

RESEARCHING RACE IN CHILE

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Abstract: Job-market discrimination research in the United States and Europe measures discrimination by a majority against racial minorities, discrimination that stems from historical patterns of inequality and privilege. Chilean researchers have applied these models to study class-based discrimination, finding some evidence to support its existence. Their innovative methods make race as well as class visible, and contradictions in their work show racial differences among Chileans. This research note highlights the interesting research from a new generation of labor economists who have simultaneously pushed the sanctioned limits of social debate and reaffirmed dominant explanations of inequality. Critical race theory is useful for making sense of the contradictions in their work and, it is argued, can improve the quality of Chilean social science research so as to reach a more accurate and self-reflective understanding of the sources and effects of inequality in Chile.

Despite decades of sustained economic growth, Chile remains one of the most unequal countries in the world (Contreras 1999; Stein et al. 2006).¹ Labor economists use econometric models to detect discrimination against racial minorities in hiring practices as a way to study how inequality is reproduced through the labor market. Discriminatory hiring practices contribute to the reproduction of inequality by denying candidates jobs and/or wages because of their race, gender, or social position, regardless of their qualifications or capacity to learn. Replicating the methods used in the United States and European countries, a group of young economists at the University of Chile trained at top North American and British universities have attempted to measure, for the first time in Chile, discrimination based on individual's surnames. Results were mixed: by one estimate, having the "right" last name increases wages by 13 percent (Núñez and Pérez 2007), yet other studies have found no evidence of discrimination by employers (Bravo, Sanhueza, and Urzúa 2007). Through the lens of critical race theory these economic models provide a window onto the contradictions of Chilean society and raise new questions for social science research. This group of economists hypothesizes that class discrimination is more relevant than racial discrimination, yet the models

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1. There is some debate about this, but in July 2010, the national survey on socioeconomic data (Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional, or CASEN) showed an increase in inequality: the richest 10 percent increased their earnings by 9 percent, and the earnings of the poorest 10 percent remained flat. This means a family that previously earned 2.7 million pesos per month now earns 2.9 million, and a family that earned 113,000 pesos now earns 114,000.

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and instruments they employ make race as well as class visible. The contradictions in their work raise key questions: How adequate are economic models from the United States and Europe for societies in which the identities, magnitude, and resources of the majority and minority are ambiguous and little understood? How do the emphasis on class and the denial of race shape our understanding of inequality in Chile?

MEASURING DISCRIMINATION

Research in the United States and Europe has for decades documented discrimination against job applicants by race or gender or both (Altonji and Blank 1999; Riach and Rich 2002). These studies come in two forms. Wage decomposition models estimate for equal levels of education, for example, differences in wages between groups (e.g., black and white). Wage gaps due to differences in, for example, education, experience, or employment sector, are considered explained, but wage differences outside of education (and all the other independent variables included in the model) are considered unexplained. This second gap is believed to reflect discrimination and any omitted independent variables or unobservable characteristics. Therefore, as more empirical indicators have become available, the unexplained portion has grown smaller. For example, one study has shown that "improved specification can reduce the unexplained effects for blacks and for women" (Altonji and Blank 1999, 3161); what began as a 15 percent wage difference attributed to discrimination was reduced to 3 percent. Behavioral experiments (also called audit reports), in contrast, attempt to show discrimination taking place. For example, Bertrand and Mullainathan (2003) sent *curricula vitae* (CVs) for job applicants similar in everything but the attribute under study in response to job postings and recorded employers' reactions. Gender and race differences are typically communicated through the applicant's name on the CV. Bravo, Sanhueza, and Urzúa (2007) conducted the first such experiment in Chile and, to their surprise, found no evidence of discrimination.

These methods reflect decades of discrimination theory developed in the United States. Gary Becker argued in 1957 that employers with a taste for discrimination pay higher wages as a result of discriminating against employees on attributes not related to productivity (in Arrow 1998, 94). Discriminating employers would disappear if nondiscriminating firms, which operate at lower costs, could freely enter the market. Reflecting on the persistence of discrimination after it became illegal with the U.S. civil rights movement, Arrow (1998) developed the theory of statistical discrimination: assuming competitive markets but limited information about candidates' real qualifications, employers will judge an individual's potential productivity from observable and assumed group attributes. Under this theory, a taste for discrimination is no longer required for discrimination to occur, and in a self-fulfilling prophecy, those discriminated against will underinvest in education and other formal indicators of productivity because they know they are judged on stereotyped attributes of their group rather than on their individual characteristics. James Heckman extended these insights to study potential discrimination on entering the labor market (rather than on wages) through

audit studies (see Altonji and Blank 1999). Many important academic debates exist among labor economists, for example, over when discrimination occurs (e.g., at first contact, during the interview, in evaluating candidates) or the exact nature of discrimination (Riach and Rich 2002). Disagreements also exist about the definition of discrimination. For example, Heckman (1998) binds discrimination to judgments about productivity and argues that different beliefs about a candidate's productivity based on unobservable factors do not constitute discrimination. Likewise, there is enormous debate on methodological constraints; these models are but snapshots in time that do not explain the roots of discrimination or its different forms.

Nonetheless, the areas of agreement are greater: job-market discrimination research papers in the United States and European countries begin with a statement about historical patterns of discrimination against racial minorities or women that defines the scope of the current problem, the identity and population magnitude of the group being discriminated against, and the mechanisms by which discrimination might occur. They assume that employers discriminate because they face imperfect information about candidates and that, were this to be corrected, a different employment pattern than that observed today would exist. These works all share a negative view of discrimination, where discrimination is the result of historical processes that today shape beliefs through misinformation. In the United States and Europe, job-market discrimination research has often responded to or sought to evaluate legal or policy measures aimed to reduce discrimination. Many of these conditions are not present in Chile, which raises questions about how well these methods travel from their original context of application to a society in which there have been few public debates about discrimination and even fewer legal or policy measures aimed to reduce it.

MEASURING DISCRIMINATION IN CHILE

The first behavioral experiment on job-market discrimination in Chile set out to "study the Chilean labor market and determine the presence or absence of gender discrimination. . . . This study also allows socioeconomic discrimination associated to names and places of residence in the Chilean labor market to be tackled" (Bravo, Sanhueza, and Urzúa 2007, 1). In contrast to research practice in the United States and Europe, the Chilean researchers introduced the following innovations: they sent fictitious rather than "real" CVs and excluded "markedly male and female occupations" (Bravo, Sanhueza, and Urzúa 2007, 7).² They found no differences in employers' call rates to job applicants across gender or socioeconomic traits. This surprising result led them to question whether using fictitious CVs may have produced "too perfect a world" in which positive discrimination

2. The exclusion of markedly female or male occupations without specifying which occupations these were or how many is also viewed by the author as an example of commonsense racism. The idea that all secretaries are women is so ingrained in Chilean society that this is normatively indistinguishable from the idea that all secretaries should be women. However, in the interest of space, I leave the discussion on discrimination against women to further work.

existed among employers who would think, "If this person, under these circumstances, reaches such level of education and experience, she or he must be a good applicant" (Bravo, Sanhueza, and Urzúa 2007, 21). Likewise, they dismiss their results and conclude, "It may still be the case that discrimination in the U.S. is deeper than in Chile. Chile is not a country with significant racial groups as may be the case of other Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Peru or Brazil. The percentage of indigenous population in Chile is small. The type of discrimination we are looking at may indeed be related to historical factors of inequality of opportunities rather than subjective discrimination" (Bravo, Sanhueza, and Urzúa 2007, 21).

Bravo, Sanhueza, and Urzúa (2007) set out to examine gender discrimination; in the process they added socioeconomic discrimination and, as reflected in the earlier quote, conclude by discussing race. They measured socioeconomic discrimination using the Subjective Socioeconomic Status (SES) index of Javier Núñez and Gutiérrez (2004) and Núñez and Pérez (2007).

What does SES measure? Most simply, it measures the number of Basque names an individual carries. Núñez and Pérez (2007) asked university students to assign a social class to pairs of surnames—obtained from a university listing—on a scale from one to five.³ The resulting index captures individuals' subjective evaluation of social class based only on an individual's surnames, which correlates very well with known measures of social class (e.g., receiving a state loan for college, socioeconomic status of the school, and town of origin; see table 1; see also Núñez and Pérez 2007). Núñez and Pérez's (2007) first step was to classify surnames into one of six categories: Amerindian, Chilean Spanish, Basque, non-Spanish European, Asian, and Middle Eastern.

Núñez and Pérez (2007) estimated wage differentials with the SES index, controlling for educational performance and socioeconomic information conveyed by the town of residence. Having a Basque or (non-Spanish) European surname increases wages by 13 percent. A poor and top student with a low SES earns approximately 17 percent less than an equally poor and top student with a high SES. Likewise, the student will earn 26 percent less than a bottom-of-the-class student from a rich area with a high SES. According to Núñez and Gutiérrez (2004), the wage gap between SES levels is not related to differences in academic performance, and attending a richer school does not fully compensate for having a low SES.

The SES index makes social class visible and quantifiable in individual transactions. It reveals that Chileans share a perception of who is upper and lower class and demonstrates a medium through which class-based discrimination can occur. Likewise, it conveys Núñez and Pérez's (2007) assumption that social class is a set of cultural attributes conferred on a person before he or she enters the labor market, which therefore is amenable to econometric analysis and resistant to change through education or income.

The SES index also makes race visible, yet neither Núñez and Gutiérrez (2004) nor Bravo, Sanhueza, and Urzúa (2007) address race discrimination directly. Why

3. In Chile, every individual uses his or her father's and mother's surname.

Table 1 Ascendancy and Wealth, as Measured by Núñez and Pérez (2007)

	No Basque names	At least one Basque name
Average income of town of origin	\$174,000	\$230,000
Attended private school (%)	58	79
Obtained a college loan (conditional on parents' income, %)	50	23

Note: Currency in 1998 Chilean pesos.

did Núñez define the SES index as a measure of social class rather than race, when it reflects both simultaneously? Through the lens of critical race theory the contradictory treatment of race in these models can be situated in its Chilean context, marked by the denial of race and adherence to ambiguous social categories. The remainder of this note illustrates how an inaccurate understanding of social groups' identities and of the markers for the exercise of unevenly distributed social, political, and economic power distorts social science research and obscures our understanding of the cultural underpinnings of inequality. Specifically, in terms of job-market discrimination research, misunderstanding the role of race in Chilean society leads to an overemphasis on class; the result is a misspecified model in which the identity of the allegedly discriminated minority is unclear.

DENYING AND RECOGNIZING RACE

A founding myth of Chile is belief in one homogenous mestizo race (Clementi 1987; Jara 1971; Mörner 1960; Encina 1949). An example of the political construction of race in Chile is the 1907 national population census, the first to include a census category for indigenous persons, applied only south of the Bio-Bío River, where most Mapuches live (Censo de la República 1907; Gundermann, Vergara, and Foerster 2005).⁴ The census report explains that Chile was largely uninhabitable before the arrival of the Spanish, with as few as three thousand people living in the northern area of the country. Although the following two hundred years saw few European migrants arrive,⁵ the report claims that by 1907 Chile had greater population density than every Latin American country except Uruguay. The census proudly reports that since the seventeenth century the "fusion of the races was complete," with "the only majority in the population being people of Spanish race or assimilated mestizos" (Censo de la República 1907, 12). Race discourse in Chile thus defines two groups: indigenous groups and the Chilean-race majority (Mörner 1960). Since 1990, democratic governments have improved protection of indigenous peoples' rights and social standing but have reaffirmed this dichotomy, despite their efforts to erase race, for example, by defining mem-

4. The Mapuches are the largest indigenous group in Chile today and resisted integration into the Spanish Empire and independent Chile and Argentina until the 1880–1890s.

5. According to the census reports: there were 414 foreigners for every national in Chile, compared to 1,371 in the United States, 2,482 in Argentina, and 1,686 in Brazil. The census does not report immigration data for Peru and Bolivia because they are "more indigenous" (see Clementi 1987).

bership in an indigenous group by language or dress (Gundermann, Vergara, and Foerster 2005). In 2002, approximately 5 percent of the population identified with an indigenous group, with Mapuches being the most populous among the seven recognized indigenous communities. The remaining 95 percent are often described as ethnically homogenous (see, e.g., *Economist* 2005).

Recent historical, sociological, and survey research questions this understanding of race and racial difference in Chile, providing evidence that racial differences exist also among the nonindigenous population and that these are associated with socioeconomic status and used to discriminate in different ways. Not only is family lineage known to be important in access to education, wealth, and power, but also detailed research has shown how, for more than a century, elites did not mix with the large mestizo population (Collier and Sater 2004; Stabili 2003). In her exhaustive analysis of the Chilean "aristocracy" from 1860 to 1960, Stabili (2003) found that the Chilean elite were open to marriages with nonelites who had not participated in *mestizaje*: those who, even if poor, had just arrived on a boat from Europe. Further, as one respondent declared, "[The Chilean middle class] has Chilean ethnic roots, and into which few foreign families integrated" (Stabili 2003, 105). In choosing a marriage partner, race mattered more than class to Chilean elites.

Others have looked at the current uses of race to discriminate. In his analysis of the racism suffered by Mapuches, Paillalef Lefinao (2002, 79) documents the desired phenotype required to occupy a job of responsibility in Chile: "European, white and, if possible, blond." Contardo (2008) describes similar trends in urban and cosmopolitan Santiago, generally thought to be very different to the rainy, southern countryside described by Paillalef Lefinao. Those who want to climb the social ladder in Santiago seek to whiten themselves because a white phenotype is preferred; the chapter titles of Contardo's book provide testimony: "The Dark Destiny of Dark People," "He/She Feels Blond," "Dad Had Light Eyes," and "Caniquero, the White Mapuche." The blockbuster 2004 movie *Machuca* includes a scene in which four poor boys, naked except for their underwear, distrustfully stare out at a swimming pool full of rich boys. A boy in the pool teases, "Those with black shirts on must jump into the pool!" Like Núñez's SES index, the movie makes both class and race visible, but commentary on the movie focused on class as communicated by the boys' surnames—lower-class Machuca versus upper-class Infante—rather than race (Contardo 2008).⁶ Finally, a recent report claims that headhunters screen job candidates on the basis of white phenotypic attributes (Alonso 2004). The stories and contradictions told by these academic and nonacademic sources provide evidence of how strongly—though seemingly unconsciously—race figures in Chilean society today.

Race also may be linked to broader group identities. A 2005 survey by the BBVA Foundation found that 37 percent of Chileans identified as white; 55 percent as

6. For a review, see A. O. Scott, "History through the Eyes of a Frightened Child," January 19, 2005 (<http://movies.nytimes.com/2005/01/19/movies/19mach.html>). Echoing Núñez's classification, Infante is a Basque name and Machuca an Amerindian one.

Hispanic; 5 percent as native and/or indigenous; and 2 percent “don’t know.”⁷ This distribution broadly coincides with another survey in which 30 percent identified as Caucasian white; 65 percent as “predominantly white” mestizos; and 5 percent as indigenous (Medina Lois and Kaempffer n.d.). That a majority of Chileans identify as mestizo or Hispanic, and a large minority as white, coincides with the historical racial and class differences described by Stabili (2003) and adds dimension to the social pressures identified by Contardo (2008) and Paillalef Lefinao (2002). A majority of the population seeks to whiten itself to conform to the desired European phenotype, which remains an attribute of upper-class Chileans and/or of a sizable minority.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Critical race theorists have increasingly focused not on the race discourses of those discriminated against, but on the often invisible race discourses of those who discriminate. In her study of how whiteness is lived in middle-class racially segregated communities of the United States, Kenny (2000, 127) identifies “multiculturalism of inconsequence,” a process of intentionally disavowing differences and of naming those things that are less threatening. As differences are purposely and systematically, though not necessarily consciously, denied, all social perspective collapses, thus eliminating public spaces in which comparisons or conflicts can arise. Comparison and conflict both require some level of self-awareness, which is absent in cultures that cultivate some degree of inconsequence. The result is a culture that lives with contradictions, without any tools to recognize these or discuss potential injustices.

Warren (2000) develops a related concept—white talk—from his study of Brazil, a country often considered a racial democracy, despite extensive evidence of race-based privilege (for a discussion of how science and research shaped and reflected categories of race in Brazil, see Schwarcz 1993).⁸ To talk of race from a point at which it is perceived as not existing is considered racist and conflictive. Race is a “problem” that affects only those who have race (i.e., nonwhites), and conflict is evidence of the problem. White talk is characterized by a capacity to pretend that “one has transcended the multiple ways one’s ideas, values, expectations, emotions and practices are shaped by race” (Warren 2000, 146), to imagine oneself as raceless or race neutral, and a “flight from feeling” or conflict avoidance. Brazilian blacks adopt the discursive practices of whites: they avoid exposing racism when they experience it and value physical attributes of whiteness. Hence, Brazilian whites can use white talk without refutation and, given the privileges that their anonymous race confers on them, have no incentive to change: “Whites can more

7. Data available on request from the author or Fundacion BBVA. The national census and Latino-barómetro poll conducted by MORI appear to ask about subjective racial identity, but these data are not publicly released or accessible.

8. Brazil’s scientific elite developed an innovative discourse that both legitimated miscegenation and excluded colored persons from positions of academic power.

easily indulge in racial privilege without guilt because white privilege is naturalized and unmarked in non-white spaces. Hence the motivation to adopt official and popular discourses that affirm the absence of racism" (Warren 2000, 160).

Race and racism are not the same thing. Race is a fluid marker of group identity, "a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" (Omi and Winant 1994, 55). In contrast, racism is essentialist representations of race used to sustain power over others (Omi and Winant 1994, 71). Racism can also be "common sense": "the routine itself, rather than the underlying logic or purpose, provides the principal impetus for the behavior" (Haney-López 2003, 111). Haney-López (2003) traces the presence of commonsense racism in the California judicial system to point out how, without any intention, judges followed socially and legally sanctioned procedures that unconsciously perpetuate racial discrimination. It is so ordinary that it is done involuntarily; if questioned, the actor would not be able to explain his or her decision and would likely regret the action.

Commonsense racism, white talk, and the multiculturalism of inconsequence are useful analytical perspectives that transform apparent contradictions (like those identified in Bravo, Sanhueza, and Urzúa 2007; Núñez and Pérez 2007; and Núñez and Gutiérrez 2004) into windows for the study of social groups, their identities, and relationships. The following three sections apply these concepts to identify how collective beliefs about race in Chile shaped the research design choices of academics studying job-market discrimination. The objective is to illustrate how greater self-reflection and understanding, achieved through a critical approach, can improve social science research.

Chileans as "Raceless"

Chilean research on discrimination has focused on gender and Mapuches (Bravo, Sanhueza, and Urzúa 2007; Fuentes, Palma, and Montero 2005; Martínez and Palacios 2002; Merino et al. 2007; Paillalef Lefinao 2002; Pinto Rodríguez 2003; Poblete 2003; Van Dijk 2007). As an example of multiculturalism of inconsequence, this research focus reflects a historical and institutional push toward intentional sameness—most clearly represented in the myth of a homogenous Chilean race—which reduces sanctioned debates of social differences to gender and indigenous groups. Arguably, Núñez and Gutiérrez (2004, 115–118) insert socioeconomic class into this group of sanctioned spaces of difference:

Since the Spanish conquest, Spanish and Amerindian descendants have mixed continuously, and the size of Afro-American population has historically been negligible. As a result, and except for the small Amerindian populations existing today, "race" and "ethnicity" as such are not meaningful categories by which to identify and describe the vast majority of mixed-blood Chilean population, unlike other nations in the Americas. Instead, we postulate that "class" is a more appropriate characteristic for examining labor market discrimination in Chile. . . .

A significant fraction of national wealth and political economic power were concentrated in a relatively small group of families and dynasties. . . . These families were often connected by kinship relations, and *did not intermarry with the large mestizo (half-breed) popu-*

lation. This situation is still recognizable today in Chilean society; it is estimated that only 25% of the Chilean population are descended mainly from Europeans, while 70% are mestizos and 5% are predominantly of Amerindian ethnic background. (Emphasis added.)⁹

Further, although Núñez and Gutiérrez (2004, 119) write that the SES index “suggests strongly that the evaluators indeed assessed the individuals’ likely socioeconomic background based on the ethnic origin suggested by their surnames,” they conclude by exclusive reference to socioeconomic class, stating that upper-class graduates earn up to 50 percent more than lower-class graduates. Núñez and Gutiérrez’s struggle to disentangle race and class, and their preference for the latter, reflects broader Chilean social preferences for sameness and difference that sanction discussing women, Mapuches, and the poor but push race out of the public space of discussion.

Furthermore, just as race is pushed out of sanctioned discussions about Chileans, it is pushed into discussions about certain others, such as Bolivians and Peruvians. Labor economists have conducted research on ethnic discrimination in Bolivia, where, they say, about 30 percent of the population is indigenous (Contreras, Zapata, and Kruger 2007; Villegas and Núñez 2005). The attribution of race to Bolivians and its simultaneous denial to Chileans reflects a deep, uncontested assumption in Chile that equates race with being indigenous, and being indigenous as a problem that exists only in poorer countries like Bolivia. This is picked up in other research on Chileans’ attitudes toward immigrant workers from Peru and Bolivia; Staab and Maher (2006) link racism against Peruvians and Bolivians to the political construction of a Chilean identity as different from that in the rest of Latin America because Chile is less indigenous or—what amounts to the same thing—more homogenous (Staab and Maher 2006).

Race in the Details of Research Design

To construct the SES index, Núñez and Gutiérrez (2004, 115) used personal information provided by graduates in business and economics from the publicly funded and emblematic University of Chile, which Núñez describes as meritocratic and attracting students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Nonetheless, Núñez added Amerindian names to the list to “increase representativity,” and he points out that 45 percent of the names in the list were Basque, a much higher proportion than in the population as a whole.¹⁰ It is noteworthy that this problem of representativity is “corrected” while asserting that the University of Chile is meritocratic, without offering any bounds or qualifications to that statement or suggesting further or alternative research methods that might overcome or better understand this problem. Is the absence of a justification for the correction evidence that few Chileans would object to the procedure? This would then be an example of commonsense racism. The missing discussion reaffirms and re-

9. New historiography about Afro-Chileans is now available (see, e.g., Cussen 2009).

10. Núñez and Pérez (2007) do not provide data on how many Chileans as a whole have a Basque last name, but approximately 25 percent of the population descends from Europeans, including from Spain; clearly, a smaller percentage than this has a Basque name.

produces a dear national myth—that the University of Chile offers opportunities to all Chileans—and obscures the links between class and race (only Amerindian names are missing from an otherwise meritocratic institution).

To explain the absence of Amerindian names from the roster of business and economics students at the University of Chile, as well as the “excess” of Basque names, would require naming the effects of white privilege: historical access to good schools; extended networks of contacts and information; and better nutrition, health, and sports facilities, among many other things. The discussion would also require cultural introspection, and revisiting, for example, metaphors like that used by a former rector to describe the University of Chile: “an *adelantado* that goes clearing roads and discovering new territories that later others will colonize” (Lavados Montes 1993, 14). The rector correctly seeks to emphasize the intellectual importance of the university but chooses a metaphor that some Chileans may not be comfortable with. In old Spanish, an *adelantado* refers to a political or military leader and evokes images of conquistadores and Spanish authority. “Assimilated mestizos” were virtual slaves under this encomienda system and, by implication, are excluded from what the University of Chile is imagined to be. Arguably, racism in Chile is common sense and dwells in the details.

The construction of research instruments, important for research validity, is particularly vulnerable to researchers’ biases and hidden assumptions, which often manifest through details of research design. Núñez and Pérez (2007, 13), for example, make a series of small decisions with a large aggregate impact: surnames that could not be classified into one of the six ethno-regional categories were discarded; no “can’t tell” response option existed on the five-point social-class index; and Basque and non-Spanish European names were excluded from the list given to European exchange students used as a control group, “in case they might have inferred, from personal observation or knowledge of Chilean history, that these names might be associated with high socioeconomic status.” Foreign students thus received a list of only Chilean Spanish names. Núñez and Pérez (2007, 7) note that “this category [Chilean Spanish] groups a heterogeneous population, including the mestizo majority of the country (and even some Amerindians with a Hispanic name), as well as segments of the population who have not participated in the process of mestizaje, as is the case of those families of Castilian-Spanish origin who gave shape to the so-called ‘Castilian-Basque aristocracy.’” Hence, even in this instance of Chilean Spanish names from which race cannot presumably be inferred, in making the link to mestizaje, Núñez and Pérez (2007) state that they believe that there are real race differences among this group, too. Another important example of skewed research results due to problems in instrument construction is Bravo, Sanhueza, and Urzúa’s (2007, 21) use of fictitious rather than real CVs, which the authors later hypothesize may have produced positive discrimination, the opposite phenomenon of what they intended to study.

These problems of this research design are not only bypassed opportunities to push further on the race question in social science research; they also reveal the presence of different undercurrents of commonsense racism and of multiculturalism of inconsequence that shape researchers’ decisions and, by way of this,

research outcomes. If researchers had foreseen that employers might have a positive discrimination bias, they could have used a different methodology to test for this. Núñez and Pérez (2007) could have used the foreign-student control group to detect beliefs about race; alternative methods his team could have considered include recording evaluations of socioeconomic status based on photos and asking lower-class individuals, who do not usually go to university, to serve as a control instead of foreigners. The opportunities to use research design choices that reflect Chilean social reality are large and critical to improving the quality of social science research in Chile.

A Discriminating Minority?

In econometric job-discrimination research models, a majority of employers must discriminate for the wages of those discriminated against to decline, or for groups to be excluded from employment (i.e., for discrimination to be detectable or visible). The identity and relative size of the majority and minority are untested, and the direction and distribution of power between them is clear (e.g., whites against blacks). Some European and North American models even try to specify how large the minority can be before it can no longer evade discriminatory employers (Altonji and Blank 1999; O'Neill and O'Neill 2005). In the case of class-based discrimination, the majority and minority are no longer evident: Are all employers upper class and all potential employees lower class? What would this kind of labor market look like? Would it be perfectly segregated, as an article on headhunters implies (Alonso 2004)? Or would it simply be very small, with upper-class employers employing only upper-class employees?

Following Frankenberg's (1993, 10) assertion that "knowledge about a situation is a critical tool in dismantling it," failure to recognize a role for race over-emphasizes the role of class and binds inequality to an issue of income at the expense of culture. Recognizing race can improve our understanding of different social groups' identities, of how inequality is exercised and sustained, and it adds specificity to academic discussions about class in Chile. Too often existing scholarship remains content with abstract notions like the popular and dominant classes, or with known inaccuracies like lower, middle, and upper class.¹¹ These abstract and/or inaccurate categories obscure the study of social relations. For example, Núñez and Gutiérrez (2004, 116) describe class as a group-specific cultural attribute, imprinted during childhood, that stays constant over a lifetime; "individuals may modify their socioeconomic status, for example by investing in education," but not their social class. He views education as the only means for upward mobility because it increases income and overcomes some negative but unspecified lower-class culture; in the process other forms of social integration, such as spatial integration, are ignored, and it is suggested but not elaborated on that class discrimination reduces a poor person's incentives to invest in educa-

11. The use of ambiguous social categories has a long tradition. The works of Hirschman (1968) or Germani (1969) on development in Latin America leave unclear, for example, whether the industrial and elite classes are the same, as well as who exactly makes up the middle class.

tion.¹² Paillalef Lefinao (2002) draws a more specific depiction of lower-class culture, documenting how racial discrimination against the Mapuches promoted a defeatist culture and a lack of confidence that affect schooling, work, and living decisions. The Mapuches' lower-class culture is described in opposition to the dominant culture, blind to these discriminatory processes, and equally invisible to the reader. Paillalef Lefinao shies away from specifying the identity and characteristics of the dominant culture. In similar terms, the renowned historian Bengoa (2006) describes Chile as divided between a passive society and an arrogant upper class. He bemoans the absence of a U.S.-like pilgrim figure to legitimize social mobility as a public value, and he attributes to this the success of a homogenizing and disempowering popular discourse. Such abstract two-class analyses are common in the Chilean literature (see, e.g., Martínez and Palacios 1996; Tironi et al. 2003; Van Dijk 2007).

Chilean economists, in contrast, describe a three-class structure, quintiles, and even deciles (Contreras 1999; Núñez and Risco 2004). Market research organizations use international income distribution categories to segment Chilean society into five classes; the top echelon of the middle class to the richest amounts to 7 percent of the population, and the middle class amounts to another 15 percent. Fully 78 percent of the population ranges from lower middle class to poor (Adimark 2002).¹³ How do all these class structures correspond to one another? What defines the identities, values, and resources of the majority and minority (or minorities)? Bounding inequality to a problem of the poorest, or the Mapuches, is one way to render this social complexity manageable, both politically and for the researcher. For the very poorest, lack of income overwhelms gender, family, religion, region of residence, or race because these are shared only by subgroups of the poor and nonpoor. Further, the elite remain on the sidelines of social analysis and commentary, seemingly free from these markers of identity that shape group behavior or are used to discriminate. Taking these scholarly accounts as examples of white talk highlights the importance of recognizing privilege, among other places, in the position of the researcher. Not only do researchers appear raceless and classless; through their work they sanction avoiding certain conflicts and perpetuating accepted social narratives.

In Chile, where racial differences exist alongside a contradictory cultural discourse, social science research that focuses on race can explicitly connect group identities to asymmetrically distributed power. Labor economists say that income inequality is largely "explained" by the behavior of the richest 10–20 percent of the population (Contreras 1999, 318), and if we focus on the remaining 80 percent, "Chile becomes one of the most egalitarian countries in the region" (Núñez and Gutiérrez 2004, 115). Putting social scientific and economic research in dialogue leads to a picture of society in which the richest 10–20 percent of Chileans are white with Basque and non-Spanish European surnames, and constitute the traditional aristocratic or dominant class; the popular class is the 80 percent "very

12. In addition, Chilean society is highly spatially segregated, both by neighborhood and by school (e.g., Núñez and Gutiérrez 2004; Núñez and Risco 2004; Contreras 1999).

13. The categories are ABC1, C2, D, and E; C1 and C2 are considered the middle class.

egalitarian" largely mestizo population. In this framing, inequality is no longer a problem of the poor. The poor are no longer the last rung in a neat continuum from poor to lower to middle to upper class. Rather, inequality is a problem about access to the top echelons of society; race is a marker of both the privileged and the discriminated, as the minority discriminates against the majority. How this feat is achieved remains a fertile question for Chilean social scientists.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Though innovative and a valuable contribution to Chilean social science research, the reviewed labor market models do not identify the groups that are discriminating and presumably being discriminated against, do not situate these in a historical context, and do not specify the relationships among the groups. They therefore fail to address real problems of representativity and research validity; whether a model is well specified cannot be assessed without some shared understanding of the underlying phenomena (i.e., of the different social groups involved, their identities and conditions, and their historical relationships). In the process of being adapted by Chilean researchers, econometric models for measuring job-market discrimination developed in the United States have been distorted in ways that undermine their usefulness.¹⁴ The reasons have to do with the relative lack of historical and social scientific research on privilege, which might both inform and challenge the specifications of quantitative models, as well as with certain beliefs about Chilean society that stem from the position of the researcher as outside the object of study. These beliefs are expressed in the contradictory treatment of race and reflect the lack of social reflexivity on the importance and role of race in Chilean society.

To bring race into the analysis of society in Chile is not to seek out new or unnecessary conflicts. Rather, paying serious attention to race as a marker of group identities and potential means for discrimination can improve the quality of social science research on how inequality is produced and maintained even in societies that have experienced constant economic growth. To work in this direction, researchers could begin by reflecting on the ascribed differences between ethnicity and race. Both terms today describe fluid categories that respond to social and political constructions rather than fixed biological attributes (Frankenberg 1993; Omi and Winant 1994). Ethnicity, however, has historically implied a shared cultural identity in addition to a racial one. Discussions of racial difference in Chile have been expressed as ethnic difference, whereas in the United States ethnicity came under attack for ignoring race and the ways in which racial difference led groups to live qualitatively different historical experiences (Omi and Winant 1994, 20). Why is there a seeming preference for ethnicity among Chilean researchers, and how is this defined? Another direction to work in is increased interdisciplinary collaboration among social scientists and humanities scholars. In particular, this approach could create projects that combine quantita-

14. I am particularly indebted to an anonymous *LARR* reviewer for helping me see this clearly in these terms.

tive and qualitative approaches to better describe the processes of discrimination as well as the magnitude or presence of it. Continuing to ignore the role of race in Chilean society compromises the accuracy and insightfulness of social science research and helps maintain existing patterns of inequality and social exclusion.

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