

CHAPTER 9

Race in Latin America

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Since the Second World War, most biologists have agreed that race is not an analytic category to understand human biological diversity. Humans vary to some extent in their DNA and their outward physical appearance or phenotype, but this diversity cannot be organized into “racial groups” or “races,” even if some genetic and phenotypical variation seems to correlate very broadly with continental geography. Humans are too similar genetically and intracontinental genetic variation is too great to be able to categorize humans into races. So race is a set of *ideas* about human similarity and difference. But what kind of ideas?

Scholars hold different views (Wade 2002b:ch. 1). This is partly because, as Goldberg says, “Race is not a static concept with a single sedimented meaning”; in fact as a signifier it is “almost, but not quite empty” (1993:80–81). While the word “race” began to appear in European languages from about the 14th century, its meaning has changed greatly since then. Banton (1987) traces how the concept first referred to genealogical linkages between a related set of people (or animals). This was “race as lineage”: all the descendants of a single ancestor or group of ancestors were connected genealogically and thus of the same lineage or race; physical appearance was not a key feature. Before the 19th century, European representations of Andean people did not show them as physically different from Europeans (D. Poole 1997: ch. 2). From the late 18th century, there was a shift to the idea of race as “type,” in which humans were categorized into a few racial types (African, European, Mongol, etc.), seen as primordial and relatively fixed; physical appearance was key to identifying racial type. This was the era of so-called scientific racism, when scientists developed “race” as a key biological category for understanding human physical variation and behavior; they legitimated racial hierarchies in which Europeans were at the top. During the 20th century, scientific racism was slowly dismantled, being mainly replaced, among scholars, by the concept of race as a “social construction,” a set of ideas about humans which can have very powerful social consequences such as racial discrimination and racial violence. At the same time, so-called cultural racism has been identified, in which categories of people familiar from the older conceptions

of race – such as “whites,” “blacks,” “Indians” and “Asians” – continue to be identified and to discriminate or be discriminated against, but now on the basis of their “culture” rather than their biology (Stolcke 1995).

The question remains: What kind of ideas are racial ideas? First, many social scientists say that racial ideas refer to human physical variation: bodily appearance, biology, genealogy, heredity, “blood” or genes. This is true but needs specifying further: These aspects of human biology are too general. People are fat and thin, tall and short, male and female. Any of these traits could be talked about in terms that included reference to such aspects.

Second, then, racial thinking also refers to human physical variation in relation to *particular kinds* of perceived human difference, which began to be perceived when Europeans started to colonize the globe and encounter different continents. Racial thinking is, typically, a way of thinking about historical categories such as “black,” “white,” “Indian,” “African,” “Asian,” and so on. The qualifier, “and so on,” is important because racial thinking can proliferate beyond such key categories – John Beddoe’s *The Races of Britain* (published in 1885) divided up the population of Britain into racial subtypes. Also, it is important that the key categories are not stable: the definition, meaning and perception of them has changed over time and place.

Third, racial thinking is not just about dividing people into physical categories, but also about explaining their behavior. Race is about nature, but also about culture. Culture is explained through naturalization, that is by rooting observed behavior in something taken to be “natural” – although what is taken to be natural has varied over time and can include the realms of environment and cosmology as well as biology. Human nature can be thought to be shaped by the environment, the supernatural (including God) and biology (MacCormack and Strathern 1980; Wade 2002b). This third point is important in understanding “cultural racism.” Although explicit reference to biology and indeed to race itself may be absent or muted in this discourse, there may still be a sense in which culture is naturalized, seen as part of a person’s or a group’s “nature” or perhaps seen as heritable in a quasi-biological way.

In sum, racial ideas are about human physical difference of various kinds, refer typically but not exclusively to key historical categories of colonial origin, and produce naturalizing explanations of culture. This is a fairly broad view of race. Some scholars prefer to limit the concept of race to a “worldview” that was typified by Europe and the US during the era of scientific racial typologies and when systematic, institutional racial discrimination was practiced in many colonial regimes and in the US (Smedley 1993). One can then trace the rise and fall of this worldview – and the way it influenced other areas of the globe – to construct a history of race. I think that this approach is not the best when looking at Latin America: It tends to measure the region against a US or European benchmark which establishes a norm for understanding race.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Spanish and Portuguese colonists exploited local indigenous peoples and African slaves to fulfill labor demands. African slaves were widespread in the Iberian Americas, but tended to concentrate where indigenous peoples suffered the worst decimation

and/or were difficult to exploit as labor: the Caribbean islands, Brazil, the circum-Caribbean mainland and some areas of the Pacific littoral of South America (see Arocha and Maya, this volume). African slaves attained freedom in many areas and a free black population developed. Sexual relations between Europeans, Africans and indigenous people led to “mixed” people, *mestizos*, who were recognized as socially distinct from their parents and were enumerated using specific categories by colonial censuses. This mixed population became numerically dominant in some areas by the late 18th century. A broad contrast existed here with the US where, although such mixtures occurred, they were less recognized socially – especially during the 19th century – and the mixed children were placed socially, and often in censuses, into the racial category of the subordinate parent.

In Iberian colonies, a socially stratified pyramid emerged, with Europeans at the apex, black slaves and *indios* (indigenous people) at the bottom and an ambiguous and contestable set of intermediate categories in the middle in which ancestry, appearance (including dress), occupation and wealth all influenced social standing. In the Spanish colonies, this was sometimes known as a *sociedad de castas*, a society of “castes” (or breeds, or stocks). In New Spain (Mexico), this was illustrated by the 18th century *casta* paintings which depicted parents of different racial categories and their mixed offspring – a caption might read “Spaniard and Mestiza produce a Castiza” (Katzew 2004). The exact role “race” played in this system is the subject of debate. “Racial” status – for example, whether a person was classified in a census as *castizo* or *mestizo* – was not fixed, could change between censuses and could be influenced by occupation (Cope 1994). But there was a strong interest in genealogy and inherited blood as markers of status in a hierarchy which was structured in part by whiteness, African blackness and indigeneity. Legal disputes could ensue if a person who considered himself white was called a *mestizo* by another person. Some legislation in the late 1700s tried to control marriages between whites, indigenous people and blacks, while “sumptuary” legislation attempted to prevent black and mulatto people from using high-status clothes and accoutrements (Mörner 1967; Wade 1997:29–30).

Spanish notions of *limpieza de sangre* (cleanliness of blood) also worked in the colonies. In Spain, these ideas had been used from the mid 15th century to discriminate against “New Christians” – Jews and Muslims who had converted to Christianity. New legislation required people to prove the “purity” of their Old Christian genealogy to gain admittance to certain administrative positions. Although this was mainly a religious measure, there was an intense concern with genealogy and the perceived inherited “contamination” that came from Jewish or Muslim “blood” (S. Poole 1999). *Limpieza de sangre* was a manifestation of what Banton calls race as lineage (see above). In the colonies, *limpieza de sangre* was recast to discriminate also against African and indigenous heritage (Manrique 1993; Martínez 2004). This recasting was fueled by the numerous rebellions organized by indigenous people and slaves and by the perceived religious heterodoxy of indigenous, slave and free black people, many of whom retained aspects of indigenous and African religious systems alongside their avowed Catholicism (Harding 2000; Stern 1987). Colonial persecution of those seen as rebellious, heretical or religiously suspect was linked to perceptions of racial status.

In the postcolonial period, there were radical changes. The category *indio*, which had been a key colonial administrative status, defined by residence in a community and the payment of tribute, began to be dismantled in the context of influential

European ideologies of liberalism which envisaged new republics comprising equal citizens. Slavery was mainly abolished by the mid-1800s, although later in Brazil (1888), Cuba (1886) and Puerto Rico (1873). During the colonial period, indigenous people had always filtered out of the status of *indio* and into the mestizo population, while African slaves and their offspring had continuously entered the ranks of the free and the mixed. Now the very categories of *indio* and slave which had helped define the colonial racial hierarchy were being undermined or abolished. At the same time, countries such as Cuba, Peru, Brazil and Mexico received large numbers of migrants from China, Japan and the Middle East who complicated the situation (Bonfil Batalla 1993; Wilson 2004).

However, ideologies of race took on more important and, to the observer of today, more familiar patterns. Intellectual and political elites in the newly independent countries were very concerned with issues of race and the building of nations. In Europe and the US, scientists, medics and intellectuals were developing theories about race which gave it huge significance. The British physician Robert Knox (1850) affirmed: "Race is everything: literature, science, art – in a word, civilization depends on it." In the late 19th century, eugenics became fashionable with its progressive agenda of creating fitter and more morally upstanding populations through controlling sexual reproduction and improving the family environment. In these raciological theories, black and indigenous people were ranked as racially inferior and race mixture was seen as degenerative.

Latin American elites had an ambivalent relationship to these theories (Appelbaum, Macpherson and Roseblatt 2003; Graham 1990). On the one hand, they saw their black and indigenous populations as inferior and their large mestizo populations as a burden. It was up to the whiter populations to lead nations into modernity. Many countries began to enact immigration legislation that sought to restrict the entry of black people, while European immigration was encouraged. While Asian immigration was significant in many countries, Chinese migrants in northern Mexico, and elsewhere, were seen as racially inferior (Rénique 2003). Deborah Poole (1997:chs 5, 6) shows how images of Andean people, created by Europeans and by Peruvians, began to focus on the physical appearance of the body as a key to classification. Throughout Latin America, typological theories which saw each body as analytically reducible to a racial "type" went hand in hand with new technologies of visual imaging which allowed the serial reproduction and circulation of multiple photographic images as instances of racial types: photographic portraits of black and indigenous peoples circulated widely in Latin America and Europe.

On the other hand, elites could not escape the mixedness of their populations – although this varied markedly from one country to another, being more prominent in Mexico than Argentina or Chile. Mixture could however be defined as a process of whitening. The perceived superiority of whites would tip the nation's biological and cultural balance in their favor, helped by European immigration (Stepan 1991). In the early decades of the 20th century, some nations began to take a more positive attitude to mixture: *mestizaje* or *mestiçagem* (racial and cultural mixture) was the basis for national identity. The mixture of African, indigenous and European peoples was the founding origin myth of the nation. Mestizaje was something to be celebrated as a distinctive feature; indigenous and African people had, it was said, made useful contributions to the cultures of, for example, Mexico or Brazil. There was, in short, some

resistance to European ideologies that simply condemned Latin American nations as mixed and inferior. In postrevolutionary Mexico, in 1925, writer and education minister José Vasconcelos celebrated the “cosmic race” as a superior mixed race which was in the process of evolving, particularly on Latin American soil, and which would undermine US ideologies about the superiority of “pure” segregated races (Vasconcelos 1997). Ironically, in Mexico, this ideology was consolidated by anti-Chinese racism, which pitted a national mestizo identity against an Asian presence seen as alien (Rénique 2003). In 1930s Brazil, intellectual Gilberto Freyre was very influential in promoting the idea of a distinctive mixed nation, with indigenous and African contributions, which avoided the notorious problems of racism and segregation seen to affect the US. The image of the mestizo nation was also influential in Colombia, Central America and, to a lesser extent, Peru (de la Cadena 2000; Gould 1998; Hale 1996; Wade 1993).

However, *mestizaje* was still seen by many Latin Americans as a progressive process in which black and indigenous people would be integrated into a mestizo nation that was moving toward whiteness. Ideologies of *indigenismo* (indigenism) were prominent in countries such as Peru and Mexico, which had large indigenous populations (see chapters by Nahmad Sitton and Seligmann, this volume). But while *indigenismo* celebrated the nation’s indigenous populations, it tended to extol indigenous history, rather than contemporary indigenous populations (de la Cadena 2000; Knight 1990). In Mexico, prominent indigenista Manuel Gamio studied indigenous populations, but focused on archaeology and overall took an integrationist perspective, envisaging the assimilation of indigenous populations into the mestizo nation (see Walsh, this volume). With the partial exception of Brazil and Cuba, black populations were much less subject to glorification as national ancestors.

RACE AND CULTURE IN LATIN AMERICA

De la Cadena (2000) argues that from about the 1920s in Peru, intellectuals began to abandon notions of race and to talk of indigenous peoples in terms of “spirit” or soul rather than biology. This can be seen to mark a shift toward the cultural explanations of human difference that became more commonplace in the later 20th century. The indigenous spirit was seen as largely a product of the environment, but was also seen as deeply ingrained and in some sense innate, even if the language of racial biology was eschewed. “Culture” was thus understood in quite a determinist – one could say naturalized – way. Nevertheless, it could be argued that this shift sets the scene for a specifically Latin American approach to race, which is distinct from that in North America and Europe. This is a key point because scholarly and popular views of race in Latin America have frequently made explicit or implicit use of a comparison with the US.

This comparison has a long history and entered into the way intellectuals such as Freyre in Brazil or Vasconcelos in Mexico defined their countries as relatively free from racial prejudice in comparison with the US (Graham 1990; Wade 2004). Tannenbaum (1948) initiated a historical debate by arguing that slavery had been more benign and colonial society more open to the assimilation of slaves in Iberian colonies than Anglo-Saxon ones. He was wrong about the benevolence of Latin American slavery,

but there was no doubt that slaves found it easier to become free in this region than in North America, that mixture between racial categories was more frequent, and that the offspring of such unions were, in the long term, recognized more fully as a mestizo social category, intermediate between black, white and indigenous.

The nature of Latin American societies as mestizo – with the variations that run from Argentina, where the image of mixture is downplayed in favor of whiteness, to Brazil or Mexico, where mixture is foregrounded in discourse on the nation – has powerfully shaped ideas about race in the region. One view is that race is not important: there is little racism and little sense of racial identity for most people. Indigenous people may have their particular ethnic identities, based on local cultures, and people in general may recognize phenotypical differences that are linked to skin color and other typically “racial” features, but none of this creates a society in which racial identities are the basis for significant social divisions and exclusions – the subtext here is usually, “in comparison with the USA” (Wade 1997:51–57). This view is most explicit in the claim that Latin America enjoys “a racial democracy.” The opposing view holds that, while Latin American racism is different from that in the US, it still operates to create significant disadvantage for indigenous and black people as collective categories.

Debates on this theme have focused mainly on comparisons of Brazil and the US (Sant’Anna and Souza 1997). In the 1950s, in the wake of Nazism, UNESCO began a series of studies of Brazil designed to explore a racial democracy. In fact, few scholars unequivocally supported the idea of a racial democracy, but many saw race as much less significant than in the US and becoming more insignificant. It was widely argued that class was the key division in Brazil, while race was secondary (Winant 1992). A key factor was mixture itself. First, according to censuses, over a third of Brazilians identify themselves as *pardo* (brown), indicating some kind of mixedness. Second, the prevalence of mixture has created vagueness about who is who in racial terms (Sansone 2003:ch. 1; Telles 2002). Much was made then, and still is now, of the fact that, rather than using a small number of terms such as black, white and indigenous, Brazilians use dozens of descriptive terms, which often try to describe actual shade of skin color. A photograph of a person will elicit different terms depending on how the person is dressed and who is doing the classifying. Racial categorization is shifting and contextual, influenced by appearance, dress, behavior, and, especially, class status: blackness is strongly associated with lower class position. Terms that indicate some degree of mixedness are very common: *moreno* (brown) is common in Brazil and elsewhere, but can include a light-skinned person with dark hair and a person with quite dark skin and of clear African ancestry. If there is little agreement on who is black (or white or indigenous), how can discrimination take place in any systematic way? In contrast, in the US, there is generally a much clearer definition of racial identity, based on a few key categories: black, white, Native American (and Asian and Pacific Islander). This clarity was fundamental both to the institutionalized “Jim Crow” racial segregation that operated for decades until after the Second World War and to the informal discrimination and segregation that still persist. There needs to be general agreement about who is black and white for such systems to operate.

Contrasting views argue that, despite the apparent plethora of racial terms, a few key terms and categories are salient, focused on black, white, indigenous and two or three basic mixed categories. Most importantly, shifting and contextual terminologies lead to shifting and contextual discriminations, rather than the simple absence of

them. Sansone shows that racial terminology in Salvador, Brazil, shifts according to context – “a son can be *preto* [black] to his mother and *moreno* [brown] to his father” – and is characterized by a “pragmatic relativism” (2003:46, 50). He also traces recent shifts in terminological usage, with younger, dark-skinned people more prepared to identify as *negro* (black), a term that was previously rather pejorative, but now signifies a more self-conscious, and globalized, political identity based on race. Yet in his view all this does not indicate an absence of racism.

A person can still discriminate against someone she or he *perceives* as “black” or “brown” or “indigenous” and if there is some kind of overlap in perceptions among people who racially discriminate and also control access to valued resources, then this will result in ongoing racial inequalities. Statistical evidence for Brazil shows that racial inequalities do exist which are not just the legacy of slavery or an effect of the fact that many dark-skinned people are in the lower classes and tend to remain there through “normal” processes of class stratification (Hasenbalg and Silva 1999). Lovell (1994) shows that average income difference between white and black men is partly due to the impact of educational background on ability to compete in the job market (which may itself be due to patterns of racial discrimination outside that market), but that 24 percent of the difference is due to processes of discrimination within the job market. The figure is 51 percent when comparing white men with black women. Data on Afro-Colombians reinforce this overall picture (Barbary and Urrea 2004; Wade 1993). Data on indigenous people in Latin America show generalized poverty for indigenous people. Up to 50 percent of income differentials between indigenous and non-indigenous workers may be due to discrimination in the Guatemalan, Peruvian and Mexican labor markets (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 1994:xxi).

The key to race in Latin America, then, is that racism and mixture coexist and interweave (Wade 1993). There is great demographic and social variety across the region, yet some broad generalizations can be made. The coexistence of racism and mixture creates societies in which categories such as “black” and “indigenous” exist and occupy important places in the national imaginary. There are also often subregions associated with blackness or indigeness – for blackness, the northeast of Brazil, the Pacific coastal region of Colombia and of Ecuador and Peru, and much of the Caribbean coastline of Central America (see Arocha and Maya, this volume); for indigeness, the Amazon basin, the Andes, and the highlands of Central America (see Varese, Delgado and Meyer, this volume). These categories and subregions are generally low down in national hierarchies of value, although they may enjoy high symbolic status in particular stereotyped domains (e.g. black people may be seen as superior musicians, dancers and sportspeople; indigenous people as ecologically minded and powerful healers). People identified as black or indigenous do suffer racial discrimination to some degree. Modernity, development and high status are often associated with whiteness or at least mixedness. Race and gender often intersect in ways that give lighter-skinned men access to both lighter- and darker-skinned women, with their unions with the latter often being informal. Darker-skinned men are more constrained by class and color, while women are constrained by moral codes of honor. Darker women may have informal unions, but run the risk of being labeled as loose (Caulfield 2003; Smith 1996).

However, “black” and “indigenous” are often vaguely defined and there is an indecisive, subjective distinction between them and “mixed” people and between the

latter and “whites” (hence the problems of enumerating these populations). There is often not a clear socio-racial hierarchy. In Brazil and Colombia, although many black people are poor, the lower classes are mixed and include many whites; people with evident African ancestry are also found in the middle classes. In Peru and Central America, although the elite is fairly white, people with indigenous physical features are not confined to the lower classes. Racial discrimination does occur but it is often unsystematic, individualistic, silent and masked. Racial identities are often not very important to people: for Brazil, Sansone (2003) calls this blackness without ethnicity (i.e. without a collective, self-conscious sense of identity). Racial identities are rarely key factors in electoral politics (although some Andean countries provide recent partial counterexamples here).

Few would contest nowadays that racism as a practice and race as an idea are significant in Latin America, but there is disagreement about how to analyze them. Twine (1998), Hanchard (1994) and Winant (1994) tend to see mixture as a problem for Brazil. The absence of clear racial identities, the existence of hegemonic ideologies which purvey the myth of racial democracy, together with the devaluation of blackness and the actual practice of racism, create a system in which black political consciousness is hampered and people are encouraged to “whiten” (to identify with whiteness and to actually marry whiter partners). For Winant (1994:156), “The public articulation and exploration of *racial dualism* [a clear black–white distinction] would itself be a major advance” in Brazil. Scholars such as Ferreira da Silva (1998), Sansone (2003) and Fry (2000) see such analyses as ethnocentric, using the US history of black political organization as a benchmark to evaluate the black Brazilian experience and judge it lacking (for a similar approach to Cuba, see also de la Fuente 2001:6–9). For them, Brazil has to be judged on its own terms: black consciousness, for example, might look more class oriented than in the US; antiracism might not depend on clear racial identities, but be based on a more inclusive, universalist project. Hanchard (1999:11) responds by emphasizing that the US and Brazil are variants on a common theme and are linked by transnational connections which undo a binary comparison between them. It is not a question of benchmarking one against the other.

In analyses of race in the Andes and Central America, something similar emerges. In this context, race has been seen by scholars as less relevant than ethnicity. Key distinctions between indigenous and mestizo people were analyzed as ethnic because they seemed to involve “cultural” distinctions of language, dress and behavior rather than “racial” distinctions of physical appearance and ancestry. I argue that this conceptual split is inadequate because (1) it denies the clearly racial discourse that surrounded ideas about indigenous peoples, alongside black people, during the colonial period and especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries (D. Poole 1997; Stepan 1991); (2) it assumes that culture (changeable, malleable) and race (permanent, fixed) are necessarily separate, when we know that identification of blackness also depends – and not only in Latin America – on cultural factors such as clothing, speech and class status; and (3) it ignores the discrimination that indigenous-looking people can suffer, for example in urban contexts (Wade 1997:37–39).

More recently, scholars both inside and outside Latin America have been willing to apply the concept of race to the Andes and Meso-America (Callirgos 1993; de la Torre 1996). The ethnocidal wars in Guatemala and Peru, which targeted these countries’ indigenous populations, made public difficult issues of racism (Arenas

Bianchi, Hale and Palma Murga 1999; Casaús Arzú 1992; Nelson 1999). Famously, in 2005, indigenous activist Rigoberta Menchú brought several politicians to court in the country's first racism case; and in Peru the Truth and Reconciliation Commission pointed to racism in their analysis of counterinsurgency violence in the 1980s war (Comisión de la Verdad 2004). In Mexico, the war in Chiapas and the explicit denunciation of racism by the EZLN (Zapatista National Liberation Army) have also forced issues of race onto the agenda, while Mexico's black population is getting increasing recognition (Castellanos Guerrero 2003; Nash 2001; Vaughn 2005). For Peru, de la Cadena argues that biological notions of race began to disappear from discourse about the Peruvian Andes, but "racialized notions of cultural heritage" were retained (2000:155). De la Cadena contends that the notions of *mestizo* and *mestizaje* are themselves hybrid concepts, mixing pre-Enlightenment, colonial notions of *limpieza de sangre*, genealogy and purity of lineage with Enlightenment notions of scientific racial typologies: "the new scientific taxonomies continued to evoke language, faith and morality" (2005:268). More than a hybridization between 19th century concepts of biology and culture – which was not unique to Latin America – this was an epistemological mixing of "two regimes of knowledge, faith and science" which enabled "a conceptual politics where the pull to define race tilted towards culture" (2005:268–269).

Weismantel also deploys a culturalized notion of race, arguing that Andean people talk about race as a physical reality but also changeable: a person's race can alter over time. In the Andes, race can be part of the body and yet be changeable because race accumulates in the body over time; it is the embodied product of history:

in the interactions between bodies and the substances they ingest, the possessions they accumulate, and the tools they use to act on the world, we can really see race being made, and making the society around it. This kind of race is neither genetic nor symbolic, but organic: a constant, physical process of interaction between living things. (Weismantel 2001:266)

Indigenous and white people's bodies accumulate things – both in the body (hard skin, soft skin; gnarled feet, smooth feet), in/on the body (smells) and on the body (clothes) – that mark them as racially distinct. Gose objects that Weismantel "simply assumes that 'race matters' in the Andes" and that she, speaking from an "omnipotent American standpoint," "accentuates the racism in Andean social life and presents it as absolute and unqualified" (Gose 2003:194). As with the debate on Brazil, we find scholars divided over whether North American understandings of race are being imposed onto a Latin American reality. In this case, however, Weismantel (and de la Cadena) are putting forward very Latin American notions of race as naturalized but still malleable culture and it is hard to accuse either of using US notions of race as a benchmark. As in the debate about Brazil, accusations of ethnocentrism, while potentially valid, can gloss over the way Euro-American notions of race both influenced and were fed by Latin American realities (D. Poole 1997).

In my view, Latin America concepts of race are *sui generis*, but not therefore the polar opposites of things North American or European. The culturalized versions of race that are particularly prominent in Latin America are not unique to the region: race always involves an interweaving between notions of nature and culture (Wade 2002b) and even in the heyday of scientific, biological theories of race, there were

very powerful discourses of morality and what we would now call culture (Stoler 1995). The emergence of “cultural racism” is another case in point (see above). But in Latin America, the coexistence of mestizaje and racism gives a particular twist to the natural-cultural construct of race, making Latin American notions of race particularly culturalized and open to be thought and experienced through, say, class, region and gendered sexuality. Streicker (1995), for example, explored ideas of race among working class black people in Cartagena, Colombia. For them, race was not an everyday way of talking about and identifying people. Most people in the neighborhood he studied were varying shades of black and brown; there was a strong notion that everyone was equal and that racism did not loom large. Ideas about race, however, formed a discourse of the moral evaluation of behavior and status. Perceptions of class status, racial identity and sex/gender behavior all evoked each other. Being *negro* meant being of low class status and also being a father/husband or mother/wife who was sexually promiscuous and did not fulfill family obligations. This worked in reverse too, so that to impute sexual looseness to a woman evoked images of blackness and low class status. Race was not prominent, but it worked through other culturalizing-naturalizing perceptions.

MESTIZAJE, DIFFERENCE, MULTICULTURALISM, AND GLOBALIZATION

If the coexistence of mestizaje and racism is the key to Latin American concepts of race, then it is also true that mestizaje has many different dynamics within it. It can be the very manifestation of racism when it takes the form of a nation-building ideology that devalues blackness and indigenusness, consigns them to the past and straitjackets them into stereotyped molds. But it can also be a space – always ambiguous and often ambivalent – in which to reaffirm blackness and indigenusness in practical everyday ways. Postcolonial theorists have recently made much of the potentially subversive nature of hybridity, a process of mixture which can be seen as linked to mestizaje and which can create a “third space” that unsettles colonial binaries of power and racial categorization (Bhabha 1994). Some Latin Americanist scholars have been cautious, well aware of the history of mestizaje and its potential to be the regional face of racism (Hale 1999; Wade 2004). Analyzing Guatemala, Hale (2002:524) recognizes the problems of romanticizing mestizaje, but still holds out the possibility that “some notion of ‘mestizaje from below’ could emerge as an articulating principle” decentering dominant ideas of mestizo society and the “acceptable” face of indigenous identity. In a related way, de la Cadena (2000) argues for a concept of “de-Indianization” which results in the formation of “indigenous mestizos.” These are Andean people who self-identify as mestizos, but also claim indigenous heritage and culture as their own. They are indigenous and mestizo at the same time; being mestizo means having gained respect through hard work and economic success, rather than having sloughed off indigenous culture. But these indigenous mestizos also hand out racist insults to those they classify as simply *indio*. French (2004) also sees mestizaje as a “supple analytical tool” which allows us to conceptualize how people who are part of northeast Brazilian peasant culture and who look as African-descended as neighbors identifying as descendants of black slaves can nevertheless make land claims as indigenous people. These people are mestizos and indigenous at the same time, but through a process of

“re-Indianization” (see also Warren 2001). I have also analyzed everyday notions of *mestizaje* in Colombia as involving the living out of cultural-racial elements through the physical body, with blackness felt to express itself through music, dance and heat, or through affective ties with family members, or through possession by racialized spirits in religious contexts. Being *mestizo* allows an inclusive space for difference as well as exclusive definitions of sameness (Wade 2005).

This is important when we come to consider recent moves toward official multiculturalism in Latin America, with the emergence of legal and constitutional measures which, in regionally uneven ways, recognize black and indigenous minorities in more explicit fashion and in some cases give them land and other cultural rights (see Arocha and Maya, this volume). In Brazil, there have been heated debates about affirmative action programs for Afro-Brazilians, with quotas for places in some universities and government entities (Htun 2004). This is not the place for an analysis of these changes and the black and indigenous movements involved in them (see Arocha and Maya, and Varese, Delgado and Meyer, this volume; see also Hale 2002; Sieder 2002; Van Cott 2000; Wade 1997). The question is how they have shaped Latin American concepts of race. One view is that such changes represent a radical departure from previous Latin American nationalisms based on *mestizaje* understood as homogenization. My view is that, when *mestizaje* is understood to encompass difference, these official multiculturalisms are not quite such a seismic shift. Still, blackness and indigeness are beginning to occupy places on a different-looking terrain.

This terrain, at once new and familiar, is defined by struggles between local social movements and national states, but also by transnational and globalizing dynamics. First, nation-states are responding to new global notions of democracy as multicultural and neoliberal governance as creating and operating through self-reliant, self-organizing communities (including ethnically defined ones). Second, black and indigenous social movements are linked into transnational concepts of, and movements for, human and indigenous rights, and into globalizing images of blackness, Africa and indigeness which also circulate in a world commodity market and a global NGO network. Third, the migration of black and indigenous people to North America and Europe (but also to Africa) has created stronger interactions between differing, but not opposing, conceptions of race and identity.

Latin American states were pushed into legal and constitutional reform by black and indigenous protest, but in some cases, they also took up the torch with a certain alacrity. Some have argued that it suited particular state interests to recognize black and indigenous minorities and thus control them more effectively while also promoting new forms of neoliberal governance (Hale 2002; Laurie, Andolina and Radcliffe 2003). In Colombia, for example, it has been argued that the state was interested in combining defense (and commercial exploitation) of biodiverse forest zones with the creation of Afro-Colombian and indigenous community land rights in those areas: the communities would be cast as stewards of the environment, thus tapping into images of a “natural” predisposition toward ecological sensitivity among indigenous and, to a lesser extent, black people (Escobar 1997; Gros 1997; Wade 2002a). By linking these populations to “nature” – in a way not necessarily challenged and even endorsed by ethnic social movements – there may be subtle processes of the renaturalization and essentialization of racial identities (see Hayden, this volume).

Black and indigenous social movements have from an early date been linked into transnational networks. This is not necessarily new: for example, Afro-Brazilian leaders have since the late 19th century been involved in interactions and dialogues about racism, religion and Africa with both North Americans and Africans, in a Latin American version of Gilroy's "Black Atlantic" (Gilroy 1993; Matory 1999; Sansone 2003:ch. 2). Sansone shows how objects of black culture (e.g. dance and religious forms) have been commodified for some time, but that recent globalization and the growth of the black movement has led new objects (notably the black body itself and its fashion accessories) to become more conspicuous and commodified (2003:76–79). This links with an increasing willingness among some black people to identify explicitly with the political and self-consciously ethnic category *negro*. In Colombia, too, black icons such as Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Bob Marley have served as inspiration for black activists alongside homegrown heroes of slave resistance (Wade 1999).

Indigenous and black organizations frequently have close links to the Church and other international entities that provide them with support and advice. Radcliffe, Laurie and Andolina (2000) found that transnational institutions and actors have influential effects on how indigenous people represent their identity, starting with the fact that defining oneself as indigenous in the first place enhances access to resources and leads people to emphasize indigenous social capital in ways that reify "tradition." However, these transnational networks open up spaces for contestation, in which, for example, indigenous women can challenge dominant ideas of "gender and development." Interestingly, indigenous people have generally had greater success than black people in establishing themselves as distinct cultures, deserving of special rights. Black people in Latin America tend to be seen as culturally closer to the mainstream and it has been harder to carve out a distinctive legal space, based on cultural difference. One strategy for Afro-Latins – which some states have encouraged – has been to make themselves look more like indigenous groups (Hooker 2005; Wade 1997, 2002a).

Indigenous and black people are also involved in important transnational migrations. Kearney (2000) shows how Mixtecs from Oaxaca (southern Mexico) migrate to California and create a cultural space called "Oaxacalifornia" in which Mixtec identity becomes more self-conscious and explicit, creating the basis for organizations which defend Mixtec rights in the US and in Mexico. Various studies trace how migrants who do not see themselves as "black" are redefined as such in the US context. Duany (1998) shows how Dominican migrants resist this classification and try to retain the concept of an intermediate mixed identity, based on being Latino or Hispanic. Ramos-Zayas (2003:ch. 6) also shows how Puerto Rican nationalists in Chicago sometimes use images of Puerto Rican blackness in a critique of US racism and segregation. This blackness is presented, however, in a specifically Latin American discourse, as inclusive and based on *mestizaje*, rather than exclusive and divisively segregated.

In sum, the effect of globalizing ethnic movements on Latin American concepts of race is uncertain. On the one hand, ideas of race may be taking on more North American dimensions (with globalized imagery): definitions of blackness and indigeness become clearer and perhaps more polarized; and they include the use of commodified images of indigenous Greenness and spiritual healing alongside a collage of transnational black imagery (reggae, rap, "African" motifs, US black hero figures); in some countries, affirmative action programs are implemented which target black and indigenous people. On the other hand, there is something resilient about Latin

American notions of *mestizaje* and its irreducibility to a set of US-style racial classifications. The resistance of some US based Latinos to black–white racial binaries is a case in point. Also, it is not yet clear that affirmative action programs for Afro-Colombians and Afro-Brazilians – which so far seem to be progressing in the absence of a clear social consensus on who is black – will necessarily lead to US-style racial categories. In Colombia, university places reserved for Afro-Colombians have been allocated in flexible ways that retain typically Latin American contextual definitions of blackness.

It is perhaps the resilience of *mestizaje* that leads some commentators to see it as a critique of US notions of race, a way to shatter their sharp boundaries and exclusive definitions of identity (Saldaña-Portillo 2001; Wade 2004). I think great caution is needed with this idea – after all, racism and *mestizaje* coexist in Latin America. But it may be that Latin American notions of race are colonizing North America as much as the other way round. The sheer number of Latinos in the US has been complicating the traditional racial categories of the US for some time now: the category “Hispanic” is not meant to be a racial category for the census (Hispanics can belong to any census racial category), but it tends to act as one when it is routinely deployed alongside other racial categories in reporting data. One of the keys to understanding race in Latin America is to grasp that it has always been defined in opposition to the US – this was the concern of intellectuals such as Freyre and Vasconcelos in the 1920s. In fact, both regions are variants on a theme and have been in a constant process of mutual racial formation. If globalizing US concepts of race and identity are clarifying racial categories for some Latin Americans, it may be that Latin American concepts of race are blurring the clarity of racial definitions for some North Americans – without this implying that racism is therefore ameliorated.

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