflict approaches like the ideology of color blindness (see also Bailey, 2004).

Judged in comparison to the 1995 and 2008 Cordial Racism data, the 2010 results may, nonetheless, subtly suggest some changing patterns. In 1995 browns were actually closer to whites in terms of the level of support they showed for affirmative action, at 48.5% and 45.4%, respectively; blacks showed a higher level at that time, at 54%. However, in 2008, browns appeared to show increased support while whites stayed about the same. This moved browns closer to blacks and further from whites. One could speculate, then, that the 2010 data set reveals some consolidation of a dichotomy in views toward affirmative action, along a white versus nonwhite divide, perhaps produced in part due to browns’ inclusion in the beneficiary category ‘afro-Brazilian’ alongside blacks.

Turning to the 2012 AB descriptive results regarding support for racial quotas, we find a somewhat different story. The question formats were changed significantly between 2010 and 2012 (see Table 2, question 2). Although there were several modifications, perhaps the most important in 2012 is that the question clearly plants a zero-sum competition in which the inclusion of persons of dark skin color via racial quotas would necessitate the exclusion of others, presumably of white skin color. In contrast, the 2010 AB survey simply asked about support for racial quotas for afro-descendants and did not state in explicit language that racial quotas automatically necessitate the exclusion of “others.” Not surprisingly, the different format produced different results. Overall, support for racial quotas drops dramatically, from 55.4% in the 2010 AB to 27.8% in 2012. Although two years separated these surveys, we would strongly speculate that the time difference was less important than the format difference for the drop in support for racial quotas. The drop in support also appears shaped by racial group status; only 19.7% of whites expressed support in 2012 compared to 32.4% and 34.3% of browns and blacks. Hence, from the optics of a zero-sum game, Brazilians in general show much less support for racial quotas for people of darker skin, including two thirds of self-classified browns and blacks. The results from the zero-sum format, then, appear more supportive of a color-blind framing of racial attitudes in Brazil.

However, very interestingly, the 2012 AB, which was conducted in 26 countries across the Americas, included the same zero-sum game question on racial quotas in its survey of the United States as in Brazil. Unfortunately, the question formed part of a split ballot in the US, so the number of cases is significantly lower, at 688.
Nonetheless, whereas overall support for zero-sum racial quotas in Brazil in 2012 was 27.8%, that number is merely 6.2% in the US. And, whereas 19.7% of white Brazilians supported racial quotas in 2012 in Brazil, only 3.5% of white Americans did (see Table 3, question 7). Relative to the white American category, African American support is significantly stronger, at 19.3%; however, about 4 out of 5 African Americans reject such a policy. Hence, in comparison to the United States, even the most radical of race-targeted policy in the form of racial quotas that absolutely necessitate the exclusion of “others” to include quota beneficiaries receives a surprising level of support in Brazil.

**Regression analysis**

We turn now to our regression analyses. Using multinomial regression, we compare those who show “some” support and those who show the “strongest support” to our reference category of “strongly against” racial quotas. We only discuss here, however, the comparison of “strongly rejecting” compared to “strongly supporting” racial quotas. Table 4 presents the logit coefficients for the 2010 AB question regarding general support for racial quotas in Brazilian universities. Using additive models, the first two reveal the importance of both racial category and education. Both blacks and browns are significantly more likely than whites to support racial quotas; and, as a respondent’s level of education increases, support for quotas falls. Interestingly, the significance and coefficient sizes of the race and education effects remain almost totally stable in the third model that includes both variables, suggesting their independence.

In fact, both of these variables remain significant in all our models. However, whereas the logits for the education variable remain almost exactly the same throughout, the power of the race variable is reduced in the fourth and in the full models. Looking to Table 5 to our odds ratio results for a substantive interpretation, our full model shows that, with each additional year of education, the odds that an individual will express strong support compared to weak support for affirmative action is reduced by about 8%, controlling for race and all other variables (see Bailey, 2004). This finding strongly contradicts the US context where research reports that individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to support affirmative action for blacks (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). With regard to race, our full model shows that the odds that a white individual compared to a brown individual will express strong support compared to weak support for racial quotas are 37.4% less. Blacks, on the other hand, do not statistically differ from browns in their expressed support for affirmative action, holding all else constant.

The full model results highlight the role of income and age as well, both negatively associated with strong support for racial quotas over weak support. Lastly, our stratification beliefs variable is also significant. It measures whether a respondent explains racial disadvantage via structuralist or individualist reasons. Table 5 reveals that, for a person who explains black disadvantage as due to structural reasons as opposed to individualist ones, those odds of expressing strong compared
Table 4. Multinomial regression analysis of support to affirmative action in 2010: Additive models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Race Education</th>
<th>Race and Education</th>
<th>Race, education, and SES</th>
<th>Race, education, SES, and beliefs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logit (Some)</td>
<td>Logit (Totally)</td>
<td>Logit (Some)</td>
<td>Logit (Totally)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>−0.466***</td>
<td>−0.773***</td>
<td>−0.442***</td>
<td>−0.316**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.179)</td>
<td>(0.158)</td>
<td>(0.183)</td>
<td>(0.204)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>−0.445**</td>
<td>−0.268</td>
<td>−0.449***</td>
<td>−0.463*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.216)</td>
<td>(0.231)</td>
<td>(0.217)</td>
<td>(0.240)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>−0.050**</td>
<td>−0.087***</td>
<td>−0.046**</td>
<td>−0.054**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
<td>(0.026)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R$510.01–R$1,020.00</td>
<td>0.456*</td>
<td>−0.109</td>
<td>0.451*</td>
<td>0.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.263)</td>
<td>(0.209)</td>
<td>(0.251)</td>
<td>(0.235)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R$1,020.01–R$1,530.00</td>
<td>0.451*</td>
<td>−0.333</td>
<td>0.447*</td>
<td>0.233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.263)</td>
<td>(0.209)</td>
<td>(0.251)</td>
<td>(0.235)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R$1,530.01+</td>
<td>0.246</td>
<td>−0.499**</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>−0.515***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.235)</td>
<td>(0.246)</td>
<td>(0.237)</td>
<td>(0.249)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>−0.189</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>−0.195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.143)</td>
<td>(0.120)</td>
<td>(0.144)</td>
<td>(0.122)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25–44</td>
<td>−0.052</td>
<td>−0.085</td>
<td>−0.053</td>
<td>−0.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.213)</td>
<td>(0.158)</td>
<td>(0.214)</td>
<td>(0.160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 45–64</td>
<td>−0.443*</td>
<td>−0.317*</td>
<td>−0.446*</td>
<td>−0.318*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.228)</td>
<td>(0.177)</td>
<td>(0.229)</td>
<td>(0.178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65+</td>
<td>−0.141</td>
<td>−0.465*</td>
<td>−0.132</td>
<td>−0.457*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.286)</td>
<td>(0.241)</td>
<td>(0.285)</td>
<td>(0.242)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 4. Continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race (Logit)</th>
<th>Race (Logit)</th>
<th>Race and education (Logit)</th>
<th>Race, education, and SES (Logit)</th>
<th>Race, education, SES, and beliefs (Logit)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Some)</td>
<td>(Totally)</td>
<td>(Some)</td>
<td>(Totally)</td>
<td>(Some)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stratification Beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constant</th>
<th>0.246</th>
<th>1.228***</th>
<th>0.422**</th>
<th>0.635***</th>
<th>0.356</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(0.160)</td>
<td>(0.147)</td>
<td>(0.211)</td>
<td>(0.216)</td>
<td>(0.239)</td>
<td>(0.231)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-2 LL</th>
<th>4.564</th>
<th>4.574</th>
<th>4.527</th>
<th>4.412</th>
<th>4.000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>4.576</td>
<td>4.582</td>
<td>4.543</td>
<td>4.476</td>
<td>4.468</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BIC</th>
<th>4.610</th>
<th>4.605</th>
<th>4.589</th>
<th>4.660</th>
<th>4.664</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2301</td>
<td>2301</td>
<td>2301</td>
<td>2301</td>
<td>2301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: AIC: Akaike Information Criterion; BIC: Bayesian Information Criterion; LL: Log-Likelihood; SES: Socioeconomic Status.

Source: Americas Barometer, 2010. Weighted data. Models 4 and 5 include controls for region and rural/urban settings (not shown).

"Lowest support for affirmative action" is baseline response category the in all models.

*p .10; **p .05; ***p .01.
to weak support for racial quotas are about 69% greater. As predicted by the literature on stratification beliefs, attributing racial disadvantage to structure is associated with higher levels of support for race-targeted intervention (Bailey, 2004; Bobo and Kluegel, 1993).

Table 6 presents the logits for our multinomial regression of support for affirmative action in 2012 where the question format explicitly posited a zero-sum game between afro-Brazilians and “others.” As shown above through descriptive statistics, levels of support for affirmative action as judged by this question fell dramatically. Our first model’s results show in the second column that whites are significantly less likely to support quotas when faced with a zero-sum scenario than were browns, whereas browns and blacks did not differ significantly.

A second education-only model shows its importance as well, where higher levels of education are associated with low levels of support for racial quotas. The third nested model reveals both education and race matter. Interestingly, though something unexpected happens in our fourth and in our full models: race effects are washed out in terms of their (significant) power to predict strong support in comparison to weak support for racial quotas. Instead, level of education takes center stage. In fact, in our full model, only education matters for predicting strong support over weak support: education is negatively associated with support for racial quotas (again, in contrast to what is found in the US). The odds ratio results in Table 7 show that the odds of an individual expressing strong support for racial

### Table 5. Multinomial regression analysis of support to affirmative action in 2010: Odds ratio.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Race and education</th>
<th>Race, education, and SES</th>
<th>Race, education, SES, and beliefs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR (Some)</td>
<td>OR (Totally)</td>
<td>OR (Some)</td>
<td>OR (Totally)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.627</td>
<td>0.462</td>
<td>0.643</td>
<td>0.479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.641</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>0.638</td>
<td>0.759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.951</td>
<td>0.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R$510.01–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R$1,020.01–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R$1,530.01+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.642</td>
<td>0.759</td>
<td>0.642</td>
<td>0.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25–44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 45–64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65+</td>
<td>0.869</td>
<td>0.628</td>
<td>0.869</td>
<td>0.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratification beliefs</td>
<td>1.427</td>
<td>1.685</td>
<td>1.427</td>
<td>1.685</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: OR: Odds Ratio; SES: Socioeconomic Status.
Table 6. Multinomial regression analysis of support to affirmative action in 2012: Additive models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Race and education</th>
<th>Race, education, and SES</th>
<th>Race, education, SES, and beliefs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logit (Some)</td>
<td>Logit (Totally)</td>
<td>Logit (Some)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.253</td>
<td>-0.574***</td>
<td>0.308*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.161)</td>
<td>(0.161)</td>
<td>(0.164)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.434**</td>
<td>0.273</td>
<td>0.417*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.217)</td>
<td>(0.195)</td>
<td>(0.220)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.042***</td>
<td>-0.127***</td>
<td>-0.045**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R$621.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-R$1,240.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R$1,240.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-R$1,860.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R$1,860.01+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.076</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>-0.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.132)</td>
<td>(0.139)</td>
<td>(0.321)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25–44</td>
<td>0.218</td>
<td>-0.252</td>
<td>0.170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.191)</td>
<td>(0.189)</td>
<td>(0.286)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Race Education</th>
<th>Race, education, and SES</th>
<th>Race, education, SES, and beliefs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logit (Some)</td>
<td>Logit (Totally)</td>
<td>Logit (Some)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 45–64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.219</td>
<td>0.219</td>
<td>0.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.267</td>
<td>0.267</td>
<td>0.482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratification Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.102</td>
<td>0.102</td>
<td>0.308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: AIC: Akaike Information Criterion; BIC: Bayesian Information Criterion; LL: Log-Likelihood; SES: Socioeconomic Status.

Source: Americas Barometer, 2012. Models 4 and 5 include controls for region and rural/urban settings (not shown).

*Lowest support for affirmative action* is baseline response category in all models.

*p < .10. **p < .05. ***p < .01.
quotas over weak support are reduced by about 12% for each additional year of education. As discussed in our Methods section, however, the split ballot format of the 2012 survey reduced the number of cases for its analysis. Hence, greater caution may be appropriate in the interpretation of the 2012 results. Nonetheless, despite the smaller number of cases in our 2012 models, all coefficients of model 5 in Table 6 have the same directional effect as the ones in model 5 of Table 4 for the 2010 survey.11

How might we explain the differences manifested in these models of the 2012 question compared to the 2010 version (keeping in mind the necessary caveat of the smaller sample size in 2012)? It appears large majorities of Brazilians, regardless of color, reject policies that necessitate a zero-sum game (as reflected in the 2012 item), including those who might benefit the most, nonwhite Brazilians. Hence, a color-blind framing appears to fit this outcome, if one considers a lack of support for zero-sum policies advantaging one racial category over another a sign of a lack of awareness of racial discrimination. However, placing such an interpretation in doubt is the fact that our variable that measures explanations for racial inequality is not significant. That is, it is not that individuals who deny racial discrimination reject zero-sum policies; instead, race and explanations of racial inequality are just not variables that explain this rejection. It is educational level that appears to capture the operative cleavage that contours attitudes toward zero-sum racial quota policies in Brazil in 2012. As we discuss more below, class appears to play
a central role in attitudes toward affirmative action in Brazil and conform to a conflict framing along class divides, as opposed to along racial divides (Bailey, 2004, 2009).

Discussion

We began by detailing a historic shift in recent years in the way Brazilian state approaches its racial diversity. From a society once heralded as characterized by harmonious “race relations,” i.e. lacking the pernicious effect of race that troubled other nations, especially the United States, the Brazilian state has now placed race and racial inequality center stage. Nowhere is this more obvious than in its adoption of race-targeted policy to combat the historic exclusion of Brazilians of varying degrees of African ancestry from important social spheres and institutions. Given this rapid policy shift, and the fact that its central stimulus appears to have come from state, social movement, and international actors, as opposed to sustained mass mobilizations (Bailey, 2008; Htun, 2004; Telles, 2004), we asked how these new policies resonate with the general public as suggested through the lens of probabilistic surveys of public opinion. From the 2010 AB, we found high levels of support when respondents were asked about whether or not they agree with the establishment of racial quotas for afro-descendants in Brazil’s public universities (see also Smith, 2010). In fact, a solid majority of the sample supported them. Both race and education contoured that support in significant ways, as did explanations for racial disadvantage. Individuals self-classifying as black or as brown were somewhat more likely than whites to express support, as were individuals of lower educational levels compared to those with higher ones. In fact, the effect of education (a proxy for class) appears more central than does race, quite differently than we find in the US, for example (Bobo et al., 1997; Schuman et al., 1997: 257–64). How can we explain these results from 2010 in Brazil?

We engaged group conflict framings as represented by the ideology of color blindness to form our hypotheses regarding the Brazilian racial common sense (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Omi and Winant, 2014). At first glance, this racial ideology appears credible for the Brazilian context in that many scholars point to important elements of color-blind racism as core to the myth of racial democracy (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich, 2008; Twine, 1998; Winant, 1999). Nonetheless, our data do not lend much support to the use of that framing in Brazil. Majority recognition of the structural racism in 2010 (and 2012), as well as majority support for racial quotas in 2010 point far from color blindness. Color-blind racism also posits that racial attitudes toward structural explanations for racial disadvantage and toward affirmative action are strongly contoured by racial group interests and hence racial identities. Although we did find significant differences between blacks and browns on one side and whites on the other, those divides are far from gulfs. That is, close to three fourths of white interpret inequality as structurally caused, and nearly half support affirmative action. Again, those percentages do not support a color-blind racism framing.
If not color-blind racism, what other possible explanations are there for our outcomes? A possible growing consciousness regarding racism in the last years appears at first look to better fit the data, thereby marginalizing color blindness as the dominant ideology in Brazil. Put simply, when individuals—and by extension, societies—come to terms with the fact that race has pernicious structural effects on life chances, it follows that they should be more open to challenging those effects (Bobo et al., 2012; Schuman et al., 1997). This indeed seems to be the case in Brazil. Not only do the majority of Brazilians recognize structural racial disadvantage, but a majority also expresses support for affirmative action.

We cannot, however, demonstrate that this recognition of structural racism and support for affirmative action that we document in 2010 are new. First of all, we do not have trend data. We would need at least some robust trend data on public opinion to support a hypothesized shift in public opinion (see Bobo et al., 1997, 2012; Schuman et al., 1997). Secondly, there is evidence of the existence of these same attitudinal patterns regarding the recognition of structural racism and support for affirmative action almost two decades earlier (Bailey, 2002; Ventura and Turra, 1995), which we document in Table 3. Hence, it would be speaking beyond our data to conclude a shift in public opinion toward racial issues in Brazil as a result of the new state paradigm shift institutionalizing affirmative action. With that caveat, there can be no doubt, however, that the Brazilian context is ripe for attitudinal change. That change, though, may come as a consequence of the shift in the state’s approach to race and racial inequality, as opposed to a change in racial attitudes prompting that change (Bailey, 2009).

In addition, there may be other factors that can help explain the overall broad support for race-targeted affirmative action that we find. Although many of Brazil’s new affirmative action strategies target browns and blacks, most policies are unlike those of the UnB on which the Supreme Court decision was based in Brazil. In most cases of affirmative action programs, the largest beneficiary category is public school students (Peria and Bailey, 2014). While Brazil’s public universities are top rate and admission is always competitive, Brazil’s public basic education is most often of low quality. Hence, those traditionally able to compete for spots in Brazil’s public universities have ironically been students of more privileged backgrounds who attended costly private schools for their basic education. Public school attendance, then, is generally synonymous with lower class status, making the great bulk of Brazilian affirmative action programs class-based, employing “social quotas.” Many universities have gone on to create quotas for browns and blacks, but as “subcategories” embedded within the social quotas (Peria and Bailey, 2014). Hence, as in the approach taken by the new Federal Law of Social Quotas, we discussed above, once a student qualifies for a quota track based on the public school attendance criterion, there is a second, separate track for browns and blacks among those public school attendees.

The result of this nuanced and couched race-targeted affirmative action is that it probably benefits from the more general acceptance of the social quotas (Peria and Bailey, 2014; Schwartzman and Silva, 2012). That is, it is not only browns and
blacks who are the target of the state’s efforts to restructure Brazilian society, working-class and poor whites are also benefiting. Hence, the landscape is changing, but not necessarily using a zero-sum game in terms of race. The well-off in Brazil has generally been privileged by the state, attending its quality public universities tuition free. That the state is now ending some of that privileged relationship with its more elite classes, it is not hard to imagine widespread support for these measures among nonelites, which is exactly what our analysis suggests. For, just as the number of afro-descendants have increased in Brazil’s universities, so too have other sectors targeted by affirmative action, whether by public school, income, disability, or indigenous criteria (Andrews, 2014). Moreover, there has been an overall expansion of the university system in the last 10 years that has increased considerably the number of seats available (Guimarães et al., 2010). Indeed, if in 2003 there were 45 Federal Universities in Brazil, by 2010 they totaled 59 (Feres et al., 2013). In sum, we posit that the wide reach of the affirmative action programs that cut across race by focusing more frequently on class (Peria and Bailey, 2014) and the expansion of higher education in general (Guimarães et al., 2010) have mitigated the perception of zero-sum racial dynamics and hence also the development of conflict attitudes as framed by the ideology of color blindness.

This interpretation is further borne out in the negative effects of education and income for support for race-targeted quotas, thereby suggesting elements of class that could be framed by class-oriented group conflict approaches. The balance of the state’s power to intervene in the socioeconomic outcomes of its population has been, at least in this sphere, tipped a bit in favor of traditionally excluded, nonelite Brazilians. Moreover, social indicators clearly evidence the growing social well-being of nonelite Brazilians since Lula’s and Dilma’s presidencies, in which more than 40 million poor Brazilians have experienced upward social mobility out of that class. Andrews (2014) writes of this decade’s experiment in wealth distribution toward poor Brazilians as a successful experiment in social democracy. What is more, the cliché may fit in this case: a rising tide lifts all boats. To that point, Andrews even claims that this decade evidences steps toward a truer racial democracy (Andrews, 2014). There is little doubt, though, that beyond progressive social class policies, quotas specifically targeting afro-Brazilians are directly increasing their percentages in Brazilian higher education (Guimarães et al., 2010).

Hence, a general bettering of the situation of nonelite Brazilians, along with the expansion of higher education to include more of the population and the use of affirmative action to target the lower and working classes alongside poor and working-class afro-descendants, has perhaps mitigated the stark formation of conflict attitudes. If, in fact, the systems in Brazil were clearly zero-sum dynamics, which research literature and those policies themselves reveal that they are not (Andrews, 2014; Peria and Bailey, 2014), would attitudes be different? Indeed, the question incorporated into the 2012 AB creates a test of that hypothesis. In 2012, the team of researchers significantly altered the question on racial quotas, as detailed above, from the 2010 AB, positing explicitly for the respondent that racial quotas for dark-skinned individuals would necessarily result in “the exclusion of
other students” (lighter skinned?). Faced with that scenario, much lower percentages of the sample expressed support for racial quotas, including only 34% of blacks. That is, two thirds of blacks and even higher percentages of whites and browns expressed disagreement with that formulation. But, when modeled as a regression, the race effect was washed out, and again, it is lower- and working-class Brazilians who show greater support for affirmative action than higher class populations. Race conflict attitudes as posited through a color-blind racism framing disappear and class conflict attitudes take center stage.

Conclusion

In sum, the Brazilian population appears to be in sync with the paradigm shift of the Brazilian state toward race-targeted approaches, but with important caveats. First, support is conditioned by class: lower levels of education and income are associated with support for race-targeted public policy. This strongly differs from the way class proxies operate in the US. In that context, Bobo et al. (2012) report an absence of class effects and Bonilla-Silva (2013) reports effects in the opposite direction, at least for whites (i.e. lower class whites are less supportive than the well educated). Secondly, Brazilian support may rest to a large degree on the novel approach that the differing state actors in Brazil have taken in creating racial quotas as a subcategory of more expansive class-based “social” quotas. This approach appears less likely to produce racial backlash or conflict attitudes, as race-targeted policy did or does in the US (Bobo et al., 2012; Pierce, 2012). It remains to be seen if these high levels of support will continue, or if the development of highly publicized cases of so-called reverse discrimination, or others of “racial fraud,” could dampen Brazilian attitudes toward these policies or even produce a backlash. In the meantime, the land of racial democracy is indeed making concrete strides toward that ideal (Andrews, 2014).

Acknowledgments

Fabrício Fialho thanks the UCLA Center for Brazilian Studies, the UCLA Latin American Institute, and the Jorge Paulo Lemann Foundation, which supported him during the research.

Notes

1. We translate negro as “afro-Brazilian.” Following state, academic, and social movement discourse, negros and afro-Brazilians are those individuals who self-classify as pardo (brown or mixed race) or preto (dark black) according to the official census terms. Negro is also frequently translated into English as “black,” but this possibly leads to confusion with the census term preto or black, which is not synonymous with negro. We translate the national census categories as white, brown, and black throughout.

2. Scholars do note, however, the existence of exclusionary race-based immigration policies by the Brazilian state in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Dos Santos, 2002; Schwarz, 1993).
3. In Brazil, public universities, which are free, are among the best in the country. But they are often filled with the children of middle- and upper-class families who could afford tuition at private elementary and secondary schools that prepare their children for the highly competitive college entrance exams. Meanwhile, those from public high schools in general cannot compete and usually have to attend costly private, often inferior, universities.

4. Brazil’s justices underlined the need for race-targeted affirmative action to combat discrimination and correct for past injustices affecting afro-descendants to the present day. “If afro-Brazilians are not getting into the university it is because they obviously do not equally share the same chances as whites. If the number of whites and blacks (negros) were equal, one could say that color is irrelevant. It does not seem reasonable to reduce Brazilian social inequality to economic criteria” argued Justice Weber (Santos, 2012). “The construction of a fair and sympathetic society requires the whole community to repair past damages perpetrated by our ancestors,” argued Justice Luiz Fux (Gallucci and Recondo, 2012).

5. We do not include theories whose driving mechanisms are cultural stereotypes or negative out-group affect (e.g. Symbolic Racism [e.g. Sears, 1988]). Instead, framings in the group conflict tradition locate material interests and the maintenance of white privilege at their core. As we will discuss, negative affect and stereotypes do play a role in these framings, but less so than in sociocultural approaches.


7. We thank the Latin American Public Opinion Project (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. Technical documentation on sample design and data collection is publicly available at www.lapopsurveys.com.

9. In 2010, Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) used a sampling design in which the selection of municipalities followed sampling procedures with “probability proportional to the size” and samples adjusted at the municipal level, although without a minimum number of interviews per municipality. Because of this, some municipalities had a very small number of cases while others had a larger number of cases. In 2012, LAPOP adopted a new process of standardization of sample size at the level of the municipality in such a way as to enable the use of the municipality as the unit of analysis in multilevel–hierarchical models. For the 2012 sample, a minimum of 12 interviews per municipality were established. The new sampling design could be one of the reasons for the difference in the percentage of blacks and browns in the two samples.

10. Multinomial regression models are not natively supported by Lumley’s (2004, 2010) survey package. We implemented our multinomial regression model for complex survey data adapting our computer code to run the packages survey and nnet simultaneously to obtain both the point estimates and design-based standard errors using replicate weights. See Lumley (2010, appendix E) for technical details about this implementation.

11. Models including interactions (not shown) between race and education suggest that the negative effect of education may be greater for whites than for browns. These interaction effects, however, are not statistically significant across color groups. Moreover, the race variables lose their statistical significance in the interaction models even when
not controlling for socioeconomic status and stratification beliefs. These results suggest that additive models are sufficient to capture the principal tendencies in our data. More research with alternative data sources and research designs are necessary to explore possible interaction effects.

References


Gratz et al. v Bollinger et al. (2003) 539 U.S. 244.
Marcha Zumbi (1996) *Por uma política nacional de combate ao racismo e à desigualdade racial: Marcha Zumbi contra o racismo, pela cidadania e a vida*. Brasília: Cultura Gráfica e Editora Ltda.


Wagley C (1952) *Race and Class in Rural Brazil*. Paris: UNESCO.

Data sets


Software


