The conflict of the ‘Racial Democracy myth’ in the attitudes towards Affirmative Action Policies in Brazil – a group conflict approach

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INTRODUCTION

The research on racial relations in Brazil is seen as fundamental in order to comprehend brazilian social dynamics: this discussion has been the target of different reviews as time went by. However, despite the frequent reviews, remains strong the so-called racial democracy myth. The original formulation of this concept can be found in Gilberto Freyre’s work (1900-1987), a brazilian anthropologist and historian. He intended to discuss the rise of brazilian society focusing on the interaction between different racial matrixes, mainly european and african. Freyre establishes a change in framing the brazilian racial studies, in order to center culture instead of biological-racial determinants. Influenced by boasian anthropology, Freyre intends to understand the production of a brazilian culture according to the sociability patterns in vogue in colonial society.

Picturing brazilian coast colonization as the fundamental stone of the national social organization, Freyre says that the interaction of specific cultural forms with the environment and behavior have made possible the creation of assimmetrical racial relations, though they were taken as soft. The relative fluidness of miscigenation would be visible, therefore, in the absence of institutionalized racism and in the possibility of social mobility. The author himself indicates that “surely there’s no other modern community with the brazilian etnic complexity, where racial relations issue among men of several etnic origins have received a more democratic or christian solution than in Portuguese America.” (Freyre, 2001, p. 121)
Although it is not ignored by Freyre, social inequality originated from the maintenance of manorial relations between whites and blacks in colonial environment is not sufficiently treated in his writings. Antirracialist approaches are known for not to use the “race” category as a variable or explanatory condition of the asymmetric distribution of resources between whites and nonwhites, deviating the focus of some debates to concepts such as social class.

The way in which economic, political and societal development has occurred in Brazil has yielded structural social asymmetries, that have generated themselves interest groupings, whose composition has been made in three attribute levels: race, class and status (Azevedo apud Guimarães, 1999). We can notice that the interaction between race and class in the interpretation of racial dynamics in Brazil is not, theoretically, a novelty, and that this approach breaks up with the freyrean racial democracy myth presumptions, for shedding light on racial and social prestige attributes. Still, research on social stratification in Brazil from the 70’s on (Hasenbalg & Silva, 1988) have made it clear to the need of analyzing inequalities in Brazil by racial criteria.

According to Telles (2003), the racial democracy myth expression has been coined by the Negro Movement in the 60’s, in order to express the assumed fallacious character of freyrean approaches on racial relations in Brazil. We are going to use this expression. In this paper, because it denotes an argument that is dear to us, that refers to antirracialist explanations on social inequalities in Brazil, that remain in vogue until nowadays. As regards the persistency of the racial democracy myth in the brazilian social thought, we should note that it has basically two dimensions: the appreciation of miscigenation as a genuine brazilian product and the perception that there is no split between races in the country; and the predominance of arguments that depreciate racial criteria in its influence on labor, educacional and income inequalities in Brazil. This paper focuses on the second dimension.

Bailey (2009) proceeds with an exam of the racial democracy myth expression, presenting the main critiques and appropriations that the concept has been thorugh since its original formulation. Certainly, one of the most severe critiques is originated on the debates promoted by the Negro Movement in Brazil, from the first half of the twentieth century. According to black intellectuals such as Abdias do Nascimento and Guerreiro Ramos, most brazilians (including browns, light browns and negros) denied consistently that there was any racial discrimination and racial inequality in Brazil. As regards it, Bailey (2009) indicates that “if people did not believe in the existence of racial
discrimination [due to the racial democracy myth], surely they would not mobilize for its eradication.” (Bailey, 2009, p. 113). Bailey postulates that, even though the persistency of the racial democracy myth is a fact in Brazil, Brazilian Political Science has not dedicated itself to investigates the political effects of this discourse. According to Hasenbalg and Silva, “yet the ways in which this ideology is translated into concepts and attitudes among white and black brazilians continue to be largely unknown.” (Hasenbalg & Silva apud Bailey, 2009).

Guimarães (1999) indicates that, despite the fixedness of the racial democracy myth in brazilian social thought, the concept of race remains unique in its critical potential. This author affirms, still, that one of the most remarkable characteristics of brazilian citizens’ racial behavior is its pretensely antiracist bias, that is, the denial of racial criteria as component of social inequalities in Brazil.

Considering this, we should investigate which are the main legacies of the racial democracy myth to the interpretation of public opinion on racial relations in Brazil. Regarding this, we must treat the myth and its main presumptions as a belief system about social stratification and labor, education and income assimetries in Brazil. Assuming it as a belief system which is specially important in order to analyze the adhesion to racial and social quotas for admission in public universities in Brazil, once these initiatives are, essentially, policies that aim at correcting educational injustices that focus on the beneficiaries’ racial attributes.

According to a trend observed in countries that also have racial debts, such as United States (in which the first affirmative actions were originated from the 1964 Civil Rights Act), Brazil, in late 90’s, has put in the public agenda the discussion on race-targeted policies or affirmative actions. Traditionally, these policies have been seen by civil society and by specialists as ways to correct educational and labor inequalities that affect poor population (mainly composed by black people). As race-targeted policies such as racial quotas get stronger in brazilian public agenda, we can notice that the debate as regards them also flourishes, engendering favorable and counter opinions.

The adoption of racial or social quotas for admission in brazilian public universities has had its first experience in 2002, when the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) has introduced the reserve of spots to black, brown and indigenous self-declared candidates that required their spots (20% of the available positions were attributed to racial quotas, 20% for social quotas, 5% for people with disabilities and the remaining spots for broad competition). From 2001 to 2013, affirmative action policies
has been extended to other public education institutions, that went from bonus scores for candidates in admission exams through the Quotas Bill (12.711/2012), sanctioned in 2012, that guarantees the “reservation of 50% of registrations by course and shift in the 59 federal universities and 38 federal education, science and technology institutes to students wholly originated from the public system.” (BRASIL, 2012). The appliance of the Quotas Bill on the definition of available spots considers the minimum percentage related to the sum of blacks, browns and indigenous in the federation unit, according to the National Census, produced by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE).

However in academic environment the affirmative actions have gained some space during the last years (mostly due to the pass of the Quotas Bill), but little has been said about the vision of the brazilians on this. In spite of the lack of research that discuss racial relations in Brazil from the perspective of political attitudes (Telles, 2003; Bailey, 2009), to analyze how reminiscences to the racial democracy myth are observed in the (un)favorable positioning to the racial or social quotas in public universities is to verify the persistance of explanations that require race as an explanatory condition to social inequalities or not.

The research that originates this paper is justified by this: the central goal of this paper is to inquiry the strength of the racial democracy myth arguments and its unfoldings on the shaping of brazilian college students’ attitudes on racial relations and, mostly, on the adoption of affirmative actions on public universities. Our main hypothesis is that, due to the predominance of a vision that postulates that brazilian social inequalities are concentrated of income and social class assimetries, the adhesion to social quotas (reservation of available spots to poor candidates, no matter their color) is higher than the adhesion to racial quotas.

Yet, among the individuals that prefer social quotas to racial quotas, we should presume that explanations that deflate the relevance of racial criteria are dominant. Regarding this, we should notice that, in this piece of work, we do not assume racist behavior as a presumption, neither we intend to label students’ positions as necessarily racist or not. We explore one of the dimensions of the current racial dynamics in Brazil, to which correspond some specific attitudes. Thus, our goal is not to work on the práxis of racist behavior, but on to the cognitive-attitudinal basis of this behavior.
DATA AND METHOD

The number and influence of experimental studies are growing rapidly in political science, according to the discovery of new possibilities for the use of experimental techniques to illuminate the political phenomena. The experimental study of politics has grown explosively in the last two decades (Druckman et al. 2011), experimentalists are exploring topics that would have been unimaginable a few years ago.

The measurement of issues such as affirmative actions (racial quotas) is difficult, because it is a socially sensitive issue, that is, the expression of preferences on social issues that are not socially consensual. Commonly related to this topic are racial, sexual orientation, drug use and gender issues, and generally, people do not want to answer, further, people just do not want to publicly disclose their social preferences when faced with a traditional survey (Berinsky, 2002; Krysan, 1998), what makes the answers of respondents suffer an effect of “social desirability”, the answer goes towards what is socially accepted and desired by the social norms. Despite these difficulties, measuring attitudes about socially sensitive issues is possible due to advances in research methods, especially in survey research. Some researchers have developed experimental techniques for measuring prejudice (Kuklinski, Cobb and Gilens, 1997a) and its effects on the support of public policies such as income transfer policies or affirmative action (Sniderman & Piazza, 1995). Thus, the technique that will be used is known as the list-experiment and it is often used in political science (e.g. Kuklinski, Cobb and Gilens, 1997a; Kuklinski et al, 1997b; Sniderman & Carmines, 1997) for this type of measurement, because it allows to indirectly question the respondents, ensuring greater sincerity in their answers.

The effect of social desirability is the inclination of the respondents to answer questions in a way that is well regarded by others, people always want to make a good impression and they care about what others think about them, there is a strong motivational component (Berinsky, 2002). This effect may end up overestimating “good attitudes” or underestimating “bad attitudes” according to the social norms. This trend represents a serious problem for conducting behavioral research with self-reported surveys.

The experimental model has become an important and great tool in political science to the study of opinions and attitudes. There is a variety of experimental studies
to measure the racial attitudes of white, like vote on black candidates, racial prejudice, support for public policies of racial nature, (Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay 1986; Sears et al. 1997).

The experimental method allows the realization of causal inferences, using information on the causal links identified in the sample studied to learn about existing causal relationships in the population as a whole (Morton & Williams, 2010). But also enables the principle of replicability, that is, not only to the data obtained, but the whole process of development and implementation of research.

This technique was brought to Political Science by Kuklinski et al. (1997b). As originally conceived by Kuklinski, the control group respondents receive a list of items and should tell the interviewer how many of the listed items they agree, without specifying what these are. Respondents from the treatment group receive the same instructions and the same list of items from the control group, however, the list contains one more item that measures the issue of interest.

Between October 2012 and January 2013, a survey was designed. In April 2013 the survey went online and applied to all undergraduate students at the University of Brasilia (UnB), and in June 2013 for all undergraduate students at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) to measure attitudes students on the quotas system. Students were contacted by email and answered the survey voluntarily.

Despite the distinct history of racial quotas on the two universities, the profile of students on both universities are very similar, making it possible to work the data from the two universities in an aggregate form. Students were invited to participate in three different studies on student quotas: quotas for public schools, quotas for low-income students and racial quotas.

In total, 4,121 students answered the racial quotas survey and 4,197 students answered the social quotas survey. Each specific survey had a number between 17 and 18 questions, differing only on the question list control, treated list or a third group with a direct question. Among the surveys completed, 2,123 (racial quotas) and 2,174 (social quotas) respondents declared themselves as white. 1,354 (racial quotas) and 1,401 (social quotas) received the standard question, 1,367 (racial quotas) and 1,369 (social quotas) the list control, 1,320 (racial quotas) and 1,347 (social quotas) the treated list.

The experiment randomly assigned respondents in the control group, treated group or the third group. Respondents in the control group were asked the following question:
“Now let's talk about the ways to entry in the brazilian federal universities. From the following list of items, how many you agree? We do not want to know with which you agree, we are interested only in the number of items which you agree”. (random order every time)

1) All universities should adopt the ENEM;
2) The increase of vacancies facilitated the entry of low-skilled students;
3) All universities should adopt a free admission system;
4) The Vestibular is not a good test to select the best students;

Respondents in the treated group were also asked with the same list, however, with the addition of the sensitive item:

5) The reservation system for blacks (racial quotas policy) is an important policy.

The first item refers to the National Secondary Education Examination (ENEM), which is a test conducted by the Ministry of Education of Brazil (MEC). It is used to evaluate the quality of secondary education and its result also serves as access to higher education in brazilian public universities through the Unified Selection System (SiSU). Enem is the largest exam in Brazil and for some it is a fairer way of admission to a system that is limited and usually requires the students to travel to the location of the desired university to do a specific exam from that institution.

The second item concerns the recent increase in the number of vacancies in the federal universities in the last decade by the government of President Lula, which has broaden almost a third of the number of spots in brazilian higher education institutions and some believe that this allowed the entry of poorly-qualified students. The third item suggests that universities should abandon the entrance tests in the universities and adopt another form of selection.

The fourth item measures attitudes about the traditional exam in Brazilian universities, the Vestibular. The fifth and final item, socially sensitive, measures the attitude of the students against the use of vague reservation system for blacks, which secures a number of places for these candidates.

Bear in mind that all items are related to the access to brazilians public universities, which makes it less suspicious and more difficult to the participants identify the research issue, otherwise, if these items were not linked. These items were
chosen following the recommendations of how best to build a list from Glynn (2010). Moreover, the items were chosen in order to avoid any ceiling effect. Kuklinski et al. (1997b) notes that a ceiling effect can occur when a respondent honestly answer yes to all non-sensitive items.

When this occurs with a respondent in the treated group, he/she has no longer enough protection to honestly report his/her response to the sensitive item and therefore he/she may underreport his/her true response. Kuklinski et al. (1997b) shows an example, in their research a large part of the control group agreed to all non-sensitive items, and due to the consequent ceiling effect, the results were a negative ratio of the sensitive item.

To avoid this Glynn (2010, p. 6) recommends the use of a negative correlation between items, which is, among the items (1) and (4) of our list because, someone who believes the ENEM should be adopted as a means of entry to all federal universities, should never agree to a free admission system in the universities.

Despite three major difficulties list experiment that Glynn (2010) and Corstange (2008) present: (i) the list-experiment requires a large sample; (ii) the standard analysis does not diagnose violations of behavioral assumptions implicit in this technique; (iii) it is difficult to use it in a multivariate regression or modeling. However, the list-experiment is becoming popular and a powerful tool to measure socially sensitive issues.

It is from the difference of the means (treated and control groups) that we estimate the racial attitudes, in this case the percentage (just multiplying by 100) of respondents opposed the racial quotas or social quotas. The third group received instead of the list-experiment, a conventional and direct question about the racial quotas or social policy:

*Do you believe that the vacancies reservation policy for blacks in the brazilian federal universities entrance exam (racial quotas policy) is an important policy?*

1. Yes
2. No

This third group was created to test how the attitudes and opinions of respondents change when confronted directly with the socially sensitive issue, because
the simple embarrassment to admit an antipathy towards another group like blacks, gays, xenofobia or sexism will be sufficient to mask and distort the true answers.

Therefore, false attitudes and opinions not only means a measurement error, but also means systematically wrong analysis: wrong estimators, inverted signals and variables without explanatory power. (Corstange, 2008). This all makes the fake answers not only an epistemological problem, but “an epistemological problem with teeth” (Corstange, 2008, p. 2). For the purposes of this study, we analyzed only the answers from the self-declared white students, since the focus is the attitudes and opinions of whites students to the quotas system in brazilian federal universities. The self-declaration is chosen as the classification, because it involves the internal process of rejection or acceptance of symbols, traditions and lifestyle associated with certain groups (Telles, 2004, p. 89).

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the average number of items that the respondents agree, both for control and treatment lists. The difference-in-means (multiplied by 100) indicates the estimated proportion of students (43.8%) who agreed with the sensitive item and thus truly support racial quotas at the University of Brasilia and the Federal University of Minas Gerais. This figure can be compared to the one obtained from the benchmark group, who answered the direct question with no privacy.

Table 1: Global estimated average support for racial quotas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>A Difference-in-means in %</th>
<th>B Benchmark Group in %</th>
<th>B – A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.38 (0.027)</td>
<td>2.82 (0.034)</td>
<td>43.8* (0.043)</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>1243</td>
<td>1215</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *p<.05

The benchmark group showed a 54.6% average support for the racial quotas. The difference between this group and the result from the list experiment (54.6% - 43.8%) indicates an overestimation of the real preferences on racial quotas. Thus,
opposition to racial quotas among students is generally underestimated by almost 11% in conventional surveys, it is the social desejability effect.

Table 2 shows the estimated percentage of students who agreed with the sensitive item (multiplied by 100) which was 65.9% and thus truly support social quotas in both universities. If we compare with the direct question from the benchmark group, a support of 73.4%, we have that the true preferences are overestimated by 7.5% (73.4% - 65.9%). This reveals that the social desirability effect exists also in the social quotas, hence, we will report only the values of the list experiment onward.

Table 2: Global estimated average support for social quotas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>A Difference-in-means (in %)</th>
<th>B Benchmark Group (in %)</th>
<th>B − A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>65.9*</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>1264</td>
<td>1245</td>
<td>(0.028)</td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *p<.05

Table 3 and Table 4 presents the results of white students support to the racial quotas and social quotas to the list experiment. As we can see, the support for the social quotas it is larger than for the racial quotas, while only 33.3% of the white respondents agreed with the racial quotas item, 60.9% of the white respondents agreed with the social quotas item.

Table 3: Estimated average support for racial quotas by whites students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>Difference-in-means (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>33.3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *p<.05
Table 4: Estimated average support for social quotas by whites students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>Difference-in-means (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>60.9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.039)</td>
<td>(.044)</td>
<td>(.059)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>677</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *p<.05

Income groups were classified into tertiles, the first tertile was with individuals with family income up to R$ 3,500, the second tertile was with family income of R$ 3,501 to R$ 8,000 and finally the third tertile with individuals of family income upper than R$ 8,001. As shown in Table 5, along with the increase in family income comes a decrease of the support for racial quotas, as higher the income, the lower the support for racial quotas.

Table 5: Estimated average support for racial quotas by family income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>Difference-in-means (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1º. Tertil</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>53.9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.044)</td>
<td>(.056)</td>
<td>(.072)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>479</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2º. Tertil</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>44.7*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.049)</td>
<td>(.062)</td>
<td>(.079)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>334</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3º. Tertil</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>30.5*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.047)</td>
<td>(.059)</td>
<td>(.075)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>402</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *p<.05

However, the results in Table 6 shows that for the social quotas that trend does not follow, the support of high income students is high as the support of low income students, while middle family income students support less the social quotas. Yet, these are only by the economic feature, we should go further.
Table 6: Estimated average support for social quotas by family income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>Difference-in-means (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1º. Tertil</td>
<td>2.42 (.048)</td>
<td>3.12 (.051)</td>
<td>69.8* (.070)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>486</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2º. Tertil</td>
<td>2.39 (.052)</td>
<td>2.96 (.059)</td>
<td>56.8* (.079)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>359</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3º. Tertil</td>
<td>2.29 (.048)</td>
<td>2.99 (.059)</td>
<td>69.5* (.076)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *p<.05

Table 7 shows the estimated average support for racial quotas by family income and race. The same trend from Table 5 appears again, but with income and race together, the opposition to the racial quotas is stronger, specially between the whites from high income families, is the less supportive group we found. It is clear that the match of income and race affects strongly the attitudes about the affirmative actions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>Difference-in-means (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Income Whites</td>
<td>2.27 (.064)</td>
<td>2.75 (.088)</td>
<td>47.4* (.109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Income Whites</td>
<td>2.35 (.067)</td>
<td>2.73 (.084)</td>
<td>37.6* (.107)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>179</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Income Whites</td>
<td>2.39 (.060)</td>
<td>2.59 (.073)</td>
<td>20.2 (.094)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>253</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *p<.05

Finally, Table 8 presents the results for the social quotas, also by family income and race. The trend from Table 6 repeats with the whites from low and high income
supporting more the social quotas than the middle income whites, it seems that the opposition of social quotas is located mainly in the middle class.

Table 8: Estimated average support for social quotas by family income and race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>Difference-in-means (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Income Whites</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>(.109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>220</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Income Whites</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>(.106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>199</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Income Whites</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>(.092)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>258</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *p<.05

DISCUSSION

The comparison between tables 1 and 2 brings an information that corroborates, a priori, to our paper’s hypothesis: the support of social quotas for the admissions in brazilian public universities is higher than the support for racial quotas, even when we control the social desirability effect by the comparison between treatment and benchmark groups. The net preference for social quotas exceeds the preference for racial quotas in more than 22%. It is necessary, then, to discuss if the racial democracy myth is pertinent to explain these differences. We can notice that the survey experimente could catch importante differences as regards the approval to the quotas. We can also notice differences in the support of the quotas as the measuring form changes, in racial and social quotas: when the individual feels more unconstrained to his/her interlocutors’ judgements, he/she tends to express his/her opinions more truly.

We can also observe that, in the comparison between tables 3 and 4 (that report about racial and social quotas approval between white college students) that the adhesion to the first system is almost twice as higher as the second system. The data
disaggregation for self-declared white students indicates that the trend of preference to social quotas resists, and the percentage of students that agree with racial quotas diminishes. This trend can be explained, at first, by the effectiveness of antiracialist theses of explanation of social inequalities in Brazil – a legacy from the racial democracy myth –, according to which inequalities correction policies should not be elaborated by racial biases, once racial criteria do not matter on the reproduction of assimetries in Brazil.

However, these data can also be explained by the self-interest perspective: once the admission in brazilian public universities has a flavor of competition and thus affirmative actions would do good \textit{a priori} only to the black and brown population that has been traditionally excluded from higher education, on the views of white students these actions would not benefit them in a straightforward logic. Once there is no way how to extract personal benefits from these initiatives, there’s no need to be favorable to them.

This hypothesis is developed by Kinder & Sanders (1996) and Sears et al (2000) in their discussion on the approval of affirmative actions in American universities. According to this thought, we should expect that, on the other side, blacks and browns would declare themselves more favorable to racial quotas than to social quotas. However, in this paper, once we intend to discuss the centrality of antiracialist explanations for the adhesion to social quotas, there is no need to discuss this possible outcome.

Table 5 shows data on social quotas and racial quotas approval, by income categories. Once quotas are a mechanism of correction of inequalities that are utterly labor and income assimetries, it is importante to review how data vary when disaggregated in terms of income. We can observe that, the higher the declared income, the lower the support to racial quotas gets. As regards social quotas, we notice a different trend: the support expressed by low and high income students are similar. On the other hand, support from medium income is lower. This data, \textit{prima facie}, indicates that the richest students recognize the existance of inequalities and the need of quotas, but not link them necessarily to racial attributes.

The downward support to social quotas among medium income students may indicate a point identified by Kinder & Sanders (1996): when asked about their support to focused public policies, individuals that occupy intermediate income categories tend
to be more conservative. In this case, being conservative means to think that the State should not see to it that minorities are protected and guaranteed in inequality correction.

Tables 7 and 8 also bring important outcomes, as long as they shed light on the intercrossing between race and income, that offer more faithful interpretation on how brazilians’ racial attitudes operate on the continuum between race, class and status.

Table 7 shows that, unlike expected, the adhesion to racial quotas among white low income individuals is the highest between all income categories, even thought these people are, theoretically, the main “competitors” of black individuals for spots in public universities. We should expect, then, that low income white individuals would be more resistant to racial quotas, which was not proved in the results. Among low income whites, the adhesion to social quotas is even higher than racial quotas, which does not surprise us, once they could benefit straightforwardly from these policies.

The analysis of the adhesion to social quotas among white individuals grouped in different income categories present a similar logic to the one presented in table 6: between the two extreme categories, we can observe that the aprooval of social quotas is higher than the observed in intermediate positions. The interpretation is similar to the one proposed for that observation.

CLOSING REMARKS

Our goal in this paper was to investigate how the racial democracy myth can be used as a resource for the interpretation of public opinion on racial issues in Brazil. Research on social stratification in Brazil from the 70’s on have indicated that racial attributes, once they were intrinsically linked to marginalization and educational segregation conditions experienced by the poor in Brazil should also be considered as explanatory variables as regards social inequalities in Brazil.

According to Guimarães (1999), Telles (2003) and Bailey (2009), the racial democracy myth can be considered as a belief system, that unites considerations and attitudes about social stratification and inequalities originated from this process, that correspond to acess to education, social space, labor market and income in the country. The racial democracy myth could, thus, be considered as a repositor of explanations that have entered in such a strong way in brazilian social thought that citizens very often appeal to it in order to formulate their attitudes and opinions on issues that correspond to racial relations, directly or not.
The social desirability effect is clear: in contexts in which the interviewer feels more exposed, he/she tends to choose answers close to the socially desirable, answers that do not cause awkwardness in the interviewer nor take to bad judgements about the respondent. Social desirability on racial relations in Brazil was also discussed by Turra & Venturi (1995), who noticed a trend of using euphemisms in words and expressions that are part of the brazilian social thought.

Still regarding social desirability on brazilians’ racial attitudes, we should notice that its presence seems to transcend methodological discussions and can explain the trend of preference for social quotas instead of racial quotas. About this, Guimarães (1999) postulates that one of the main trends in brazilians’ racial behavior is the fact that, very often, racial discrimination treats itself as antiracism, and treats any other evaluation of racial attributes (taken as explanatory variables) as manifestations of racism. Therefore, social desirability in the answers provided by brazilian students could be interpreted by the following sentence: it is socially desirable to prefer social quotas than racial quotas, once the difference between candidates would be, itself, an expression of racism.

According to the data, in racial and social quotas, social desirability effects are present and may be identified by several measures of adhesion. However, when we isolate social desirability effects, we can notice that, in a aggregate level, the adhesion to social quotas is higher than racial quotas. Thus, even though social desirability cannot be ignored, it is not the only possible explanation. When we disaggregate data in terms of racial classification and income, we can see that even so the preference for social quotas trespasses racial quotas, which corresponds to our hypothesis.

We claim that the pertinence of the racial democracy myth on the white students preferences for affirmative attitudes is a belief system that, by discussing the dissolution of racial criteria on private life sociability and crediting the rise of brazilian people from the concept of culture, depreciates racial attributes as explanatory factors to social assymetries observed nowadays. Even though the brazilian social stratification has been formed according to racial criteria, the social thought built from there did not link to race the function of hierarquizing social relations component, and, naturally, explanatory as regards inequalities.

Therefore, the presumptions of the racial democracy myth are linked to the adhesion to the social quotas instead of the racial quotas. We follow this thought: the racial democracy myth depreciates racial attributes as explanatory factors as regards
inequalities in Brazil. Once the affirmative actions in Brazilian public universities a way of correcting educational and labor inequalities, these actions should not be planned due to racial criteria, but due to criteria that emphasize class and status differences.

We should notice that the adhesion to social quotas instead of racial quotas does not assume, in any way, the belief that Brazil is a country free from social assimetries. But the social thought contaminated by the racial democracy myth credits the existence of these assimetries to class and status attributes, even though the research on stratification have highlighted that marginalization and social segregation originated from social inequalities have affected mostly AfroBrazilian population.

Later studies in the social stratification field, such as Osório (2008), give space to racial criteria as explanatory variables in other ways: racial discrimination and racial ressentment. According to this corrente, not only inequalities of exposition and access to goods and material, educational and cultural services produce social assimetries, but also racial discrimination to which most of the AfroBrazilian people are exposed in Brazil.

Thus, disadvantages in aspects such as labor market entrance and permanence in higher education would be linked not only to the absence/insufficiency of resources, but also to the expression. Of prejudice and discrimination. As regards this, it is importante to verify that, by showing preference to the social quotas instead of the racial quotas, Brazilian college studies surveyed do not recognize, yet, racial discrimination as a producer of social assimetries.

According to Guimarães (1999), one of the remarkable tensions in Brazilian citizens’ racial attitudes research would be caused by the interchanging between egalitarian and traditionalist presumptions. There would be, according to him, a trend of using some sort of upside-down egalitarianism – different from the egalitarianism approached by Kinder & Sanders (1996) – which postulates that the differences among people by racial criteria would be itself a form of discrimination, even though this differentiation aims at selectin individuals to take part in public policies that, at least theoretically, have been designed to correct social inequalities. According to this trend, to be more favorable to social quotas would be a way to strenghten egalitarian principles.

Antirracialist discourse represented by the famous expression “We are one” devalues the potential of race attributes and assumes that social differences observed among Brazilians are not due to race. This fact has outcomes in how racial attitudes in
Brazil are formed. Once color/race itself would not be taken into account to the discussion of inequalities and social assimetries, it was not consideres to the formation of identities and personal marks that, beyond self-interest, also shape mental structures in which political and social attitudes are processed either. In order to explore this puzzle, we rely on contributions from Thales de Azevedo (Azevedo *apud* Guimarães, 1999), Fernandes (1965), Guimarães (1999), Telles (2003), Bailey (2009) and others as regards the particular relation between race, class and status to the definition of interest groups in modern Brazil.

Guimarães (1999), as regards it, postulates that any debates on brazilians’ attitudes to racial relations should take into account “the discoursive and ideological intercrossing between race, class, status and gender” (Guimarães, 1999, p. 54), among other historical processes. Summing up, the definition of interest groups only by racial criteria is not enough: that is the reason why we examine data on this interaction, beyond data on race and income themselves. According to Bailey (2009), “(in Brazil race is more of a continuum in which color and other physical features, and socioeconomic features as class position, are taken into account in the social process of categorization. The determination of race, thus, is variable.” (Bailey, 2009, p. 135).

We therefore assume that the interaction between these attributes which are equally powerful between each other is fruitful, and we do not assume that class is more remarkable than race in the explanation of racial attitudes in Brazil. Relyion on Bailey (2009) once more, we can indicate that “the danger of focusing in monolithical racial identities can be particularly dreadful in Brazil, where class-based identifications may play a significant role in cognitive organization of attitudinal instances.” (Bailey, 2009).

In this paper, we have relied on empirical data to test and develop our hypothesis, that establishes that the presumptions of the racial democracy myth may be useful to explain at least partially the higher levels of adhesion to social quotas as compared to racial quotas. We have seen that in fact, antiracialist theses are fruitful to understand Brazilian college students’ attitudes on affirmative actions, but, inspite of that, according to Guimarães, “the idea of race in Brazil remains unique in its critical potential” (Guimarães, 1999). Although this is an agenda to be continued in other research projects, we can also point out Hasenbalg & Silva’s assumption that, as economic inequalities and disadvantages suffered by afro-brazilian population rise to public agenda, we can expect a context in which racial relation become a field of social competition (Hasenbalg & Silva, 1988).
REFERENCES


