Indigenous Identity, Discrimination by Skin Color, and Whitening in Guatemala

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Relations between indigenous Mayas and Ladinos in Guatemala have been typically studied with emphases on the political and cultural aspects of ethnicity. The upsurge of indigenous mobilization during the 1990s, the change of state ideology toward a multicultural stance in neoliberal contexts, and the evolution of these phenomena in the society, particularly among indigenous individuals, are major topics in the political analysis of ethnicity in Guatemala (Bastos 2012; MacKenzie 2010; McNeish 2008; Hale 2004, 2002). Moreover, identity, ancestry, proficiency in indigenous languages, and traditions are commonly pointed out as ethnic characteristics that culturally differentiate the Maya from the Ladino (Adams 2005, 1994; Colby and van den Berghe 1969; Harris 1964). While the importance of culture in this distinction is usually acknowledged, phenotype is normally not considered in determining the Maya/Ladino ethno-racial boundary (see Hale 2004 for an exception). Using regression analysis, we examine in this study whether phenotype is significant for intergroup boundaries and ethno-racial identity or not in Guatemala. We work with the 2010 round of the Latin American Public Opinion Project survey for Guatemala (LAPOP 2010), which is representative at the national level. Not only did this survey gather information about cultural ethno-racial characteristics (self-identification and proficiency in indigenous languages), but it also measured individuals' skin color.

Firstly, we analyze the effect of skin color on indigenous self-identification using logistic regression models (Frank, Akresh and Lu 2010; Golash-Boza 2006). Keeping in mind the relevance of cultural characteristics, we expect that those who speak an indigenous language

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have greater odds of self-identifying as mestizo. Nonetheless, taking into account the stratification by skin color in other indo-Latin American countries (Villarreal 2010), we expect that skin color remains positively and statistically significant as a predictor of indigenous self-identification net of the effect of indigenous language. We control for sex and age in every model and sequentially incorporate control variables for level of urbanization and region, educational attainment, and parents' occupational status. We also control for political beliefs using two indexes for moderate and radical engagement considering that the indigenous self-identification also can be understood as a political identity (Bastos 2004). We expect a positive association between political engagement and indigenous self-identification.

Bearing in mind that the ethno-racial condition as a social construct is multidimensional (Saperstein 2012; Saperstein 2006), especially in the context of Latin American fluid boundaries, we concurrently examine the effects of cultural and phenotypic characteristics on the perception of skin color discrimination using ordered logistic regression models. Not only do we expect that darker skin tones are positively associated with a greater perception of skin color discrimination, but we also expect that those who speak an indigenous language, and those who self-identify as indigenous have greater odds of perceiving skin color discrimination. The perception of skin color discrimination in this hypothesis refers to the prevalence of racism in Guatemala as an ideological and structural problem that shapes boundaries according to phenotype (Essed 1991). We also control for sex and age in every model and sequentially incorporate control variables for level of urbanization and region, educational attainment, and parents' occupational status.

We finally examine the desire to have a whiter skin color using ordered logistic regression models. We understand this desire as a disposition to cultural whitening (Wade

2010). Therefore, we expect that the desire to have a whiter skin color is positively associated with darker skin tones, with indigenous self-identification, and with proficiency in indigenous languages. We also argue that a possible cause of desiring a whiter skin tone is the perception of skin color discrimination: the greater this perception is, the greater the desire to have a whiter skin color. Moreover, foreign beliefs that privilege white (or whiter) characteristics also may be exerting influence on local ethno-racial ideologies. Individuals with transnational connections may be exposed to foreign ethno-racial ideologies and their respective standards (Popkin 2005). Similarly, those who regularly use internet participate in a global public sphere (Castells 2008) where they are also more exposed to foreign values, tastes, and behaviors. Consequently, we incorporate explanatory variables that indicate whether the respondent has family out of the country, and that measure the respondent's use of internet. We expect that these variables are positively correlated with the desire of a whiter skin color.

In this analysis, we seek to explain the relevance of phenotype in the context of Latin American *mestizaje*, which is characterized by miscegenation and fluid ethno-racial boundaries, and by its discourses on inclusiveness (Wade 2010; Telles 2004). According to Telles and Bailey (2013), Guatemalan elites largely opposed *mestizaje* and supported the view of separate Ladino and Maya nations. In contrast with other Latin American countries, *mestizaje* did not become a political racial project (see Omi and Winant 1994) that promoted the assimilation of indigenous people. Conversely, Grandin (2000) argues that indigenous individuals endured Ladino pressures of cultural assimilation. Beyond the relevance of the political racial projects associated with the social processes of state formation, Grandin's argument points out the indigenous agency to contravene Ladinos' path toward progress.

Nonetheless, we found evidence to suggest that the darker the individual is, the greater the odds of self-identifying as indigenous even net of proficiency in an indigenous language, which is by far the most important predictor in these regressions (see Table 1). Interestingly, we found evidence to suggest that, contrary to our expectations, moderate political engagement is negatively associated with indigenous self-identification (see Table 1, Model 6). Moreover, we found evidence to suggest that indigenous self-identification, skin color, and indigenous language are positively associated with the perception of skin color discrimination (see Table 2). Furthermore, we found evidence to suggest that proficiency in an indigenous language is positively associated with the desire of having a whiter skin color (see Table 3). Also, perception of skin color discrimination has a positive effect on the desire of having a whiter skin color (see Table 3, Model 4). We did not find evidence to suggest that access to foreign ethno-racial beliefs is associated with the desire of having a whiter skin color (see Table 3, Model 5). These findings suggest that phenotype is certainly relevant in Guatemala as a predictor of indigenous self-identification, as a motive for ethno-racial discrimination, and as an indicator of the disposition toward cultural whitening.

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Table 1. Odds Ratios of Logistic Regression Models Predicting Indigenous Self-Identification

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Skin Color[a]	1.699 ***	1.624 ***	1.458 ***	1.396 **	1.336 *	1.300 **
	(0.24)	(0.22)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.115)
Indigenous Language		102.8 ***	74.13 ***	73.48 ***	75.92 ***	64.28 ***
		(41.6)	(24.2)	(24.4)	(24.9)	(20.08)
Level of Urbanization[b]						
Large Cities			1.639 +	1.717 +	1.632 +	1.448
			(0.46)	(0.55)	(0.46)	(0.77)
Intermediate Cities			2.572 +	2.660 +	2.539 +	2.484
			(1.32)	(1.44)	(1.28)	(1.49)
Rural			2.873 *	2.477 *	1.999 +	1.976
			(1.22)	(1.07)	(0.75)	(1.12)
Region[c]						
North			2.728 **	2.424 *	2.220 *	2.615 *
			(0.94)	(0.90)	(0.86)	(1.24)
Northeast			0.543	0.474	0.434	0.527
			(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.22)	(0.30)
Southeast			0.636	0.491	0.456	0.504
			(0.44)	(0.33)	(0.30)	(0.25)
Center			1.505	1.351	1.417	1.643
			(0.83)	(0.80)	(0.88)	(0.68)
Southwest			3.167 **	3.208 **	3.168 **	3.569 **
			(1.31)	(1.34)	(1.38)	(1.42)
Northwest			1.460	1.191	0.842	0.827
			(0.81)	(0.63)	(0.43)	(0.41)
Petén			0.671	0.637	0.617	0.485
			(0.64)	(0.57)	(0.53)	(0.34)
Education[d]						
Primary Education				0.481 +	0.474 +	0.565
				(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.21)
Secondary Education				0.284 **	0.319 *	0.420 +
				(0.13)	(0.16)	(0.19)
Bachillerato, Magisterio or *Secretariado*				0.254 *	0.345 +	0.435 +
				(0.14)	(0.19)	(0.19)
University or More				0.271 *	0.392	0.424 +
				(0.17)	(0.23)	(0.21)
Parents' Occupation[e]						
Domestic worker, Peasant					5.417 *	4.938 *
					(4.41)	(3.53)
Artisan, Manual Worker, Security, Retailer					3.474 *	3.469 +
					(2.20)	(2.43)
Office Worker, Technician, Teacher, Government Employee					1.298	1.292
					(0.87)	(1.00)
Moderate Political Engagement						0.904 *
						(0.04)
Radical Political Engagement						0.995
						(0.06)
Female	1.041	1.015	0.907	0.840	0.833	0.862
	(0.23)	(0.35)	(0.23)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.17)
Age	0.987 *	0.979 *	0.981 *	0.971 ***	0.970 ***	0.970 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)

(continues)

Table 1, continued

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Log-likelihood	-840.8	-482.2	-447.0	-439.1	-407.2	-377.2
N	1402	1402	1402	1402	1326	1206

Note: Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

[a]Skin color categories are ordered from whitest to darkest with the darkest category subjectively assigned the highest value.

[b]Capital, metropolitan area is the reference category.

[c]Guatemala department is the reference category.

[d]No formal schooling (zero years of education) is the reference category.

[e]Executive, professional is the reference category.

+p<.1 (significant at a marginal level); *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Table 2. Odds Ratios of Ordered Logistic Regression Models Predicting Perception of Skin Color Discrimination

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Ethno-Racial Characteristics						
Indigenous Self-Identification[a]	1.678	*	1.742	*	2.066	**
	(0.42)		(0.44)		(0.54)	
Skin Color[b]	1.143	*	1.156	**	1.146	*
	(0.06)		(0.06)		(0.06)	
Indigenous Language	1.754	*	1.729	*	1.688	*
	(0.44)		(0.44)		(0.44)	
Level of Urbanization[c]						
Large Cities	1.923	***	1.784	***	2.245	***
	(0.34)		(0.29)		(0.52)	
Intermediate Cities	1.279		1.184		1.408	
	(0.43)		(0.40)		(0.65)	
Rural	1.432		1.397		1.745	
	(0.39)		(0.37)		(0.65)	
Region[d]						
North	0.811		0.892		0.859	
	(0.44)		(0.47)		(0.43)	
Northeast	1.005		1.107		1.149	
	(0.39)		(0.42)		(0.38)	
Southeast	0.568		0.632		0.716	
	(0.23)		(0.25)		(0.27)	
Center	0.960		1.038		1.076	
	(0.43)		(0.47)		(0.45)	
Southwest	0.617		0.652		0.641	
	(0.35)		(0.35)		(0.33)	
Northwest	0.755		0.846		1.005	
	(0.36)		(0.40)		(0.48)	
Petén	0.870		0.966		1.030	
	(0.51)		(0.59)		(0.63)	
Education[e]						
No formal schooling			0.883		1.036	
			(0.36)		(0.43)	
Primary Education			0.953		1.167	
			(0.24)		(0.28)	
Secondary Education			1.559		1.905	+
			(0.45)		(0.63)	
Bachillerato, Magisterio or *Secretariado*			1.113		1.268	
			(0.41)		(0.48)	
Parents' Occupation[f]						
Domestic worker, Peasant					0.276	***
					(0.08)	
Artisan, Manual Worker, Security, Retailer					0.225	***
					(0.06)	
Office Worker, Technician, Teacher, Government Employee					0.453	*
					(0.16)	
Female	1.154		1.169		1.124	
	(0.25)		(0.25)		(0.22)	

(continues)

Table 2, continued

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	1.007 +	1.010 *	1.013 **
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Log-likelihood	-796.5	-794.0	-742.8
N	1378	1378	1305

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Threshold values for each category in the dependent variable are omitted to save space.

[a]Ladino is the reference category.

[b]Skin color categories are ordered from whitest to darkest with the darkest category subjectively assigned the highest value.

[c]Capital, metropolitan area is the reference category.

[d]Guatemala department is the reference category.

[e]University or more is the reference category.

[f]Executive, professional is the reference category.

+p<.1 (significant at a marginal level); *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Table 3. Odds Ratios of Ordered Logistic Regression Models Predicting the Desire to Have a Whiter Skin Color

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
Ethno-Racial Characteristics										
Indigenous Self-Identification[a]	1.225		1.172		1.218		1.122		1.130	
	(0.24)		(0.23)		(0.25)		(0.24)		(0.24)	
Skin Color[b]	1.004		0.964		0.944		0.927		0.935	
	(0.09)		(0.08)		(0.08)		(0.09)		(0.08)	
Indigenous Language	1.635	**	1.599	**	1.661	**	1.604	*	1.634	*
	(0.29)		(0.28)		(0.32)		(0.31)		(0.33)	
Level of Urbanization[c]										
Large Cities	1.155		1.077		1.102		1.065		1.033	
	(0.21)		(0.23)		(0.25)		(0.22)		(0.22)	
Intermediate Cities	1.536	+	1.480		1.439		1.468		1.418	
	(0.38)		(0.40)		(0.37)		(0.41)		(0.40)	
Rural	1.437		1.233		1.234		1.194		1.177	
	(0.33)		(0.36)		(0.35)		(0.34)		(0.33)	
Region[d]										
North	0.910		0.904		0.902		0.857		0.921	
	(0.55)		(0.54)		(0.55)		(0.51)		(0.54)	
Northeast	0.813		0.770		0.754		0.739		0.748	
	(0.51)		(0.49)		(0.48)		(0.47)		(0.49)	
Southeast	3.748	*	3.618	*	3.915	*	4.022	*	4.206	**
	(1.99)		(1.84)		(2.10)		(2.17)		(2.21)	
Center	3.745	***	3.619	***	3.421	***	3.532	***	3.742	***
	(1.41)		(1.26)		(1.26)		(1.32)		(1.30)	
Southwest	1.571		1.700		1.679		1.808	+	1.921	*
	(0.49)		(0.52)		(0.51)		(0.56)		(0.55)	
Northwest	3.789	***	3.610	***	3.928	***	3.980	***	4.057	***
	(1.47)		(1.34)		(1.51)		(1.55)		(1.50)	
Petén	2.383		2.373		2.311		2.463		2.572	
	(1.40)		(1.37)		(1.35)		(1.48)		(1.53)	
Education[e]										
No formal schooling			2.479	*	2.839	*	3.024	**	3.072	*
			(0.98)		(1.16)		(1.23)		(1.34)	
Primary Education			2.504	***	2.644	***	2.763	***	2.834	***
			(0.64)		(0.70)		(0.75)		(0.86)	
Secondary Education			1.795	+	1.941	*	1.909	*	1.954	*
			(0.54)		(0.58)		(0.58)		(0.64)	
Bachillerato, Magisterio or			1.926	*	1.984	*	2.032	*	2.040	**
Secretariado			(0.52)		(0.55)		(0.59)		(0.55)	
Parents' Occupation[f]										
Domestic worker, Peasant					0.578		0.667		0.669	
					(0.25)		(0.29)		(0.30)	
Artisan, Manual Worker, Security,					0.608		0.702		0.712	
Retailer					(0.26)		(0.31)		(0.31)	
Office Worker, Technician, Teacher,					0.558		0.604		0.615	
Government Employee					(0.20)		(0.21)		(0.22)	
Perception of Skin Color Discrimination							1.468	***	1.454	***
							(0.16)		(0.16)	

(continues)

Table 3, continued

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Family Out of the Country					1.272
					(0.23)
Use of Internet					1.003
					(0.07)
Female	1.554 *	1.476 *	1.407 *	1.395 +	1.420 *
	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.25)
Age	0.995	0.992	0.990	0.989 +	0.988 +
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Log-likelihood	-1885.5	-1876.7	-1768.9	-1733.6	-1730.1
N	1369	1369	1299	1281	1280

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Threshold values for each category in the dependent variable are omitted to save space.

[a]Ladino is the reference category.

[b]Skin color categories are ordered from whitest to darkest with the darkest category subjectively assigned the highest value.

[c]Capital, metropolitan area is the reference category.

[d]Guatemala department is the reference category.

[e]University or more is the reference category.

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+p<.1 (significant at a marginal level); *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)