Latina/o or Mexicana/o? The Relationship between Socially Assigned Race and Experiences with Discrimination

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Abstract

Discrimination based on one's racial or ethnic background is one of the oldest and most perverse practices in the United States. Although much research has relied on self-reported racial categories, a growing body of research is designed to measure race through socially assigned race. Socially assigned or ascribed race measures how individuals feel they are classified by other people. In this study, the authors draw on the socially assigned race literature and explore the impact of socially assigned race on experiences with discrimination using a 2011 nationally representative sample of Latina/os (n = 1,200). Although much of the current research on Latina/os has been focused on aggregation across national-origin group members, this study marks a deviation in the use of socially assigned race and national origin to understand how being ascribed as Mexican is associated with experiences of discrimination. The authors find evidence that being ascribed as Mexican increases the likelihood of experiencing discrimination relative to being ascribed as White or Latina/o. Furthermore, the authors find that being misclassified as Mexican (ascribed as Mexican but not of Mexican origin) is associated with a higher likelihood of experiencing discrimination compared with being ascribed as White, ascribed as Latina/o, and correctly ascribed as Mexican. The authors provide evidence that socially assigned race is a valuable complement to self-identified race/ethnicity for scholars interested in assessing the impact of race/ethnicity on a wide range of outcomes.

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Discrimination based on racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation[1] is one of the central experiences that continue to plague the United States. The research literature has consistently documented the differences in outcomes due to discrimination for such populations (Anderson 2013; Reskin 2012). As a result of discrimination, several populations have experienced social inequalities, which have affected their livelihoods and overall well-being (Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey 1999; Harrell 2000; Leonardelli and Tormala 2003). Although scholars in the social sciences have developed a sustained interest in exploring

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how discrimination influences the lives of communities of color (Keith and Herring 1991; Jud and Walker 1977; Reskin 2012; Williams 1999; Williams, Neighbors, and Jackson 2003), with our examination we seek to delve "deeper" into the dynamics of discrimination within the panethnic Latina/o community by assessing how discrimination varies on the basis of how Latinos are viewed by others.

Extant research has identified strong relationships between racial discrimination and many outcome domains. Such outcomes include group identity (Banfield and Dovidio 2013; Branscombe et al. 2012; Clark and Clark 1949; Sellers et al. 2006), political behaviors (Schildkraut 2005), mental and physical health (Brodish et al. 2011; Stuber et al. 2003; Williams et al. 2003), and generational health (Goosby and Heidbrink 2013; Nicklett 2011). Social scientists have also discovered correlating relationships between discrimination and other domains, such as home ownership and housing conditions (Painter, Gabriel, and Myers 2001; Turner et al. 2002; Williams, Nesiba, and McConnell 2005), harsher criminal penalties (Steffensmeier, Ulmer, and Kramer 1998), negative labor market outcomes (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004), and segmented consumer markets (Harris, Henderson, and Williams 2005).

Although this research area is extensive and has increased our understanding of the role, impact, and disparity that discrimination plays in the lives of many people of color in the United States, our additional examination can contribute to distinctions for the bases of discriminatory behaviors and "targeted" groups. The aim of our analysis is to shed light on discrimination and race/ethnicity measurement in three specific areas within this larger literature: (1) the identification of contributors of discrimination with the relatively lesser studied Latina/o population, (2) the role of socially ascribed race (how others view one in society) on discrimination, and (3) unpacking of the panethnic classification of Latina/os by exploring national origin variations in discrimination (i.e., the Mexican-origin population) relative to being misclassified as Mexican when one is from a different national-origin group. The results of this analysis will advance our collective knowledge of the central concept of discrimination by providing some perspective on how being viewed as Mexican by others drives discrimination experiences within the largest minority population in the United States.

DISCRIMINATION AND THE LATINA/O POPULATION

Discrimination can be defined as the unequal treatment of an individual on the basis of specific and unique characteristics. According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2009), these characteristics can include a person's age, disability status, national origin, race or color, religion, and sexual orientation. Race is defined as a group of people identified as distinct from other groups because of physical or genetic traits shared by the group. Ethnicity is defined as the state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition. Most directly tied to our analysis, discrimination on the basis of one's race/ethnicity has become one of the most debatable and stimulating social issues in the United States and among the most studied among social scientists. However, a vast majority of this work focuses on the African American population (Aguirre and Turner 2004; Chae et al. 2010; Chae, Lincoln, and Jackson 2011; Chae, Nuru-Jeter, and Adler 2012; Dotterer, McHale, and Crouter 2009; Odom and Vernon-Feagans 2010; Roberts et al. 2008; Seaton, Yip, and Sellers 2009; Sellers et al. 2003; Smalls et. al. 2007).

Given our review of the literature, a large share of the research has focused on discrimination relative to African Americans, but less work has focused on Latina/os. Although there has been some important work focused on the discrimination experiences of other groups, including Latina/os (Araujo and Borrell 2006; Chou, Asnaani, and Hofmann 2012; Darity, Dietrich, and Hamilton 2005; Lorenzo-Blanco et al. 2013; Molina and Simon 2013; Ornelas and Hong 2012; Trevino and Ernst 2012), we know far less about the implications of discrimination within the panethnic Latina/o population.

Although limited, there is literature suggesting that Latina/os experience discrimination to a similar degree as other racial or ethnic groups (Gee et al. 2006; LaVeist, Rolley, and Diala 2003; Stuber et al. 2003), with many Latina/os reporting discriminatory experiences similar to those of African Americans (Golash-Boza and Darity 2008). Furthermore, as documented in the existing research, historically Latina/os have faced and continue to face substantial discrimination in their workplaces and neighborhoods and in the public education system (Lopez, Morin, and Taylor 2010; Pew Research Center 2007). Recent work situated

in South Florida, for example, links discrimination and mental health among Latina/o youth, suggesting a significant link between depression and Latina/os with darker skin compared with Latina/os of a lighter skin complexion (Burgos and Rivera, 2009). Our growing but still limited knowledge of how discrimination manifests itself among Latina/os is important because of the increased presence of the Latina/o population in the United States, its sociopolitical makeup, and the noteworthy diversity within the panethnic Latina/o population. Greater knowledge and understanding can highlight the ways in which discrimination affects lives in this community.

Although it may appear as though the daily experiences of Latina/os mirror those of African Americans within the context of racial/ethnic discrimination, there are some important differences between these two large racial/ethnic groups. These differences have implications for the nature and extent to which discrimination can affect the life chances of Latina/os, as well as how researchers approach their analyses of discrimination on this population. For example, Latina/os who have immigrated to the United States relatively recently may face discrimination because of their immigration and legal status (Finch, Kolody, and Vega 2000; Rumbaut 1994). Similarly, language has been a source of discrimination experiences among Latina/os (Pew Research Center 2007; Haubert Weil 2009; Kossoudji 1988). These factors suggest that research focused on discrimination aimed at Latina/os will need to be sensitive to some of these nuances specific to the population that may predict discrimination experiences. Our analysis includes measures for these factors.

Although there are some factors that may affect discrimination experiences specific to the panethnic Latina/o population, there are others they share with African Americans. For example, skin color may be a factor that influences discrimination experiences for Latina/os, similar to research findings for African Americans. Throughout U.S. history, racial and ethnic discrimination has been a major dilemma (Myrdal 1944), with individuals with darker skin complexion experiencing the greatest disadvantage (Du Bois 1899; Hunter 2002; Knapp et al. 1995; Rondilla and Spickard 2007; Stevenson 1996; Goldsmith, Hamilton, and Darity 2006; Hamilton, Goldsmith, and Darity 2009). Some work has examined phenotypic discrimination among Latina/os in the United States on the basis of the 1990 Latino National Political Survey, finding that Mexicans and Cubans with darker skin complexion experience high levels of discrimination in the labor market, affecting their occupational chances (Murguia and Telles 1996; Espino and Franz 2002). We therefore include a measure of skin color in our models.

SOCIALLY ASSIGNED RACE, STEREOTYPES, AND DISCRIMINATION OF MEXICAN ORIGIN

Although once widely debated, most scholars now agree that the notion of race is a sociopolitical construct. As a result, race should not be interpreted as being scientific or anthropological in nature, because of the lack of a biological etiology (Vargas, Sanchez, and Kinlock 2015). Within the framework of race being socially constructed, social science research has provided two general approaches to measure race: self-identification and social assignment or ascribed race. Much of the research interested in exploring disparities across racial/ethnic groups has typically relied on asking respondents to self-identify their race/ethnicity in surveys (Campbell and Troyer 2011; Cheng and Powell 2011; Lewis 2003; Roth 2010; Saperstein 2006, 2012; Song and Aspinall 2012; Stepanikova 2010; Vargas 2014; Vargas 2015; Veenstra 2011). Although this approach has proved its value over time, some contend that people make determinations about individuals' race before asking them how they self-identify (Cheng and Powell 2011; Garcia et al. 2015; Irizarry 2015; Roth 2010; Saperstein 2006; Song and Aspinall 2012; Stepanikova 2010; Vargas 2014; Vargas et al. 2015; Veenstra 2011).

The notion that others may define one's race regardless of one's own identity is known as "socially assigned race" or "ascribed race," and it has proved to be a very important measure in predicting the level of discrimination an individual will encounter as well his or her health outcomes. For example, Jones et al. (2008) demonstrated that if respondents self-identified as Hispanic, Native American, or mixed race but were socially assigned as White, they were more likely to report very good and excellent health compared with respondents who self-identified as the same races but who were ascribed as non-White (i.e., White advantage). Corroborating those findings, MacIntosh et al. (2013) recently demonstrated that respondents who self-identified as racial/ethnic minorities, but who were ascribed as White were more likely to receive

preventive vaccinations and less likely to report health care discrimination compared with respondents ascribed as non-White.

In another work examining racial self-identification and perception by others, Saperstein and Penner (2010) investigated this relationship within the criminal justice system. The authors found that racial self-identification was strongly linked to one's likelihood of being incarcerated and that the general population in America links "blackness" to negative traits and criminal status (Saperstein and Penner 2010). More specifically, those respondents who have been incarcerated were more likely to identify and be seen as black and more likely not identify or is perceived as White. This pattern among incarcerated respondents held up regardless of how they had been perceived and identified themselves previously (in that longitudinal study). This literature suggests that being defined as White by others may have positive outcomes, and certain experiences or statuses (i.e., incarceration, welfare recipients, etc.) can have the effect of a negotiation process in which individuals are negotiated with everyday interactions. Finally, their research introduces the fluidity of racial identification over time and an individual's circumstances.

We thus hypothesize that Latina/o respondents who are viewed by others as being White are less likely to report experiences with discrimination than those who are ascribed as Mexican or Latina/o. We do discuss later the stigmatization and the negative images that are associated with being Latina/o and/or Mexican. We are also interested in potential negative consequences associated with racial or ethnic misclassification.[2] In work examining racial misclassification, Campbell and Troyer (2011) found that misclassified American Indians had higher rates of psychological distress. Similarly, in what scholars have labeled the "Whitening of Latina/os," recent work by Vargas (2014) showed that respondents who report higher socioeconomic status and lighter skin are more likely to be viewed as White compared with respondents who have lower socioeconomic status and darker skin.

Our analysis intends to advance our understanding of the bounds of racial misclassification by exploring the further specification of national-origin group members under the Latina/o panethnic umbrella. In this case, what are the consequences associated with being misidentified or classified as Mexican, as opposed to being White or Latina/o? Does being viewed by others as Mexican for non-Mexican-origin respondents yield higher rates of discrimination than being viewed as White or Latina/o or being correctly classified as Mexican (ascribed as Mexican and of Mexican origin)? This research addresses how panethnic aggregation and national origin may mask important variations that are traditionally treated as noise (modeled in the error term) in quantitative analysis. Taking into account the heterogeneity and diversity of the Latina/o population in the United States, in this study we analyze the impact of being ascribed as Mexican on experiences with discrimination.

Latina/o subgroups tend to reside in different areas of the United States, can have different cultural practices and norms, have different immigration experiences, and have different levels of socioeconomic status. However, it is unlikely that members of the general population make these important distinctions when interacting with Latina/os in the United States. We approach this analysis from the standpoint that the size of the Mexican-origin population in the United States, historical perceptions, and current political context surrounding immigration policy can lead to greater discrimination for Latina/os who are viewed Mexican.

THE MEXICAN-ORIGIN EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

Mexican Americans are the largest Latina/o subgroup, making up more than 65 percent of the total Latina/o population. Although historically situated in the Southwest, migration streams have spread the Mexican-origin population to the southern and northeastern parts of the United States, while expanding their presence in the Midwest and Southwest. Latina/os have been the largest "contributor" to this country's population's growth rates, with the Mexican-origin population representing a substantial portion of that population's growth. Concomitantly, the size and fast growth of the Latina/o population has been associated with a sense of fear of this group on the part of non-Hispanics (as affecting the racial/ethnic makeup of the nation, creating cultural and value differences, causing a preponderance of Spanish-language use, etc.) Individuals being identified Latina/os or, more specifically, as of Mexican origin may be more likely to experience discriminatory behavior. The added case of mistaken identity (i.e., perceived as Mexican when that it is not one's national origin) can compound discrimination experiences. We

briefly outline the historical context of discrimination directed toward Mexicans in the United States and the current climate surrounding common perceptions of Mexicans as primarily immigrants, especially undocumented ones.

As the largest segment of Latina/os, the Mexican-origin community has been long-standing in the United States. Mexican presence in the current United States preceded the expansion of the United States into what is now the American Southwest (Gutierrez 1983). The aftermath of the Mexican-American War resulted in the acquisition of the northwestern territory of Mexico and placed residing Mexicans under U.S. governance. Historically, those of Mexican origin have been stereotyped as lazy, dumb, morally deficient, and violent (Aguirre 1972). The field of Mexican American history has documented the pattern of discriminatory practices and negative stereotypes (Foley 1997; Ngai 2004; Vasquez 2010) in a variety of settings and locations.

In addition to individuals' discriminatory behaviors, there have been institutional practices treating those of Mexican origin differently. In 1930, the U.S. Census Bureau added the category "Mexican" as part of the range of racial categories (Gross 2003; Rodríguez 2000). At that time in history, it was perceived that all Mexican laborers were of mixed race. Because of this instance, census enumerators were instructed to recognize individuals as Mexicans if they had been born in Mexico, had parents born in Mexico, or could not be classified as being White, Negro, Indian, Chinese, or Japanese (Ortiz and Telles 2012). This practice occurred during the 1930 census, but the separate racial category of Mexican was removed in subsequent censuses.

In addition, Mexican American children were part of a segregated school system in the Southwest (San Miguel 1987), with separate schools, the rationale referencing language and "negative cultural values and traditions." In the late 1960s and early 1970s, attempts to integrate the desegregated school systems in the Southwest designated Mexican Americans as White so as to integrate segregated African American schools with segregated Mexican schools. Several court cases in Denver, Corpus Christi, and Houston sought to designate Mexican Americans as an identifiable ethnic minority group for the purpose of school desegregation. In these jurisdictions, the courts recognized Mexican Americans as a distinct minority group for the purpose of school assignments (Foley 1997; Menchaca 1995). Mexicans also experienced segregated public facilities, lynching, and other discriminatory practices (Almaguer 1994; Barrera 1979) as well as a limited opportunity structure in employment, education, and health care access and treatment. Thus our focus on those of Mexican origin as having significance as "objects" of discriminatory treatment has a strong basis for paring out from the Latina/o panethnic grouping.

Two studies have examined how the perceived status of Mexican-origin respondents affects how others see them racially/ethnically. Buriel and Vasquez (1982) asked Mexican American and Anglo adolescents to assign characteristics (positive and negative) to Mexican-origin people. Consistently, Anglo adolescents had more negative ratings, whereas Mexican American adolescents were positive about their own group. The investigators did find some negative shifts among second- and third-generation Mexican Americans. Their concluding comments suggested that greater exposure to American culture and norms contributes to prevailing negative stereotypes in American society. Finally, Ortiz and Telles examined the racial treatment of Mexican Americans who acknowledge their history of racialization (Barrera 1979; Ortiz and Telles 2012; Telles and Ortiz 2012; Vasquez 2010). In that research, ascribed race or perceptions about being Mexican corresponded with experiences with discrimination. Key dimensions of skin tone (Gomez 2000), educational attainment, dense social networks with other Mexicans, and interaction with Anglos contributed to greater incidence of discrimination. Mexican Americans with higher educational attainment have more contact with Anglos and experience a greater prevalence of negative Mexican-origin stereotyping. The incidence of discrimination is greater in the workplace, in school settings, and with the police. Our brief coverage of the relation between being of Mexican origin and stereotypes and discrimination (Andrade 1982) ties to our current research effort to examine the ascribed "category" of Mexican origin in addition to the Latina/o and White racial categories. Differentiation within national-origin groups is an important area that has been relatively underresearched.

The legacy of discrimination directed toward the Mexican-origin population in the United States has been reinforced by the current anti-immigrant sociopolitical context. Analysis of public opinion data suggests that the U.S. population's views toward immigration policy have become more conservative over time (Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Harwood

1986), driven largely by a rise in undocumented immigration (Cornelius 1982; Passel 1986). Furthermore, research has also shown that the general American population has associated the surge in the number of undocumented immigrants with increased levels of crime (Cornelius 1982) and an overall eradication of American political values (Day 1990; Huntington 2004; Schlesinger 1998).

Our theory, that being defined as Mexican leads to greater discrimination, is driven not only by a rise in conservatism but also by an association made by the mass public regarding negative views about immigration and the Mexican population. Using surveys from 2007 and 2008, Pérez (2010) found that negative attitudes toward Latina/o immigrants are associated with restrictive policy preferences toward both legal and undocumented immigrants. Using a survey experiment conducted in 2010, Hartman, Newman, and Bell (2014) found that racial antipathy toward Hispanics plays a role in anti-immigrant sentiment and in support for anti-immigrant policies. Furthermore, they found support for the idea that anti-immigrant sentiment and anti-immigrant policy preferences act in part as "coded" expressions of anti-Hispanic prejudice. Although this work does not make explicit that negative attitudes are specific to Mexicans, given the disproportionately high rate of migration from Mexico, it is very likely that Americans' attitudes are directed specifically at those they believe to be Mexican.

The Department of Homeland Security reported more than 4.6 million removals between 1997 and 2013,[3] more than twice the total number of all deportations before this period (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013). Directly tied to our theory, the department reported that in 2013, more than 240,000 Mexicans were removed. That was more than five times the number of removals to the next highest country, Guatemala, at 47,000. Immigration policy scholars have also found that Mexicans are the primary target of border enforcement efforts. For example, Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, and Motel (2011) found that 73 percent of removals were of Mexicans, although undocumented immigrants from Mexico represented only 58 percent of undocumented immigrants present in the United States. For these reasons, we anticipate that non-Mexicans who are socially ascribed as being of Mexican origin will report higher levels of discrimination than other Latina/os in our sample, while controlling for the lived experiences of Latina/os (language, skin color, nativity, national origin, social economic status, and gender).

METHODS

Data Collection

For our analysis, we took advantage of a 2011 Latino Decisions/ImpreMedia survey that was designed in collaboration with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy at the University of New Mexico. Latino Decisions conducted the field work for the survey and worked in conjunction with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy to design a survey instrument focusing on health and Latina/os. The sample and design allowed us not only to test the relationship between socially assigned race and experiences with discrimination but also to explore the heterogeneous nature of the Latina/o experience. This is an ideal data set for our research question, as we have built-in indicators of how Latina/os believe they are classified in the United States as well as questions regarding national origin, nativity, acculturation, and citizenship. Taken together, this is the only nationally representative data set of Latina/os that measures socially assigned race, features a discrimination variable, and contains key indicators used when studying Latina/os.

A total of 1,200 Latina/os were interviewed by telephone through two samples: 600 Latina/o registered voters and 600 nonregistered Latina/os. The nonvoter sample was added for the purpose of ensuring that our ability to explore the relationship between multiple measures of race and health related outcomes included noncitizens, who are obviously not included in registered voter samples. Given this design, half of the registered voting sample was foreign born, among the nonregistered sample, 63 percent of this sample was foreign born.

All phone calls were administered by Pacific Market Research (Renton, WA). The survey has an overall margin of error of ±4 percent, with an American Association for Public Opinion Research response rate of 29 percent. Latino Decisions selected the 21 states with the largest numbers of Latina/o registered voters, states that collectively account for more than 95 percent of the Latina/o electorate. Although this sample was designed to capture a large margin of Latina/o voters, these states also account for 91 percent of the overall Latina/o adult population. The voter sample was drawn from registered voters by using the official statewide databases of registered voters, maintained by elections officials in each of the 21 states. A separate list of Hispanic households was used to identify respondents for the nonvoter sample, which was designed to be proportionate to the

overall population in those states. Probability sampling methods were used in both samples on the basis of the respective lists used to identify the universe of potential participants. Respondents were interviewed by telephone, and they could choose to be interviewed in either English or Spanish. A mix of cell phone–only and landline households were included in the sample, and both samples are weighted to match the 2010 Current Population Survey universe estimate of Latina/os and Latina/o voters for these 21 states with respect to age, place of birth, gender, and state. The survey was approximately 22 minutes long and was fielded from September 27, 2011, to October 9, 2011.

Measures

The primary outcome variable of interest is experience with discrimination using a single survey question: "Have you personally experienced discrimination, or been treated unfairly because of your race or ethnicity?" The response categories for this measure are 0 = no and 1 = yes. This measure is specific to racial/ethnic discrimination, making it ideal for our analysis, and has been used in numerous studies (Gee et al. 2006, 2008; Harris et al. 2013; Hossain and Susan 2010; Ro and Choi 2009). To provide context on this outcome, a 2007 study by the Pew Hispanic Center showed that among Latina/o adults, 31 percent responded that they or a family member had experienced discrimination in 2002, 38 percent responded that they had experienced discrimination in 2006, and 41 percent responded that they or a family member had experienced discrimination in 2007 (Pew Hispanic Center 2007).

Our main explanatory variables are four mutually exclusive categories that are created using ascribed race and national origin survey questions. Our specific question on ascribed race was "How do other people usually classify you in the United States? Would you say you are primarily viewed by others as . . .? Please Select One." The response categories for this variable are "Hispanic/Latina/o," "Black/African American," "White," "American Indian/Native American," "Mexican," and "Some Other Group." The categories of black/African American, American Indian/Native American, and some other group are dropped because of small sample sizes (*n* = 118). The three socially assigned race categories are White, Latina/o, and Mexican, totaling 1,082 respondents. We also make use of a national-origin question to create our match and mismatch categories among ascribed as Mexican

respondents. The specific survey question was: "[Hispanics/Latinos] have their roots in many different countries in Latin America. To what country do you or your family trace your ancestry? [open-ended with list of all countries]." Two categories make use of the national-origin question: Latina/os who are ascribed as Mexican but are not of Mexican origin and Latina/os who are ascribed as Mexican and who are of Mexican origin. The distribution on the national-origin indicator shows that Mexican-origin Latina/os make up the majority of respondents, representing 52.75 percent of the sample, followed by Puerto Ricans (8.58 percent), Spanish (6.08 percent), Cubans (4.67 percent), Colombians (2.75 percent), Salvadorians (2.33 percent), Dominicans (2.25 percent), and Guatemalans (2 percent).

Finally, we control for a handful of measures that have been found to be correlated with discrimination in previous research. Among the demographic variables, we include standard measures of income, educational attainment, age, and gender. To assess income, we include several dummy variables representing different income categories: $40,000 to $60,000, $60,000 to $80,000, and more than $80,000, with less than $40,000 serving as the reference category. We also include a variable of "unknown" income in the model, which includes respondents who did not report their incomes as a means of saving cases. Finally, we control for cultural factors, including nativity, language of survey, and self-reported skin color on a five-point scale (very light, 17.22 percent; light, 25.57 percent; medium, 47.36 percent; dark, 6.50 percent; very dark, 3.34 percent). Summary statistics for all variables used in this analysis are listed in Table 1.

Statistical Analysis

Our analytical approach is intended to determine the relationship between socially assigned race and experiences with discrimination within a nationally representative sample of Latina/o adults. Our primary focus is to determine the effect of being socially assigned as Mexican on reported discrimination compared with being socially assigned as Latina/o or White. We then focus on further decomposing the category of ascribed as Mexican to explore differences in the probability of experiencing discrimination for respondents who are ascribed as Mexican but who are not of Mexican origin (being misclassified as Mexican) compared with respondents who are ascribed as Mexican and who are of Mexican origin, as well as respondents who are ascribed as White or Latina/o. We then conduct

Table 1. Summary Statistics (*n* = 985) Using a 2011 Latino Decisions/ImpreMedia Survey.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Discrimination	.345		0	1
Ascribed as White	.117		0	1
Ascribed as Latina/o	.494		0	1
Ascribed as Mexican	.389		0	1
Mismatch-Mex	.062		0	1
Match-Mex	.327		0	1
Age	51.623	17.182	18	98
Education[a]	3.471	1.547	1	6
Female	.586		0	1
Spanish language[b]	.503		0	1
U.S. born[c]	.431		0	1
Skin color[d]	2.53	.962	1	5
Income				
Missing	.191		0	1
<$40,000	.485		0	1
$40,000–$60,000	.130		0	1
$60,000–$80,000	.073		0	1
>$80,000	.122		0	1

[a]Response categories: 1 = grades 1 to 8, 2 = some high school, 3 = high school, 4 = some college, 5 = college graduate, 6 = postgraduate.
[b]Interview was conducted in Spanish.
[c]Response categories: 0 = foreign born, 1 = U.S. born.
[d]Response categories: 1 = very light, 2 = light, 3 = medium, 4 = dark, 5 = very dark.

a logistic regression analysis to examine the differences across socially assigned racial categories on the probability of experiencing discrimination.

RESULTS

We begin with a discussion of the distributions from our sample (which are provided in Tables 1 and 2). Regarding our socially assigned categories (Table 2), a large segment of our sample indicated that they are socially ascribed as Latina/o or Hispanic (49.35 percent). About 11.74 percent of our sample indicated that they are ascribed as White, and 38.72 percent are ascribed as Mexican. Among those ascribed as Mexican (421 respondents), 32.72 percent are not of Mexican origin ("mismatch-Mex"), compared with 6.19 percent of respondents who are of Mexican origin ("match-Mex"), shown in the bottom half of Table 2. A cross-tabulation of our main dependent variable shows that 34.5 percent of our sample has experienced discrimination. The mean age in our sample is 52 years, and the majority of our respondents have at least a high school education. Moreover, at least half of our sample completed the survey in Spanish, and just under half of the

respondents indicated that they are of Mexican ancestry (43 percent), both consistent with national data on Latina/os from the U.S. census, except for Mexican ancestry, because about 64 percent of the Latina/o population is of Mexican ancestry. With regard to citizenship and nativity, just under half of our full sample is U.S. born, with a large majority reporting U.S. citizenship. In sum, our sample is representative of U.S. Latina/os, as the U.S. census estimates that about 63 percent of Latina/os older than 25 have a high school education, and about 74 percent of Latina/os older than 5 speak Spanish at home.

Our logistic regression models 1 to 4 decompose the category of ascribed as Mexican to explore differences in the probability of experiencing discrimination for respondents who are viewed by others as being Mexican but who are not actually of Mexican origin (the reference category) compared with respondents who are accurately ascribed as of Mexican origin, as well as respondents ascribed as White or Latina/o. We estimate models 1 to 4 iteratively to first understand differences in discrimination controlling for age, education, gender, and language of interview (model 1). We then estimate

Table 2. Cross-tabulation of Ascribed Race and Mismatch Categories Using a 2011 Latino Decisions/ ImpreMedia Survey.

Variable	Variable Name	Ascribed Race Survey Response	Country of Origin Survey Response	Number of Observations	Percentage
Original	Ascribed as White	White		127	11.74
	Ascribed as Latina/o	Latina/o		534	49.35
	Ascribed as Mexican	Mexican		421	38.91
Creation of mismatch categories					
Mismatch[a]	Mismatch-Mex	Mexican	Other than Mexico	67	32.72
	Match-Mex	Mexican	Mexico	354	6.19

[a]Mismatch categories (separating respondents ascribed as Mexican [*n* = 421] by country of origin).

this model and include nativity (model 2), income (model 3), and skin color (model 4) to isolate the effects of nativity, income, and skin color on experiences with discrimination.[4]

As shown in Table 3 (models 1 to 4), we can conclude that respondents who are mistakenly ascribed as being of Mexican origin compared with White or Latina/o, or who are accurately ascribed as being Mexican, experience higher levels of discrimination. In fact, among respondents who are ascribed as being White, the odds of experiencing discrimination are 67 percent lower ($p < .001$) than among respondents who are misclassified as Mexican, holding all else constant. Respondents who are ascribed as being Latina/o or Hispanic have odds of reporting discrimination 59 percent ($p < .001$) lower than those for respondents who are misclassified as being Mexican, holding all else constant. Finally, for respondents who are of Mexican origin and accurately classified as being Mexican, the odds of experiencing discrimination decrease by 51 percent ($p < .05$) compared with non-Mexican-origin Latina/os who are misclassified as Mexican, holding all else constant.

To help visualize these relationships, we computed the predicated probabilities of experiencing discrimination for each of the ascribed race categories of theoretical interest, holding all else constant. These relationships are shown in Figure 1, and we find that respondents who are socially assigned as White report the lowest probability of experiencing discrimination (27 percent), followed by those ascribed as Latino (31 percent). Moreover, we find that respondents who are correctly classified as Mexican are 35 percent likely to experience discrimination. Last, respondents who are misclassified as being Mexican when they are from other

national-origin groups are most likely to experience discrimination (52 percent). This confirms that Latinos who are viewed as Mexican by others face greater discrimination in U.S. society than Latinos viewed as White. This figure provides strong visual support for our primary theory that Latina/os who are misclassified as Mexican have a greater likelihood of experiencing discrimination, even after accounting for the internal variation among the Latina/o population and other potential sources of discrimination in our models.

In addition to our measures of socially assigned race, among the control variables, only education and nativity (being U.S. born) proved to be significant. In line with the extant literature on the relationship between education and discrimination, education is positively correlated with experiencing discrimination among Latina/os. We also find that being born in the United States also increases one's likelihood of experiencing discrimination, which has shown to be the case in studies focused on immigrants. We do not find evidence that age, income, gender, or skin color is a factor in experiencing discrimination among our sample. Finally, language of interview is not an important factor in experienced discrimination. The lack of a significant relationship between skin color and discrimination is somewhat surprising given the strong correlation identified in the literature. However, these studies have not accounted for the more recently developed concept of ascribed race.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The focus of the present work was to take an in-depth look at the effects of socially assigned race

Table 3. Logistic Coefficients for Regression of Socially Assigned Race on Experienced Discrimination Using a 2011 Latino Decisions/ImpreMedia Survey.

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	β	Odds Ratio	β	Odds Ratio	β	Odds Ratio	β	Odds Ratio
Reference: mismatch-Mex (respondents who are ascribed as Mexican but not of Mexican origin)								
Ascribed as White	−1.197*** (.353)	.302***	−1.207*** (.354)	.299***	−1.191*** (.356)	.304***	−1.109*** (.359)	.330***
Ascribed as Latina/o	−.930*** (.293)	.394***	−.888*** (.294)	.411***	−.845*** (.295)	.429***	−.901*** (.297)	.406***
Match-Mex	−.703** (.298)	.495**	−.690** (.299)	.501**	−.669** (.300)	.512**	−.704** (.303)	.495**
Age	.002 (.004)	1.002	.002 (.004)	1.002	.002 (.004)	1.002	.002 (.004)	1.002
Education[a]	.132** (.052)	1.141**	.132** (.052)	1.141**	.122** (.055)	1.130**	.110 (.056)	1.116
Female	.020 (.137)	1.020	.014 (.137)	1.014	.000 (.141)	1.000	−.012 (.143)	.988
Spanish interview[b]	−.170 (.152)	.844	.056 (.191)	1.058	.084 (.194)	1.088	.147 (.198)	1.159
U.S. born[c]			.355** (.181)	1.426**	.376** (.183)	1.457**	.366** (.187)	1.441**
Income missing[d]					.026 (.209)	1.026	−.074 (.217)	.928
Income $40,000–$60,000					.144 (.209)	1.155	.146 (.210)	1.158
Income $60,000–$80,000					−.404 (.285)	.668	−.334 (.287)	.716
Income > $80,000					.243 (.221)	1.276	.275 (.223)	1.316
Skin color[e]							.099 (.077)	1.104
Adjusted R²	.0179		.0209		.0249		.0247	
Observations	985		985		985		959	

Note: β is a logit coefficient; standard errors are in parentheses.
[a]Response categories: 1 = grades 1 to 8, 2 = some high school, 3 = high school, 4 = some college, 5 = college graduate, 6 = postgraduate.
[b]Interview was conducted in Spanish.
[c]Response categories: 0 = foreign born, 1 = U.S. born.
[d]Reference category: income less than $40,000.
[e]Response categories: 1 = very light, 2 = light, 3 = medium, 4 = dark, 5 = very dark.
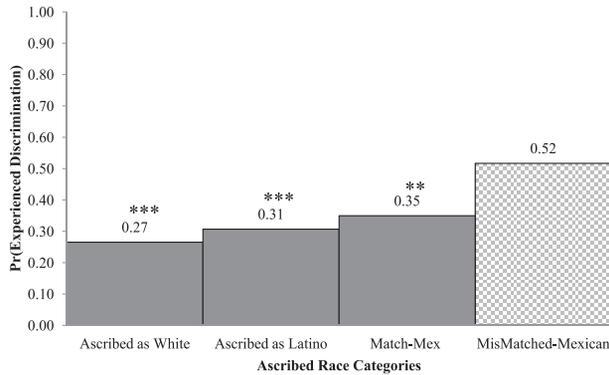**p < .05. ***p < .01.

Figure 1. Adjusted predicted probabilities of logistic coefficients for regression of socially assigned race on experienced discrimination using a 2011 Latino Decisions/ImpreMedia Survey (*n* = 959).
Note: Controlling for age, gender, education, income, nativity, language of interview, and skin color (all of which were set to their mean or mode values).
*$p < .10$, **$p < .05$, and ***$p < .01$ for the differences between mismatched Mexican (ascribed as Mexican but not of Mexican origin) and matched Mexican (ascribed as Mexican and of Mexican origin), ascribed as Latino, and ascribed as White.

on discrimination among the Latina/o population in the United States, with a particular focus on the relationship between being accurately classified and misclassified as being Mexican and discrimination. We find that being ascribed as Mexican, compared with being ascribed as White or Latina/o, increases one's likelihood of experiencing discrimination among Latinos in the United States. Moreover, once we decompose the category of ascribed as Mexican, we find that non-Mexican-origin Latina/os who are misclassified as Mexican report the highest levels of discrimination, even after taking into consideration age, education, income, nativity, language, gender, and skin color, all key components of the Latina/o experience. These findings are important, as they highlight differentiating discriminatory effects on Latina/o subgroups that would be hidden or overlooked if aggregated across Latina/o subgroups.

These findings suggest that being socially assigned as Mexican carries with it a heavy burden and speaks to the systematic racialization that exists for Latina/os, particularly for Mexicans. Findings from this research highlight the racialization and the historical legacy of discrimination among Mexican-origin populations. Research on Mexican Americans has provided evidence of the racialization of this group, both historically and in contemporary life in the United States (Almaguer 1994; Barrera 1979; Foley 1997; Gomez 2007; Massey 2009; Vasquez 2010). An extended pattern of labor migrants has placed many Mexican

Americans at the lower end of the economic hierarchy and their historic placement near the bottom of the racial hierarchy (Montejano 1987). This was preceded by the conquest of the original Mexican inhabitants of the American Southwest, which fostered notions about a distinct racial category of "Mexican" in the prevalent public sphere. Mexican-origin persons encounter significant racial barriers, which have resulted in limited opportunities for them. Ortiz and Telles (2012) demonstrated that Mexican Americans lag educationally and economically even after several generations in the United States as a result of this treatment. They have been thus limited to mostly working-class jobs and prevented from successfully integrating into middle class society.

Although Latinos of Mexican origin are more likely to report discrimination than Latinos from other backgrounds, interestingly, we find that discrimination experiences are even more likely for Latinos who are mistaken for being Mexican. We believe that this may be driven by not only the racialization of the Mexican population in the United States but also by the variation in discrimination experiences among Mexican Americans. The interrelationship between a historical legacy of discrimination among third-generation Mexican Americans who are middle class and structurally integrated into U.S. occupations, institutions, and mainstream culture is the focus of research by Vasquez (2010). She described these Mexican Americans as living at an identity and cultural

"crossroads," whereby respondents who are either part European or have lighter skin and hair colors have "flexible ethnicity," enabling them to traverse multiple racial terrains with some dexterity (Anzaldúa 1987). This could lead many Mexican Americans to report lower levels of discrimination than non-Mexicans who are ascribed as Mexican, particularly when we control for skin color.

Our research findings reconfirm the importance of examining national-origin groups within the panethnic groupings to examine differential effects and/or compounded consequences of being of Latina/o and Mexican origin. However, we find that personal identification choices can hit a wall of racialization, as well, whereas "Mexican ethnicity is in large part determined by things much greater than our personal volition" (Macias 2006:xiii). This highlights the importance of thinking beyond self-identification for measurement of race, ethnicity, and, in this case, national origin. Our measurement approach of not only using an ascribed identity but combining that with the more traditional self-identification measure has led to what we believe is an important suggestion for the measurement of important concepts central to scholars interested in race and ethnicity. Particularly in today's sociodemographic climate, in which immigration attitudes appear to be influencing relationships across racial groups, assessing how being mistaken for a negatively viewed group affects outcomes such as discrimination is both timely and important. These results hold even after controlling for regional variation, emphasizing the need to replicate our measurement approach in future work.

Our findings also highlight interesting patterns for the relationship between education and experiences with discrimination, in that higher educated Latina/os are more likely to report experiences with discrimination. One plausible explanation for this relationship is that with greater levels of education, Latina/os are put into positions that require more contact with more non-Latina/o coworkers and neighbors (Ortiz and Telles 2012). This increased contact could then lead to an increased chance of experiencing discrimination. For example, research has shown that higher income and older African Americans are more likely to experience discrimination than their less educated and lower income counterparts (Halanych et al. 2011). In line with the extant literature on the relationship between education and discrimination, education is positively correlated with experiencing discrimination among Latina/os (Berkel et al. 2010; Ortiz and Telles 2012; Pérez, Fortuna, and Alegría 2008). We

also find that nativity (being U.S. born) proved to be positively associated with experiencing discrimination, which has shown to be the case in studies focused on immigrants (Córdova and Cervantes 2010; Finch et al. 2000; Pérez et al. 2008; Perez, Sribney, and Rodríguez 2009).

Although we believe this study has important implications for social scientists, we acknowledge that there are a number of unsettled issues with our analysis due to the limitations inherent to the research design. Most prominently, scholars in the future should consider how the race of the discrimination agent may influence the impact of discrimination on Latina/os' well-being. The Latino National Survey (Hu-Dehart et al. 2006) revealed that although the majority of respondents who reported experiences with discrimination indicated that they had been discriminated against by White individuals in their last discrimination experience (64.7 percent), another 12.6 percent reported being discriminated against by other Latina/os, 8.3 percent by African Americans, and 3.4 percent by Asian Americans. We encourage survey researchers to develop an instrument that provides the power to conduct this analysis, as it may be possible that the experience of being discriminated by someone from one's own ethnic group could have a pronounced impact on one's well-being. Furthermore, it would be very interesting to see if the findings of this study travel to other populations that have been socially assigned with negative stereotypes. For example, does being ascribed as someone of Middle Eastern descent, or as an African American, lead to similar experiences of discrimination among other racial or ethnic communities? These are questions we hope to see other researches take on, replicating our measurement approach with data tailored to these purposes.

As the United States continues to be more racially and ethnically diverse, understanding how the lives of individuals in society vary by race and ethnicity becomes more critical, particularly for panethnic groups (Asians, Native Americans, and Latina/os). This comes at a time when the Census Bureau is developing numerous experiments on how to eliminate missing data among Latina/o respondents when asked the question regarding self-reported race. We advocate for approaching the task of measuring race and ethnicity from the standpoint of ascribed race, in addition to traditional measures of self-reported race. This requires moving beyond single measures of race and/or ethnicity, which are usually constructed through self-identification. We believe that the approach we

take in this analysis can be applied with other outcomes in mind. It is likely that if being mistakenly classified as Mexican leads to higher rates of discrimination, this could also lead to negative health outcomes, such as depression, decreased wages, and potentially a greater sense of commonality with other Latina/os. We encourage scholars to continue the advancement of our measures of race and ethnicity in an effort to better reflect the lived experience of these communities with our measurement approaches. We also encourage scholars to include other Latin American national-origin response categories within the ascribed race question, a task that has not been examined at this time, to test for response bias.

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NOTES

1. For this research, we focused our attention on discrimination specifically against Hispanic/Latina/os living in the United States.
2. By *misclassification*, we refer to situations in which an individual self-identifies with a particular racial/ethnic group, and the ascribed racial/ethnic identification is of a different racial/ethnic group.
3. Our calculations using Department of Homeland Security data (*2010 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* for fiscal years 1997 through 2010) and annual departmental announcements of year-end removal statistics for fiscal years 2011 through 2013 (http://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics).
4. Prior to decomposing the category of ascribed as Mexican by national origin to create our misclassification measure, we ran a logistic model on experiences with discrimination prior to the misclassification analysis that controls for age, education, gender, income, and language of interview. Here we find that being socially assigned as Mexican compared with being socially assigned as White or Hispanic/Latina/o increases the probability of reporting discrimination. In fact, for Latina/os who are ascribed as being Mexican, the odds of experiencing discrimination increase by 41.3 percent ($p < .05$) compared with Latina/os who are ascribed as White, holding all else constant. For Latina/o respondents who are ascribed as being Mexican, the odds of experiencing discrimination increase by 26.2 percent ($p < .05$) compared with Latina/os who are ascribed as Latina/o/Hispanic, holding all else constant.

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