Volume 31 - Article 24 | Pages 735–756 ★

Race, color, and income inequality across the Americas

By Stanley Bailey, Aliya Saperstein, Andrew Penner

Download PDF Submit a Response Letter

Date received: 04 Mar 2014
Date published: 19 Sep 2014
Word count: 2564
Keywords: racial identification, racial inequality, skin color
DOI: 10.4054/DemRes.2014.31.24

Abstract

Background: Racial inequality in the U.S. is typically described in terms of stark categorical difference, as compared to the more gradational stratification based on skin color often said to prevail in parts of Latin America. However, nationally representative data with both types of measures have not been available to explicitly test this contrast.

Objective: We use novel, recently released data from the U.S. and 18 Latin American countries to describe household income inequality across the region by perceived skin color and racial self-identification, and examine which measure better captures racial disparities in each national context.

Results: We document color and racial hierarchies across the Americas, revealing some unexpected patterns. White advantage and indigenous disadvantage are fairly consistent features, whereas blacks at times have higher mean incomes than other racial populations. Income inequality can best be understood in some countries using racial categories alone, in others using skin color; in a few countries, including the U.S., a combination of skin color and self-identified race best explains income variation.

Conclusions: These results complicate theoretical debates about U.S. racial exceptionalism and methodological debates about how best to measure race. Rather than supporting one measure over another, our cross-national analysis underscores race‟s multidimensionality. The variation in patterns of inequality also defies common comparisons between the U.S. on the one hand and a singular Latin America on the other.

Author's Affiliation

Stanley Bailey - University of California, Irvine, United States of America [Email]
Aliya Saperstein - Stanford University, United States of America [Email]
Andrew Penner - University of California, Irvine, United States of America [Email]

Articles

»Current Volume

»Older Volumes

»Volume 31

»Editor's Choice

»Replicable Articles

»by Author

»by Subject

»Search

Citations

Cited References: 36

»View the references of this article

Download to Citation Manager

»RIS format

»BibTeX format

Similar Articles

PubMed

»Articles by Stanley Bailey

»Articles by Aliya Saperstein

»Articles by Andrew Penner

Google Scholar

»Articles by Stanley Bailey

»Articles by Aliya Saperstein

»Articles by Andrew Penner

Jump to Article

Volume	Page

Volume	Article ID

© 1999–2018 Max Planck Society

- Articles
- Current Volume
- Older Volumes
- Editor's Choice
- Replicable Articles
- by Author
- by Subject
- Search

- Special Collections
- About Special Collections
- All Special Collections

- for Authors
- General Information
- Submission Guidelines
- Peer Review and Publication
- Copyright Information
- Review Process
- Submit a Paper
- Submit a Letter
- My Author Account

- for Readers
- Get Email Alerts
- How to cite DR

- About the Journal
- Purpose
- From the Publisher and Editor
- Who's Who
- Our Reviewers
- Contact Us
- Copyright & Legal
- Privacy Policy