

Legacies of Race: Identities, Attitudes, and Politics in Brazil

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Legacies of Race: Identities, Attitudes, and Politics in Brazil, by Stanley R. Bailey
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In this meticulously researched, theoretically sophisticated, and thought-provoking book, Stanley Bailey offers new findings and insights regarding the topic of race in Brazil. Scholars of race in Brazil have long been interested in racial group boundaries, the myth of racial democracy, and anti-racist mobilization. Currently, researchers are attempting to assess the impact of recent, momentous changes in Brazil, such as the implementation of racial quotas. Covering these critical topics, Bailey uses data from three major Brazilian surveys on racial attitudes, spanning 1995 to 2002, to create a unique study. *Legacies of Race* is extraordinary both in terms of its successful advancement of the field of race in a manner which will interest general scholars of race, and its significance as a seminal text in the evolution of race scholarship in the Americas.

This book is replete with new findings and theoretical advances. A highlight is Bailey's discussion of the concept of "antiracism," which he argues is well-suited to contexts where there are weak racial subjectivities and racial ambiguity. Another contribution is Bailey's creative attempt to both define and measure the concept of racial groupness, a concept that unfortunately is rarely the subject of empirical investigation despite its central importance to the study of race. Through careful analysis, Bailey demonstrates the weakness and ambiguity of Brazilian racial group boundaries thus creating the foundation for a major argument of his book—that dominant theories on racial attitudes (mostly derived from the U.S. case) are ineffective in the Brazilian context because they assume high levels of groupness. Presenting counterintuitive findings, Bailey demonstrates how race does not determine racial attitudes in Brazil.

On another front, Bailey engages questions of social movements and public policy. He speaks to the conundrum of the historical lack of success of black movements in Brazil, a country stratified by color. Challenging the dominant response to this enigma, which blames Afro-Brazilians for their putative failure to recognize racism or to identify as black, Bailey critiques the strategies of the movements themselves, arguing that their racialist, bi-polar racial dynamics are incompatible with popular understandings of race. Contributing to the **cutting-edge feel of the book**, Bailey also assesses the impact of recent affirmative action policies in Brazil which employ a dichotomous racial format, finding that this approach often excludes multiracials from racial quotas.

Bailey's most impactful (and also most controversial) contribution is his forceful challenge of the dominant stance in the literature—that Brazil's national ideology of racial democracy

has created a situation in which everyday Brazilians do not recognize racism. He finds strong support for the idea that Brazilians of all colors not only recognize racism but also support anti-racist organizing and race-targeted policies such as affirmative action. Based on these findings, Bailey argues that the myth of racial democracy is best understood as a creed of racial egalitarianism. More importantly, he suggests that this ideology could be harnessed to combat racial discrimination.

The strengths of this text are multi-fold. Bailey adeptly manages to produce an in-depth analysis of core topics surrounding the study of race in Brazil while simultaneously building conceptual and theoretical bridges with scholars of race in the United States.

Bailey's novel data and innovative approach move us significantly closer to understanding the Brazilian puzzle of race. Methodologically, the analysis is consistently rigorous. Bailey is refreshingly honest regarding the limitations of his research and continually engages various interpretations of his data. Readers will find this book very accessible and clearly written.

Despite its many strengths, this book has a few limitations. Bailey's discussion of boundaries in the Brazilian case is a bit circular. From the onset, Bailey establishes the weakness of Brazilian racial-group boundaries but then proceeds to test theories which assume high levels of groupness. He then, not surprisingly, demonstrates their ineffectiveness. This theme is repeated over various chapters. At some point one wonders how productive it is to repeatedly engage with U.S.-based theories whose assumptions violate the Brazilian situation. Nevertheless, Bailey succeeds in making his point regarding their ineffectiveness.

Another limitation of this book is Bailey's reluctance to stake out a clear position on some of the most controversial issues related to race in Brazil (e.g. affirmative action, the adoption of a dichotomous racial system). Bailey stays very close to his data, maintaining a safe distance from the most heated debates in the field. At some point the reader yearns for him to detach himself from discussion of the empirical findings, leave his cautious approach behind, and hear his voice on the matter, especially given the revolutionary nature of his findings.

A final limitation surrounding Bailey's research is the question of whether or not his findings merely reflect a new era of racial attitudes in Brazil. If they indeed capture an attitudinal shift, then Bailey is well positioned to address this new moment; he is on less stable ground when attempting to speak to earlier attitudes as well as the overall essence and effect of the myth of racial democracy. Bailey is aware of this perceived limitation and draws on earlier data to suggest that racial attitudes similar to the ones he found were held decades earlier. However, these data are much less conclusive and, ultimately, the question of whether or not Bailey's data are representative of earlier time periods remains unanswered. However, given Bailey's desire to speak to the myth of racial democracy more broadly, it may have been worthwhile to move beyond the Brazilian context. In other Latin American countries, where national ideologies are similar to that of Brazil's racial democracy, there is evidence that suggests these ideologies have resulted in a popular denial of racism and have inhibited anti-racist efforts. In any case, the verdict is still out regarding the effects of such national ideologies. **Needless to say, this book is likely to spark tremendous debate. As Bailey himself acknowledges, this book will not settle many of the debates in the field. In fact, the real debates have just begun.**