"Responding with Good Sense": The Politics of Race and Censuses in Contemporary Brazil

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines the past and current policies towards and decisions about color enumeration of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics. It also focuses on the 1991 census campaign, "Don't Let Your Color into White: Respond with Good Sense" which urged Brazilians to self-select a "darker" color on their census schedules. The dissertation argues that census bureaus are not detached registers but rather are active participants in the constitution of political and social relations, and specifically, in the constitution of racial politics. In Brazil, census color questions and interpretations of census data have sustained and advanced claims of a "whiter" and now "mixed" Brazilian population.

The dissertation also argues that the status and power of census bureaus makes them the referent for political activities by social groups to (re) draw the boundaries of social identities. In Brazil, the 1991 census campaign sought both to politicize the census by emphasizing the importance of "accurate" responses and to problematize the census color question in hopes of eventually having it reformulated. More accurate responses would show a "black" majority in Brazil. A reformulated census question would ask about "race" and not "color." While this dissertation takes Brazil as its principal case study, it is also comparative in scope. An examination of U.S. race and ethnic classifications, for example, provides a useful (and oft-cited) basis of

comparison with Brazil. An extended discussion of the different contexts and political consequences of censuses offers a basis of comparison with Brazilian censuses. This dissertation draws upon both field research in Brazil by which both primary and secondary materials were obtained and formal and informal interviews were conducted. It also draws upon several bodies of scholarly literatures.

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Chapter One: The Politics of Race and Censuses in Contemporary Brazil

Brazilian demographic censuses of the twentieth century offer a portrait of an increasingly "assimilated" and "lighter" population. Census data have been part of and helped to sustain narratives of an evolving Brazilian race and, in their positivist versions, of racial democracy and "whitening." These narratives of national identity are of political consequence. They help both to displace appeals to distinct racial identities and to undermine grievances based on race. The boundaries of racial group memberships are erased; the only "race" to which one can rightfully appeal is an ever evolving Brazilian race. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), through its written texts and policies, has proved a capable transmitter of Brazil's national story. Brazilian black activists, however, offer another version. They maintain that Brazilians have not become one "lighter" people, but instead remain distinct and "darker." They view the IBGE's actions as part of broader attempts to disguise deliberately Brazil's "racial" reality and to diffuse the potency of racial grievances. The 1991 census campaign, "Don't Let Your Color Pass into White: Respond with Good Sense," which urged Brazilians to choose a "darker" color on their census schedules along with other black movement activities are not easily reconciled with a discourse of racial assimilation, a "lighter" or "whiter" national identity and "racial harmony."

This dissertation attempts to make sense of these competing claims as it offers new theoretical direction for scholarship about the politics of race in

Brazil and elsewhere. My argument is that "race" as an ideologically and socially constituted category is actively (re)-inscribed by censuses, and that such (re)-inscription both reflects and engenders politics. That is, Census bureaus are not detached registers but are active participants in the political and social constitution of race and of attendant racial claims. In Brazil, census color questions, color terms, and interpretations of census data have sustained and advanced claims of a "whiter" and now "mixed" population and of racial democracy.

Further, given the role and status of state census bureaus, organized groups seek to use their authority to (re)-draw the boundaries of social identities. In Brazil, the 1991 census campaign, "Don't Let Your Color Pass into White: Respond with Good Sense" sought not only to politicize the census by emphasizing the importance of "accurate" responses but to recast social identities as "racial" ones and not simply as "color" ones. Put plainly, Brazilians were asked to think of their identities not in terms of a "Brazilian" race, with its different colors but in terms of distinct races or "origins." Yet in the face of a state institution committed to existing methods of categorization according to "color" and without sustained political mobilization of Brazilians as "blacks," the campaign's appeals were untenable.[1]

[1] The color terms used by the IBGE are also a source of contention, as will be discussed in following chapters. The census term "preta" (black) is a term commonly used to describe objects or to refer to a person in the third person. The census term "parda" (brown) is rarely used in popular parlance.

As stated, this study intends to offer an alternative to existing accounts of race and politics in Brazil. Broadly speaking, these accounts dismiss race in two ways: first, "race" is not a problem due to extensive "racial mixture". Second, "race" is a problem that will be solved once the more fundamental problem of class inequalities has been redressed. I argue instead that "race" matters in Brazil in ways revealed both in the notion of "racial mixture" itself and in how class identities themselves are understood and experienced. "Race" and "racial membership" are constituted discursively and in institutional mechanisms; they change over time both within and between different national contexts. What the boundaries of "race" membership are and what membership means is neither transparent nor uniform. My formulation of race, then, drives a wedge between it and human bodies. How bodies and "race" categories become connected and the varied experiences (individual and collective) which such connections engender are what needs to be examined.

In Brazil, dominant racial discourse says that Brazilians, whatever their color, are members of the Brazilian race. These colors are also ranked hierarchically, where "white" is prized, "brown" or "mixed" is less valued and "black" is negatively valued. The Brazilian Census Bureau participates in the re-inscription of these dominant meanings. However, Brazilian black activists counter that Brazilians are not "one" race but members of distinct races: principally "black" and "white." Membership in the "black" race

should be embraced and not rejected. The census campaign was one step toward insuring such membership.

At stake, then, in Brazil and elsewhere are claims to and power over how human existence can be known and experienced. When human bodies are understood in terms of "race", when human experiences become racial ones, and when privilege and deprivation, benefits and penalties, superordination and subordination hinge on racial membership, we witness, what I term, the "politics of race" at work. This dissertation is about such politics and examining them means to begin with race's constitution and consequent contestation. What does it mean to be a member of this race or another, and how does it matter? To whom? And why? In Brazil, being "black," "white," or "brown" Brazilians or being "black," "brown," or "white" people – that is, being members of the new "Brazilian" race or of distinct races – bear very different meanings and consequences for the assertion and advance of political claims. The Brazilian census bureau is an important, if overlooked, participant in and site of the "politics of race."

My approach to race differs significantly from those that dominate both scholarly and popular literature on Brazil, all of which naturalize race.[2] The

[2] The "race relations" literature on Brazil is characterized by an inconsistent, and at times seemingly contradictory, use of terminology. At times, the terms "race" and "color" are used interchangeably. At other times, the use of "race" and/or "color" is precise and deliberate. In this literature review, I have remained faithful to the terms used by the authors.

once dominant (and still influential) approach presumed that "racial mixture" had rendered systematic racial discrimination impossible. The purported salutary effects of "miscegenation" were most clearly and powerfully articulated by Gilberto Freyre in the 1930s. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Freyre's ideas form the core of what is known as the "myth of racial democracy." According to Freyre and subsequent corroborative accounts, extensive racial mixture and cultural assimilation had eliminated widespread racial discrimination and prejudice.[3] Without "pure races," there are neither sources for discriminatory actions nor audiences for racial appeals. As is well known, the myth of racial democracy has been steadily attacked and now beats a path of slow retreat, at least in certain academic circles. Yet, in popular discussion, the myth still carries great and evident weight. As a consequence, the mere mention of racial discrimination is often met with denial, disbelief or outright hostility as if it is the utterance and not the discrimination that is worthy of condemnation. Self-identified black activists who publicly make racial appeals or denounce racism are gagged by charges that they themselves are racist or mere imitators of a political language better understood in the United States or South Africa

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[3] Gilberto Freyre, The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), and New World in the Tropics: The Culture of Modern Brazil, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1959). An important work that supported Freyre' claims was Donald Pierson, Negroes in Brazil, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1967). First published in 1942.

but not Brazil.

The attacks on Freyre's idea of racial democracy, beginning in the 1950s with the UNESCO studies and up to the present, are all characterized by a near exclusive focus on dismantling the myth by documenting racial discrimination. In the 1950s, a team of foreign and Brazilian scholars was commissioned to study Brazil as an example of a multiracial yet nondiscriminatory society. However, contrary to their mandate, these scholars documented extensive and consequential discriminatory practices.[4] Their findings powerfully contradicted Freyre's depictions of Brazilian society. Yet, because these accounts tended to interpret race in terms of class, meaning racial subordination is derived from and is a part of class subordination, they did not differ very much from Freyre. Freyre also assigned explanatory primacy to class differences. According to Florestan Fernandes, a leading member of the revisionist "Sao Paulo" school, racial (or color) categorization is a residual manifestation of an industrializing society's inability to rid itself of "caste" ascription. The positivism that sustained the solving of the "race problem" was transferred from "miscegenation" to industrialization.

The inability of this revisionism to account for the persistence of

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[4] Important works include: Florestan Fernandes, A Integracao do Negro na Sociedade de Classes (2 vols.), (Sao Paulo, 1978); Marvin Harris, Patterns of Race in the Americas, (New York: Walker and Company, 1974); Charles Wagley (ed.), Race and Class in Rural Brazil, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963) and Thales de Azevedo, Cultura e Situacao Racial no Brasil, (Rio de Janeiro, 1966).

economic and social inequalities with the deepening of Brazilian capitalist development became the basis of the structuralist critique of the late 1970s and specifically the work of Carlos Hasenbalg and Nelson do Valle Silva.[5] These works, however, are also class reductionist in that racial inequalities are a resultant of and necessary for the functioning of Brazilian capitalism.[6] Yet this class reductionism is neither as rigid nor tragically consequential as that which characterizes Brazilian leftist politics. Leftist activists dismiss color by privileging class as the most salient social identity. The consequent and persistent marginality of "non-class" based demands and appeals within organizations committed to the "social question" has, at best, led to the acknowledgment of color and gender as secondary or tertiary identities. At worst, it has made sacrifices of darker skinned people to political strategies which refuse to take seriously the ways in which color, class and gender categories are mutually constituted in Brazil.[7]

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5 Carlos Hasenbalg, Discriminacao e Desigualdades Raciais no Brasil, (Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1979); Carlos Hasenbalg and Nelson do Valle Silva, Estructura Social, Mobilidade e Raca, (Rio de Janeiro: Vertice and IUPERJ, 1988).

6 Howard Winant persuasively and usefully makes such an assessment while also making a claim for a "racial formation" approach. Howard Winant, "Rethinking Race in Brazil," Journal of Latin American Studies, 1 (1992), pp.173 - 192.

7 By mutually constituted, I mean that the very meanings of color, gender and class categories in Brazil suggest a certain commensurability between them. For example, woman is often presumed to mean also white and middle- class. Or poor is often synonymous with black or brown and conversely, rich is presumed to also mean white and man.

The failure to take the intersections of these categories seriously is graphically illuminated in a recent book about the assassinations of street children. The book is co-authored by the nationally renowned association for street children -MNMMR, the primer non-profit organization IBASE and the Research Institute for the Study of Violence at Brazil's prestigious University of Sao Paulo. In it, there is only one sentence, and no chart (out of 23) which addresses the color of the victims.[8] The included charts, however, are comprehensive; they range from tables about where articles on the assassinations appear in newspapers to the gender of the victims to the regional locations of the murders. The absence of color data is even more striking given that all of the book's pictures (including the cover) are of boys who would most certainly (given their class status and skin color) be categorized as black or brown in Brazil. In short, poverty and murder have colors in Brazil, and most often those colors are black and brown.

In response to both "miscegenation" or class arguments scholars and black activists assert the salience of "race", not of a Brazilian race, however, but of a "black" race. This "black race," of which "blacks" and "browns" are constitutive, is Brazil's majority population. As such, it warrants political and economic power commensurate with its numbers. Explanations of why

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[8] Movimento Nacional de Meninos e Meninas de Rua (MNMMR), Instituto Brasileiro de Analises Sociais e Economicas (IBASE) and Nucleo de Estudos da Violencia de Universidade de Sao Paulo (NEV-USP), Vidas em Risco: Assassinatos de Criancas and Adolescentes no Brasil, (Rio de Janeiro, 1992).

"blacks" have yet to act politically as a self-conscious group often problematically presuppose that a "truly black" consciousness has been disabled. That is, these explanations suggest that there exists a black essence which is the crux of racial (or ethnic) identity but which has been confounded by "racial mixture" or suppressed by a "whitening" ideology. "Black" collective action is a presumed inevitability; its absence in Brazil must be explained.[9]

In my view, these positions and their variations are of limited use in making sense of the politics of race in Brazil precisely because the significance of race/color categories is deflected, first by "racial mixture" or class and then by an encompassing black racial identity. By adhering to these positions, one is unable to account for racial appeals in a society where such appeals are presumed to have no basis. And neither can one account for the ambivalence, confusion nor antipathy which black racial appeals engender among many of the people who purportedly comprise this black majority.

[9] Similarly, recent scholarship, and especially North American, has charted the histories, successes and failures of black organizations in the face of ideological domination which has, they argue, obscured or neutralized black racial identification. See, for example, George Reid Andrews, Blacks and Whites in Sao Paulo, Brazil 1888-1988, (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991). Michael Hanchard makes an argument of racial hegemony by white elites. Michael Hanchard, Orpheus and Power: The 'Movimento Negro' of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Brazil 1945-1988, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

The Politics of Race and Censuses

For my purposes, what is most instructive about race mixture or black racial identity arguments is that they are partly based upon census data which provide, at best, shifting ground. The IBGE's often explicitly stated commitments to both the desirability and inevitability of a "whiter" population have existed alongside attempts to improve its capabilities of "accurately" measuring the population. One the one hand, the IBGE maintains that color percentages are inaccurate because people "lie" about or otherwise change their color category; meaning, most often, that respondents check "lighter" rather than "darker" terms. Demographer Charles Wood, for example, found that 38% of "upwardly mobile non-whites" reclassified themselves from "darker" to "lighter" color terms over time in keeping with perceived changes in their socio-economic status.[10] On the other hand, the IBGE holds that extensive racial mixture has made enumeration according to scientifically valid categories impossible. Further, census terms are incapable of either reflecting or capturing the multiplicity of terms used socially. Marvin Harris argues, for example, which the IBGE's use of the term "parda" rather than "morena" leads to an inflation of both the numbers of "whites"

[10] Charles Wood, "Categorias Censitarias e Classificacoes Subjetivas de Raca de Raca no Brasil," in Peggy A. Lovell (org.), Desigualdade racial no Brasil contemporaneo, (Belo Horizonte: MGSP Editores, 1991).

and "blacks." [11] However, neither the unreliability of respondents' answers nor IBGE inability to devise more "suitable" categories or conform to scientific categories has prevented the IBGE from making its prognosis of Brazil's future. Brazilians are mixing and are becoming a "lighter" if not "whiter" people.

For proponents of black racial identity, census data are used to support two apparently contradictory claims. The first is that "blacks" are disappearing and suffer materially because of and as a consequence of that invisibility. This perception motivates, in part, the census campaign: "blacks" not only must be counted; they must be counted "accurately." In this latter point, the IBGE is accused of deliberately distorting Brazil's racial reality. According to ex-Federal senator and veteran black activist, Abdias do Nascimento, the omission of color and race data from censuses is an "instrument of social control."[12] He goes on to argue that because of the lack of census data:

> The reality of race relations is masked, and any information that blacks could use in their struggle for social justice is withheld. . .For the outcome of such practices is to negate any racial, ethnic or cultural

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11 Harris disagrees with sociologist Nelson do Valle Silva who maintains that of the two terms, "parda" and "morena," "parda" is the less ambiguous. Marvin Harris, "Who are the Whites?: Imposed Census Categories and the Racial Demography of Brazil," Social Forces, 72:2(1993), pp. 451-462.

12 Abdias do Nascimento, Mixture or Massacre: Essays in the Genocide of a Black People, (New York: Afrodiaspora, 1979), p.80.

definition of the Black people, denying us any collective identity.[13]

Moreover, the perception of "disappearing blacks" is not limited to Brazil. It extends to the whole of South America. In a 1993 Washington Post article entitled "In Much of South America, Descendants of Africans Are Getting Hard to Find," Jose Carlos Luciano, a black sociologist at the Legal Defense Institute of Lima, Peru, is quoted as saying: "Blacks are disappearing, at least physically, into the racial mix . . .When you think of black people in Peru, the first thing you have to consider is our numerical insignificance."[14]

The second claim is not only are "blacks" the majority in Brazil but that Brazil's "black" population is the second largest in the world, behind Nigeria. Brazilian black activists are not the only ones to make this claim. It appears widely, in both popular and scholarly writing, especially in the U.S..[15] For example, in another Washington Post article, journalist Don Podesta describes Brazil as having ". . .the largest population of blacks in Latin America . . .. where as many as half of the 147 million people bear some African ancestry. This makes Brazil the world's second-largest black nation,

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13 Ibid., p.80.

14 Don Podesta, "In Much of South America, Descendants of Africans Are Getting Hard to Find,"*The Washington Post* , 17 August 1993, p. A13.

15 The North American texts in which this characterization appears are too numerous to cite. Most often, scholars use this idea of the world's second largest "black" population as justification for why "race" is being discussed in reference in Brazil or as a basis for comparative study of "blacks." In these works, "race" is synonymous with "black."

after Nigeria."[16] According to sociologist Peggy Lovell, "Today Brazil is home to the world's largest population of African descent except for Nigeria."[17]

This characterization of Brazil as a "black"nation by U.S. journalists and scholars has been largely dismissed by their Brazilian counterparts as a gross misreading of Brazil and an arrogant (even imperialistic) imposition of U.S. constructions of racial categories. As the Brazilian Ambassador to the U.S., Rubens Ricupero, wrote in response to the aforementioned Washington Post articles, in Brazil and Latin America there is

> "... a far greater degree of intermarriage between races and the presence of intermediate categories that make it inappropriate and irrelevant to transplant to these societies measurement criteria in narrow terms of "black" and "white" which have been developed in the context of civil rights in the United States."[18]

As importantly, that Brazilian black activists seemingly advocate a U.S. style criteria for establishing "black" identity reinforces the twin claims that the Brazilian black movement is imitative, and that Brazil does not have a racial problem. As the Ambassador also wrote: "...Brazilian society has still a long way to go to meet its major social challenges, but racism and racial tensions

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[16] Don Podesta, "Black Slums Belie Brazil's Self-Image," *The Washington Post*, , 17 August 1993, p.A9.

[17] Peggy A. Lovell, "Race, Gender, and Development in Brazil", Latin American Research Review, 3 (1994), p.7.

[18] Rubens Ricupero, "Racial Harmony in Brazil,"*The Washington Post*, 30 August 1993, Letter to the Editor.

are certainly not among them."[19]

At issue, in short, is the "brown" ("mixed") category. When Brazilian activists and U.S. scholars and journalists use a definition of "black" which is defined primarily or exclusively by "african descent," "browns" become "black." More to the point, "african ancestry" is conflated with "black" as a racial category. "Race" in this view is an identity first constituted in "blood" ties and not institutional mechanisms, social relations or discursive practices. With this move, black activists reconcile the apparently contradictory claims of "disappearance" and "majority." "Blacks" are not disappearing if "Browns" are defined as part of a "black race." Conversely, most Brazilians view "brown" as an encompassing and discrete middle ground. More than that, it signifies the very embodiment of "race mixture" and the new Brazilian race. Thus persons who are considered and consider themselves "brown" or "mixed" are not members of the "black" race, but instead of the Brazilian race, with its many colors. Again, the words of the Ambassador are revealing. "If," he wrote, "we were to adopt in Brazil the American criterion by which a child of mixed white and black parents is considered black, a whole encyclopedia would be necessary to list all prominent Brazilians of black origin, including among them several Brazilian presidents."[20] His point of course is that these prominent Brazilians are not considered black, and there is no reason they

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19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

should be.

At issue also are claims attendant to these characterizations of Brazil's population. If Brazil is a "black" nation, it can arguably be compared and contrasted with apartheid South Africa. "Blacks" and "Browns" are indisputably poor, poorly and badly educated, and underrepresented politically: it is, in effect, a white minority ruling a black majority. In striking contrast, if, as dominant discourse goes, most Brazilians are "racially mixed," color but especially race are displaced as axis upon which privilege and subordination turn. There is no racism since there are no "pure races" from which "racial" antagonism would spring. There is no racial discrimination because of the indeterminacy of racial identities (other than a Brazilian racial identity). Prejudicial behavior might be directed toward someone because of color but these are isolated incidences. Social inequalities in Brazil are due to class. "Race," as the Ambassador said, is "irrelevant".

Given this political terrain, IBGE censuses and interpretations assume immediate and evident importance. How the IBGE categorizes and counts bodies and interprets its data bears directly on how the Brazilian population is known and on what claims can be made about it. The authority that the IBGE commands is that which statistics and statistical agencies in general command: they purportedly access a truth and stand as adjudicators of competing claims. This authority is frequently challenged, questioned and paradoxically, sought after. The 1991 census campaign was launched both to

undermine the IBGE's claims that Brazilians are a racially mixed and "lighter" people and to force the IBGE's methods into the open. That is, the color question and the color terms that the IBGE has used, according to campaign organizers, betray the state's interest in upholding Brazil's "whiter" national face. If a different question were asked and different terms used, the data, organizers charged, would not only be different, but more "accurate." Thus, while the campaign was unsuccessful in getting the color question changed to a "race" question, it raised IBGE methods as an issue.

The campaign, "Don't Let Your Color Pass into White: Respond with Good Sense" was organized by ten non-governmental organizations. Seven of these organizations were black movement organizations, two were academic organizations and the overall coordinator was the Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses (IBASE). The campaign urged Brazilians to claim their "ethnic" origins in hopes of rendering a more accurate picture of Brazil's racial composition, and it set out through a series of outreach events to, in the words of campaign literature, "sensitize Brazilians to their ethnic origins." And herein lay the difficulties. What ethnic origins meant was African ancestry. If one, then, were to claim one's African origins, the next two steps would be first to make them the basis of one's identity and second to assert oneself as "black." The campaign's appeals then were an explicit attempt to recast Brazilian national identity not as a racially assimilative one, but as one which suppresses distinct racial identities. By encouraging the claiming of

"black" which is thought of in racial and not color terms, the campaign sought to impose the rigidity of a bifurcated racial line and to flatten the differences between (self) identifying as either "black" or "brown."

On the 1991 census schedule, however, the race term applied only to the "indígena" (indigenous) category. Specifically the question asked: "What is your color or race?", and the five choices were white, black, yellow, brown, and indigenous. The only "race" other than the Brazilian "race" are the indigenous peoples, most of whom live in independent territories. All other Brazilians were to check the box which corresponded to their color. While many of the campaign coordinators would have preferred that the terms be thought of as distinct races, rather than colors, they identified as a practical goal having persons check a "darker" color. That is, persons who otherwise would have checked white, should check brown and those who would have checked brown, check black.

The campaign's success is difficult to assess fully. For one, as of January 1995, full census results were still unavailable.[21] And, even if they were available, attributing causality to the campaign (assuming the number of blacks increased) would be difficult. The numbers then may eventually offer

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[21] In October 1994, the IBGE stated that full census data would be available by December 1994. Preliminary results of the census were released in the (north American) spring of 1992. These results, however, did not include color data because the color question did not appear on the basic questionnaire asked of all households. The color question was included on the survey questionnaire applied to one of every ten households.

an important, but incomplete measure of the campaign's success. The other measure for assessing the campaign rests with both the perceptions of organizers, on the one hand, and the coherence of the campaign's message and organizers' ability to spread it, on the other. For campaign organizers, just mounting the campaign was considered a success. It was viewed as a proactive tactic that placed the issue of racial identity within the realm of open public discussion.

Beyond the campaign's existence, then, its success (or potential for) is less apparent. Its small size, limited financial and human resources, and turbulent political environment in which it was conducted all affected its ability to get widespread exposure. Even more importantly, the campaign faced an inherent tension: why would anyone say s/he was black if allowed not to? In Brazil, the colors "black", "brown" and "white" are valued differently. Brazilians receive, via mass media and school curricula, a steady diet of images and declarations of an unified Brazilian people in which certain Brazilians are more valued and more representative than others. A review of the cultural terrain will be taken up in more depth in chapter five. These cultural as well as other institutional mechanisms (i.e. labor markets, educational opportunities, etc.) all (re) -produce the negative meanings and consequences of being categorized as "black" or "dark" (both relative). Choosing "black" or a "darker" color on census schedules was neither an obvious nor easy choice, the campaign notwithstanding. In fact, it may well be

that the census provides a way of escaping stigmatization that simply living in Brazil does not. In short, the difficulties confronted by the campaign extend beyond the (in)-actions of the IBGE.

Brazil's National Identity: A Discourse of Race

The "whiter" and/or "mixed" national identity that the IBGE has upheld and the campaign contests has its origins in the intellectual currents of the early 20th century and the ideas of anthropologist Gilberto Freyre especially. From the turn of the century well into the 1930's, much of Brazilian scientific and social thought adhered to eugenics and other racial theories dominant in Europe. As both Nancy Stepan and Thomas Skidmore have shown, such adherence defied prevailing European conceptions of eugenics which ruled racial improvement or progress in Latin America an impossibility, prima facie, given its large indigenous and African populations.[22] Brazilian intellectuals modified eugenic thought by arguing that miscegenation did not automatically mean degeneration. That is, degeneration could be the result of poor sanitation and health care and not exclusively miscegenation.[23] Gilberto Freyre pushed this modification even further by converting what

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22 Nancy Leys Stepan, The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), and Thomas Skidmore, Black Into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

23 Stepan, Ibid., p.157.

had been considered a negative into a positive by arguing that through miscegenation, Brazilians were becoming one people. Miscegenation, rather than having a degenerative effect, would have a regenerative or cleansing one. As Freyre explained: "By and large, the Negro of Brazil is the mulatto. . . Among us the Negro problem has been simplified by the long process of miscegenation."[24] Later in his life, Freyre spoke increasingly of the "browning" rather than "whitening" of the population.[25] In any case, the "white" and (belatedly) "brown" categories are, relative to "black," better and more desirable.

Freyre's (re)-interpretation of miscegenation's significance is best understood not only as a response to the dismal forecasts of eugenicists; but also to and against Modernist intellectuals who were, in his view, too willing to accept "progress" and its possibilities on Europe's terms. He offered an interpretation which both favorably assessed Brazil's past and optimistically predicted its future: the process of miscegenation begun during slavery would result in the "browning" and eventual "whitening" of the population. Miscegenation, so the story goes, is the foundation of Brazil's racially

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[24] Gilberto Freyre, The Mansions and the Shanties: The Making of Modern Brazil, (New York, 1963), p.418.

[25] Gilberto Freyre, "O Brasileiro como uma Alem-Raca," *Folha de Sao Paulo*, (Sao Paulo), 21 May 1978.

democratic society.[26]

Freyre's ideas and especially the claim of a non-discriminatory society, have been, as already mentioned, steadily attacked over the last 40 years. Yet documenting racial discrimination has lead both to a minimizing of the meanings and values which race and color categories bear and to a ignoring of the Brazilian state's role. Consequently, although this revisionist research has successfully debunked one tenet of racial democracy: the non-existence of racial discrimination, it had, as importantly, ignored a more fundamental tenet: "racial mixture." That is, racial democracy is constituted not only in the body politic, but in bodies themselves. Both the literal "mixing of bloods" and the desired "whitened" being which ideally results from such mixture serves as evidence of not only the democracy's existence but of its success. This particular dimension of racial democracy: racial democracy in bodies, holds out two important implications for the meanings and politics of national identity.

The first is that human differences, or more precisely, African and Indian "characteristics" are purportedly gotten rid of through cultural assimilation and corporal integration with Europeans, or more precisely, the Portuguese. The sexual dimension of this integration implies a consensual and non-

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[26] For a useful discussion on the myth of racial democracy and national identity, see Denise Ferreira da Silva, "Revisitando a 'Democracia Racial': Raca e Identidade Nacional no Pensamento Brasileiro," Estudos Afro-Asiaticos, 16 (1989), pp. 157-170.

conflictive process. The origins of national identity, then, are located securely in the most private of spheres. The second implication is related to the first: given the status of the private sphere; the state is, in significant measure, an outsider in the making of this Brazilian identity. As such, the state becomes an inappropriate site to channel racial demands which, of course, have no basis within the discursive confines of racial democracy. In sum, the discourse of racial democracy endures for two related reasons: one) it speaks about bodies and two) the state has no role since racial democracy is a result of nature's course. Although racial democracy allows no room for the state, the state census bureau has, in turn, actively sustained and transmitted it. This irony of the state's absence extends also to the emergence of the racial democracy idea itself. As Nancy Stepan points out, racial democracy was a integral component of Brazil's state-building project beginning in the 1930s.

The Brazilian State and Race

Scholarship on the modern Brazilian state is substantial; however, scholarship on the IBGE as one institution within the larger state apparatus is scarce. This scholarly silence on the IBGE's role (and that of the state in general) in Brazilian racial politics in particular is insured by the pervasiveness of the myth of racial democracy. That is, it is not only that Brazil purportedly does not have a "racial" problem, but that the problem's absence is largely due to a non-interventionist state. Unlike in both South

Africa and the United States, interactions between the "races" in Brazil were unobstructed and unmanaged. There were neither de jure nor wide spread de facto racially discriminatory or segregationist state policies or social customs. The term, "racial state", then, is one reserved for the U.S., apartheid South African and German Nazi states. The Brazilian state, in contrast, has been defined mostly in negative terms: what it is not rather than what it is.

Where scholarship deals with state actions and race, it concentrates on early twentieth century immigration policies and eugenics health policies of the 1930s. In the case of immigration policies, Europeans were recruited as agricultural and later industrial workers while native-born Brazilians and especially newly freed slaves were left to their own devices. Marital restrictions, based on eugenic theories, were written into the 1934 Constitution.[27] Scholars have mostly treated these policies as isolated incidences.

In my view, however, the Brazilian state can also be seen as a "racial state," in ways that expand upon and differ from the term's equation with the U.S. and apartheid South African states. That is, the Brazilian state is a racial state in that it is both structured and has been structured by race. By that I mean that the state is embedded within and is thus shaped by and helps to shape a

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[27] Michael Mitchell, "Race, Legitimacy and the State in Brazil," (paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association Meeting, Mexico City, 29 September - 1 October 1983).

discursive as well as material domain. Discourse about race is an intrinsic part of state processes. Racial discourse informs and renders intelligible certain state actions and policies, specifically those of the Brazilian census bureau. The Brazilian census bureau, like those of both U.S. and South Africa, has not merely reflected social and political relations, it has helped to constitute them. In short, census bureaus help to "make up" people. [28] In Brazil, the census institute has actively touted Brazil's collective and whiter face. It has also, through its policies and decisions, sought to suspend public discussion about the meanings of Brazilian "colors" and the political consequences of color enumeration. Thus, while it is true that the Brazilian state neither explicitly defined (via the courts) the boundaries of racial membership nor actively enforced discriminatory policies as did the U.S. and South African states, it is not true that the Brazilian state is a "non-racial" one. At the very least, the IBGE's categorizing, counting and interpreting of Brazil's racial evolution suggests a re-evaluation of Brazil's exemption as a racial state.

Methods

This dissertation employs a single case study approach which allows for an examination of the contextual constitution of race and of the political battles

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[28] The term "make up" is borrowed from Ian Hacking, "Making Up People" in Thomas Heller, Morton Susna, and David Wellberg (eds.), Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).

over and consequences of census-taking, especially racial/ color enumeration in one country. The study of twentieth century Brazilian censuses reveals a state apparatus deeply involved in the (re)-production of "race" and especially in advancing a "whiter" national face. At the same time, the 1991 census campaign was a direct challenge to IBGE actions, calling its methods and the national identity it has helped to sustain into question. This dissertation also uses a comparative approach. Neither the politics of race nor of censuses are limited to Brazil. By directly contrasting Brazilian census color terms with United States race/ethnic terms over time, we see clearly both the changing categories and meanings of race both between two national experiences and within them. Further, by comparing the particular uses and consequences of censuses in Brazil with those of other countries at various historical moments, we see also the authority which statistical thinking and census bureaus command across settings and historical epochs. We also see census bureaus as actors in and sites of battles over how human beings will be known. Finally, comparisons of the census campaign with both a 1983 language campaign among the Basque of Spain and the tactic of "Outing" used by the U.S. Gay and Lesbian movement, offer fruitful insights into the politics of identity and the problems of collective action.

My research draws upon a total of seven months of field research in Brazil during which time I conducted both formal and informal interviews with academics, IBGE officials and statisticians, Ford Foundation officers, census

campaign organizers and black movement activists. It is based upon primary and secondary sources which fit broadly within four categories. The first is public documents and official records in which IBGE census texts and documents about policies on color enumeration are included. The second is private documents; these include internal census campaign correspondences, internal progress reports, transcripts from meetings and campaign literature. The third category is mass media; major Brazilian daily newspapers and popular magazines were consulted. Finally, my research relies upon several bodies of scholarly literature: a) history of statistics and censuses b) Brazilian history, c) critical theories of race and the history of science and race and d) social movement theory.

The Chapters

Chapter two offers a theoretical and comparative discussion of censuses that proceeds in two steps. In the chapter's first half, an historical and theoretical treatment of statistics and censuses is provided. In this first part, I argue that statistics' intrinsically political nature must be acknowledged before the politics which they reflect and engender can be accounted for. In the second half, the history of and battles over U.S. race/ethnic categories on U.S. censuses are examined. I analyze the changes in categorization over time and present U.S. censuses as an useful (and oft-cited) counterpoint with Brazilian census color classification, which is, in turn, taken up in chapter three.

To borrow from Leonard Thompson, censuses, like political myths, bear the stamp of their contexts.[29] Chapter three examines twentieth century Brazilian censuses, namely, IBGE interpretations of census data and policies/decisions regarding the utility (or not) of a color question. The chapter shows that the "color" question has appeared erratically on Brazilian censuses. It also shows that census texts have often confidently predicted and happily reported the whitening of the population. I argue, therefore, that a close analysis of IBGE texts and decisions proves the IBGE's role in upholding a whiter national face. I also argue that the IBGE has assigned scientific conceptions of "race" an authoritative status which has lead to two seemingly contradictory claims. The first is that due to extensive "racial" mixture, it is impossible to conform to scientifically valid definitions of distinct racial membership. The second is that Brazilians are getting whiter. Science is used to at once sustain the claim of whitening and to hold discussion about race as an ideologically and socially constructed category at bay.

Chapter four focuses on the 1991 census campaign, "Don't Let Your Color Pass into White: Respond with Good Sense". The campaign sought to get Brazilians to check a "darker" color and preferably "black" on their census schedules. This chapter first situates the campaign within the broader context of the 1990, then 1991 census. It then examines the campaign's discursive and

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[29] Leonard Thompson, The Political Mythology of Apartheid, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p.25.

logistical strategies directed toward its perceived constituency. This chapter also compares the discourse of the disappearing "Black" to which the campaign was in part responding with the analogous discourse about the "Vanishing Native American" in the United States. The chapter concludes with an comparative discussion of a 1983 Basque language campaign in the Basque region of Spain.

Chapter five assesses the discursive strategies of the census campaign. It argues that the census campaign's urging of Brazilians not only to claim their "ethnic origins" but to make them the basis of a black racial identity within a context that recognizes "mixture" and prizes whiteness is unsustainable. Without clear symbolic or material benefits of self-selecting "black" on a census form, why would one? I assist my assessment by first offering an overview of popular images of Brazilian "colors" as transmitted through mass media and school textbooks. I then compare the campaign with the U.S. Gay/Lesbian movement's tactic of "outing." Both the Gay/Lesbian and Brazilian black movements are movements in search of bodies. Yet both face formidable collective action problems, and it is unclear how the movements' tactics of claiming bodies overcome them.

In chapter six, the dissertation returns to its main arguments. The chapter begins with a look at the future of census and racial politics in the U.S. and Brazil by analyzing the possible addition of a "multiracial" category to the U.S. 2000 year census and the as yet unknown question and categories on the

Brazilian 2001 census. Is it, as some scholars have speculated, that the politics of race in the U.S. now more closely resemble those of Brazil and vice versa? Finally, the dissertation concludes with my predictions about the future of race and census politics worldwide.

Chapter Two: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives on the Politics of Censuses

Statistics in general and censuses in particular occupy privileged positions in scholarly and political discourse.[1] Their positions are secure largely because they purport to and are treated as though they offer an unmediated description of the world: social phenomena are simply extracted, categorized and quantified. This chapter offers a theoretical and comparative discussion of the politics of censuses. It argues that not only do censuses engender political action – the securing and/or maintenance of material and symbolic benefits – but that censuses are intrinsically political. By censuses, I am referring not only to state apparatuses which conduct them, but mostly to the (social) scientific methods that they employ. By political, I mean that censuses, through categorization especially, offer privileged and influential ways of knowing collective and individual bodies. This knowledge, in turn, structures the possibilities of and conditions for political action. How persons know themselves and how they are known are processes in which censuses and their categories are today constitutive. An analysis of censuses, therefore, illuminates both the intersections of identities, state power, and (social) scientific methods, and the political character and consequence of such intersections.

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[1] A note about the scope of my discussion is needed. An examination of mathematical methods and specifically those which are used to devise census data is beyond the purview of this chapter.

Knowing the World through Numbers

The historical trajectories of censuses and the discipline of statistics are distinct but connected. Statistics, the word itself derived from the German word statistik or "state-istics," has its roots in mid-seventeenth century German studies and, even more prominently, in English Political Arithmetic. German studies, which was mostly qualitative, assessed state power by compiling information on the populations, commercial activities, armies and administrations of Germany's statelets. Statistics' "purpose was to collect and classify - ideally as exhaustively as possible - information about the material world."[2] Statistics, then, were understood as fundamental to state power because they allowed for the measurement of population upon which state power, strength and definition rested.

English political arithmetic, like German statistics, was designed to increase knowledge about both state and society, and thus to enhance the power of the state. Unlike its German counterpart, however, political arithmetic was concerned with the quantification of data and was closely connected to public finance and taxation policies. Political arithmetic's purview, however, was not confined to actuarial life-tables; it extended to the development of sound state policy. A basic assumption was that the wealth and strength of a country depended upon the size its population.

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[2] Stuart Woolf, "Statistics and the Modern State," Comparative Study of Society and History , 31(1989), p.591.

Declining in importance by the early 19th century, political arithmetic as such died but the use of numbers did not. The first half of the century witnessed in Ian Hacking's words, "an avalanche of printed numbers" in Europe. Criminologists gathered numbers on categories of crimes and types of criminals. Public hygienists collected data on sanitation and housing densities. Moral Reformers sorted out the varieties of social vices. Medical doctors categorized diseases and their incidence. What is most important, for our purposes, is the authority which quantitative data was granted. Numbers, once categorized and tabulated, were the basis of analysis about society's workings. For Belgian statistician Adolphe Quetelet, numbers revealed a regularity that proved the existence of statistical laws, which, in turn, governed human affairs, independently of either individual or state intentions.[3] His construct of the statistical "average man" was consistent with his view of the regularity of these rules. Each "society" was governed by its own rules, made manifest in the concept of this abstract person. This person, then, typified the "nation"; he was to a particular society what the center of gravity is to physics.[4] As Hacking observes:

> . . . Quetelet was not talking about an average for the human species. He was talking about the characteristics of a people or a nation, as a racial type. . .A race would be characterized by its measurements of

[3] Ian Hacking, The Taming of Chance, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p.105; Theodore Porter, The Rise of Statistical Thinking, (Princeton, N.J.:Princeton University Press, 1986), pp.51-56.

[4] Porter, p.52.

> physical and moral qualities, summed up in the average man of that race.[5]

In this sense, the statistical "average man" helped both to reproduce and to advance thinking about human bodies as representatives of distinct races and as repositories of distinct racial essences.

Although statistics today is recognized as a social science based in the doctrine of mathematical probability, at the time of Quetelet's writings in the 1830's statistics was mostly the manipulation of large numbers where therein underlying truths could be found. Only in the latter nineteenth century did mathematical methods became central to statistics, precisely because of math's critical role in the demonstration of proof [6] Quetelet's aim was to make statistics mathematical by placing it in the domain of probability theory.[7] By the end of the century, Francis Galton's "Bell or Normal Curve' signaled another step toward probability in that deviation from and correlation to "normalcy" could be measured mathematically. Statistics could not only reveal, they could explain and even predict.

Galton set out to solve the puzzle of human genetics. As he saw it, England's intellectual and moneyed class consisted of persons from select

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[5] Hacking, p.107.

[6] Woolf, p.592.

[7] Porter, p.45.

families, and he wanted to know why.[8] He concluded that the best breed the best and the worst breed the worst and between stood the vast space occupied by the "mediocre" toward which the best regressed and the worst advanced. The Bell Curve revealed this phenomenon. In his own words:

> We see by them that the ordinary genealogical course of a race consists in a constant outgrowth from its centre, a constant dying away at its margins, and a tendency of the scanty remnants of all exceptional members to revert to that mediocrity, whence the majority of their ancestors originally sprang.[9]

Galton, of course, is most prominently associated with the British Eugenics movement, along with Karl Pearson and R.A. Fisher. Eugenics, the study of inherited human characteristics as the fundamental determinants of both individual existence and that of society, writ large did not "merely motivate statistical work"; it shaped the science of statistics.[10] The Normal Curve, like the construct of the Average Man before it, are both predicated on race: that each race has both an average man and a normal curve. Human existence is a racial one that can be known through numbers. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the chasm between statistics and mathematical theory had been closed. Statistics, once associated with regularity, had become associated

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[8] Donald A. MacKenzie, Statistics in Britain, 1865-1930: The Social Construction of Scientific Knowledge, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981).

[9] Hacking, p.180.

[10] Ibid., p.12.

with probability and even indeterminism. Institutionally, Statistical Societies were well established in several countries. Talking in and about numbers became a legitimate and privileged way of knowing and representing humanity and the material world.

Demographic censuses, like statistics, have their roots in the state as well. Not, however, in the study of the state but in the enhancement of its powers through extraction and coercion. Census-taking in Western Europe began ". . . as a means, not of gathering quantitative data, but of surveillance, conscription, and tax assessment."[11] The precursors of modern censuses were often targeted toward certain groups within a particular population, for example, young men, property owners or those deemed "subversives." Today, however, censuses numerate an entire and not just a restricted, population. The enumerated are more frequently considered citizens to be served and not simply or only subjects to be watched. And, in keeping with the use of modern censuses for information production and not surveillance; census data is, more often than not, made public and not considered state secrets. Thus, censuses are now considered legitimate means by which a state can assess its population and its resources. Many national censuses employ similar methods, and the establishment of international guidelines has advanced this uniformity. Since 1946, for example, the United Nations has

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[11] Paul Starr, "The Sociology of Official Statistics," in William Alonso and Paul Starr, The Politics of Numbers , (New York: Russell Sage Foundation), p.10.

sponsored four world population census programs with the express purpose of improving and standardizing national censuses.[12]

The claim, however, that state probing and counting is no longer viewed with distrust should not be overstated. Popular perceptions of and responses to censuses indicate that they are not always (if ever) viewed as harmless or inconsequential ventures carried out by an impartial state apparatus. In the 1991 Nigerian census, for example, the total number of Nigerians was put at 88.5 million, a figure well below the expected number. Many Nigerians attributed this undercount, in part, to the Government's deliberate decision to inflate the numbers of the mostly Muslim north and undercount the predominantly Christian south and east.[13] Moreover, this is not the first time that Nigerian censuses have been questioned. The censuses of 1962, 1963, and 1973 have all been disputed.[14] West German censuses were canceled in 1983 because of a threatened "strike." According to public opinion polls, approximately one-fourth of the population threatened not to cooperate with

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[12] Doreen S. Goyer and Eliane Dornschke, The Handbook of National Population Censuses: Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Oceania, (CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), pp.6-7.

[13] Kenneth B. Noble, "Nigeria Reveals Census' Total, 88.5 Million, and Little More," *New York Times* , 25 March 1992, p. A10; Kenneth B. Noble, "After Nigeria's Census, Skeptic Count is High," *New York Times* , 4 June 1992, p. A13.

[14] P.O. Olusanya, Nigeria's Demographic Delusion: A Critical Examination of the Census Controversy, (Lagos: Lagos University Press, 1983); S.A. Aluko, "How Many Nigerians? An Analysis of Nigeria's Census Problems, 1901 - 63," Journal of Modern African Studies, 3 (1963),pp. 371-92.

state enumerators because they feared invasion of privacy. The government had planned to use the census data to fill existing gaps in official local registers of inhabitants. Many feared that local authorities would use the information to tighten tax enforcement or prosecute people who had previously given false information.[15]

Taken together, the ascendancy of statistical knowledge, including censuses, and knowledge about and interest in the human body is usefully understood as the rise of what Michel Foucault has called "bio-power." Bio-power refers to the development of the human sciences and to the expansion of state administrative apparatuses which came to "know" the body and hence to control it.[16] Statistics in general and censuses in particular with their sorting, categorizing and counting are a part of this state machinery. Biopolitics, Foucault writes, "gave rise to comprehensive measures, statistical assessments, and interventions aimed at the entire social body or at groups as a whole."[17] As important, in my view, are the ways that the human sciences talked about bodies, namely in terms of race.

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[15] William P. Butz, "Data Confidentiality and Public Perceptions: The Case of European Censuses," (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Statistical Association, Las Vegas, Nevada, 5 -8 August 1985).

[16] Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982), pp. 133-142.

[17] Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, (New York:Vintage Books, 1980), p.138.

That statistical knowledge has been constituted in state and body politics has neither eroded its claims to "objectivity" nor rigor in line with the hard sciences nor diminished its power and influence. On the contrary, statistics' privileged position appears more secure than ever with numbers freely brandished to prove or refute political stances and to settle scores. While there is often debate about the veracity of the numbers at hand, there is rare debate about statistics' access to the truth.

And in my view, it is precisely statistics' truth claims that make censuses and particularly racial/ethnic enumerations so influential and often contentious. That is, statistics' claims to knowledge, we have seen, have extended far beyond counting; they have extended to "being." Being that is, in turn, understood racially or ethnically. It is not only that you are counted, but in the process you are known, both by categorization and through it. Given these deep knowledge claims, it is no wonder that the Brazilian Census Institute has been consumed with orchestrating and interpreting the "truth" about Brazilians which censuses purportedly reveal. It is also no wonder that activists have attempted to disrupt this orchestration. In fact, that so little which is obviously political -- i.e. affirmative action policies, public monies for social programs -- hinges on Brazilian censuses points up the autonomous power which statistics possess. At stake in Brazil are claims about whom Brazilians *are*, and the political purchase of those claims.

Whatever truths statistics ultimately lay bare, the numbers themselves

must first be produced. It is at this level of analysis: the level of production, that the power that statistics command can most fully appreciated. For all of contingencies which bear upon the production of numbers – human agency, institutional practices, historical context – the numbers come out, in important ways, unscathed. All of the productive forces- both cognitive and institutional- behind statistics disappear leaving only the numbers which purportedly "speak for themselves". For me, however, examining the political contexts in which census statistics are produced affirms their intrinsically political nature. How numbers are produced says something not only about the uses to which they will be put, but about the census statistics themselves. Within them are embedded prevailing ideologies, and the political and social relations of the contexts from which they are produced. Numbers, without categories, are useless. Categories, without contexts, are misknown.

Political Contexts of Censuses

The political contexts of censuses make the categories intelligible, and yet final census reports present an uniformity and universality that bear little resemblance to the very unordered and particular conditions in which they are created. This uniformity suggests a distilled truth that simplifies comparison along time and space. Seemingly, all that there is to know is captured and neatly displayed in numbers. Concealed and minimized in this

display, however, is the actual organizing of a census and of its results. Absent from the official texts then is an account of the whole series of actions that and cast of actors who make a census possible. Absent too are accounts of the contexts in which these actions take place and the uses to which census data will ultimately be put. This information matters. With it, we can examine the political purposes of censuses, and how different historical contexts and institutional arrangements determine not only which information is (or is not) obtained but what is defined as information. Without it, we reinscribe the authority and the truth claims which census statistics both command and generate.

In the United States, for example, censuses are located squarely at the heart of the political process. The U.S. constitution mandates that a national census be conducted every 10 years for the purposes of representational apportionment. The political difficulties in determining apportionment using the census were first manifested at the Constitutional Convention. Institutionalized slavery required a compromise between Northern and Southern delegates regarding how slaves would be counted. Under the three-fifths compromise, slaves counted as 3/5 persons. With the passing of the 13th amendment, slavery and the compromise were abolished. The perceived imbalance of power between the North and South which the compromise had addressed, however, again emerged as the South gained in representational apportionment because ex-slaves were counted as full

persons.

With representation based on population, a built-in incentive exists to overcount the population. The framers of the constitution anticipated and sought to neutralize this incentive, however, by constructing a counter-incentive: taxation would be apportioned as well. As James Madison explained in Federalist paper number 54, basing both representation and taxation on census enumerations would achieve a balance of interests and would assure impartiality.

The dangers Madison anticipated if this balance were removed have not happened.[18] Instead, "undercounts" and not "overcounts" have been the more intractable difficulty encountered by the Census Bureau.[19] In the wake of the 1980 census, for example, more than fifty lawsuits charging undercounts were filed. Undercounts have taken on more urgency and attracted more political attention with the growth of Federally funded programs targeted for minority populations. In the wake of Civil Rights legislation, the political stakes attached to censuses have increased markedly. The legitimacy and political efficacy of claims to "minority" group status rests not only on the existence of such a group but on its size.

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[18] The adoption of the 16th Amendment in 1913 abolished the apportionment of taxation.

[19] See, for example, Ian Mitroff, Richard O. Mason and Vincent P. Barabba, The 1980 Census: Policymaking amid Turbulence (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1983); Note, "Demography and Distrust: Constitutional Issues of the Federal Census," Harvard Law Review 94 (1981): 841-863.

The first step, then, in securing minority status is official recognition. Since 1970, the Census Bureau has created the "Hispanic Origin" question in response to internal recognition that data about "hispanics" were inadequate and to external pressures from organized Hispanic groups. Similarly, Asian-American groups have banded together to add and then preserve sub-categories on the census. These two cases will be taken up in more detail in the following section. For now, it is enough to say that official recognition through categorization has been an important factor in post Civil Rights American politics. Authors Ira Lowry and Harvey Choldin have each argued that the census bureau has allowed politics to seep into its scientific task of enumeration.[20] I however disagree and do not mean to suggest that only since 1970 have censuses been a party to American racial politics. That suggestion would vitiate my theoretical premise that categorization is, on its face, political. It would also be historically inaccurate. "Racial" and "Color" categorization and enumeration have occupied a fixed place on U.S. censuses. They occupy this place, in turn, because American politics and society has been and continues to be so thoroughly absorbed in race.

Censuses taken under colonial administrations provide other examples of their contextual contingencies. Colonial censuses encapsulate the dominant

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20 Ira S. Lowry, "The Science and Politics of Ethnic Enumeration" in Winston A. van Horne (ed), Ethnicity and Public Policy, (Univ. of Wisconsin System, 1982):42 - 61; Harvey M. Choldin, "Statistics and Politics: The 'Hispanic Issue' in the 1980 Census", Demography, 3 (1986), pp.403-418.

and subordinate relations of colonialism. For example, census-taking during turn of the century U.S. occupation of both Cuba and the Philippines was cast simultaneously as an instrument of effective administration and a first test of the "fitness" of the colonized for eventual self-governance. Immediately following the establishment of American rule in the Philippines, the 1903 census was conducted. In taking stock of its new possession, the U.S. called upon Filipinos to participate in the census, both as counters and the counted. As Governor General Taft wrote in the census text, "The taking of the census will therefore form a test of the capacity of the Filipinos to discharge a most important function of government. . ."[21] Similarly in Cuba, the U.S. cast the 1899 census, the first after the Spanish American War, as a test for Cubans. Cubans were thus called upon to volunteer as workers and to cooperate with enumerators as demonstrations of their civic high-mindedness.[22] Many Cubans did, and many did not. Those who did not cooperate used the occasion, which had become a political event, to protest publicly against U.S. occupation.

Colonial censuses are also a means of extending, imposing, and reinforcing colonial perceptions and aims. Bernard Cohn argued, for example,

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21 Vicente L, Rafael, "White Love: Surveillance and Nationalist Resistance in the U.S. Colonization of the Philippines," Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (eds.), Cultures of United States Imperialism, (Durham: Duke University, 1993), p.189.

22 Lisandro Perez, "The Political Contexts of Cuban Population Censuses, 1899 - 1981," Latin American Research Review, (1984), p.146.

that embedded within British colonial censuses were deeply held British views about Indian society, namely, that "caste and religion were the sociological keys to understanding the Indian people."[23] There were assumptions about the existence of "martial races", concerns about whether Hindus and Muslims were evenly represented in the civil services and whether certain castes or "races" were dominating educational opportunities.[24] Given these presumptions, the proper categorization and enumeration of Indians according to caste became paramount. Beginning with the first modern census in 1870, colonial administrators discovered that in spite of their grand designs, actual census taking proved to be a much more difficult task. Even with these difficulties, the census was perceived as an instrument for more effective colonial administration. Moreover , census - taking has produced profound societal consequences. G.S. Ghurye maintained that censuses revived a weakening caste system.[25]

Arjun Appadurai has gone even further arguing that colonial enumeration and classification are at the root of contemporary India's volatile communal

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[23] Bernard S. Cohn, "The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia," in Bernard S. Cohn, An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987

politics. [26] In his view, colonial enumerations were different both from contemporaneous censuses in the metropolises and from pre-colonial enumerations. Their distinctiveness rested in the colonial census' central role in both (re)-inscribing Indian bodies as exotic and bearers of distinct differences and in controlling them for the purposes of the colonial state. The notion that bodies are bearers of group identities and moral status were, as Appadurai acknowledges, " a very complicated part of the Indian social imaginary."[27] Yet, the British "orientalist" imaginary viewed the entire Indian population as essentially and problematically different (from them), and in need of control. These marked and categorized Indian subjects defined by colonialism became after colonialism, not only Indians but bodies of distinct communities. India is today engaged in what Appadurai calls the "deadly politics of community."[28]

Additionally, it is not only, as Appadurai argues, that colonial censuses differed significantly from those of the metropolises, but that they differed significantly from one colonial possession to the next. For example, British East Africa colonial censuses were markedly different from Indian censuses in

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[26] Arjun Appadurai, "Number in the Colonial Imagination," in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds.), Orientalism and the Post Colonial Predicament, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993): 314-339.

[27] Ibid., p.319.

[28] Ibid., p.335.

both their frequency and quality. In an important way, colonial censuses appear as a measure of the importance which the metropolises assigned its territories. Whereas India was a valued possession of the British empire; East Africa, relatively speaking, was not. In fact, the first full scale census was not conducted until 1948 (in contrast to India's in 1870), one year after Indian independence and 12 years before East African independence. Before 1948, it had been enough for colonial administrators to rely on population estimates derived from the poll tax rolls. What mattered most to the British was the land, not the people or more efficient colonial administration.

Up to this point, I have defined the political context of censuses mostly in terms of the uses to which a particular state puts census data. The other context is the census bureaucracy. It is a part of the state apparatus but occupies a discrete place nonetheless. Censuses have been and are today implemented by large bureaucracies which are tied, more or less explicitly to other, usually more powerful, political institutions. I say more or less explicitly because the appearance of neutrality is considered crucial to the effective functioning of statistical agencies. Most states either have a centralized statistical bureau run by trained professionals that is responsible for all government produced statistical information and/or a decentralized system in which separate state agencies have their own statistical apparatuses. For example, the U.S. Bureau of the census produces much, but not all, of the government's statistical data. Also, all of its important decisions and

functions are either mandated or approved by the U.S. Congress.[29]

Accompanying these institutional divisions is the division of labor. Although a census may be organized by a national bureau, every part of the overall project may not be done on a national scale. The conducting of a census is often decentralized with regional divisions of the census institution responsible for their areas. Often, local people, trained or untrained, paid or unpaid are relied upon to do the actual questioning. Furthermore, not all of the actual tabulating need be done nationally. Data may be tabulated regionally and the results forwarded to the national headquarters. Whatever the organizational structure, the data are mediated through channels of enumerators, clerical workers, statisticians, supervisors and politicians; in short, through a filter of people and of methods which makes this data products, in the fullest sense of the word.[30]

Race, Color, and/ or Ethnic Categories and Censuses

Censuses sort out who's who as individuals, round up the collective "we" and put faces on that "we." At stake, of course, are claims to and narratives about national identity and group identity. Brazilian and Venezuelan

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[29] Starr, p.26.

[30] Government Statisticians' Collective, "How Official Statistics are Produced: Views from the Inside," in John Irvine, Ian Miles, and Jeff Evans (eds.), Demystifying Social Statistics, (London: Pluto Press, 1979), pp.130-151; Starr, pp.26-29.

censuses, for example, are held up as proof apparent of their assimilative national identities. No Venezuelan census since 1854, the year of slavery's abolition, has included race or color questions for precisely this reason. They are unnecessary. Similarly, in Colombia and the Dominican Republic, census schedules do not contain race, color or ethnic questions.[31] In the United States, the myth of the "melting" pot for European immigrants has meant that after two generations, the U.S. Census Bureau did not, until the 1980 inclusion of an Ancestry question, measure ethnicity or national origin. They had become white Americans. In contrast, French censuses relish the notion that immigrants become French such that data about "national origins" has not, until recently, been consistently collected. However, data about immigrants as laborers has been registered regularly.[32]

Inconsistent or nonexistent census-taking often indicates that the national identity is up for grabs or threatens to be pulled asunder. In Tanzania, for example, ethnic questions have not appeared on censuses since 1978.[33]

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31 Rodolfo Monge Oviedo, "Are We or Aren't We?," NACLA: Report on the Americas, 4 (February 1992), p.19.

32 Gerard Noiriel, "Difficulties in French Historical Research on Immigration," and Roxane Silberman, "French Immigration Statistics" in Donald L. Horowitz and Gerard Noiriel (eds), Immigrants in Two Democracies, (New York: New York University Press, 1992).

33 Donald L. Horowitz, Ethnic Groups in Conflict, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p.145.

Kurdish demands for new censuses in Iraq have been ignored.[34] Lebanese censuses have not included ethnic questions since 1932 so as not to change the ethnic ratios and consequently, the quotas upon which state institutions were established.[35] The lack of current census data has not however deterred attempts to determine Lebanon's "true" ethnic demography.[36] Most recently, a 1994 census conducted in Macedonia, a former Yugoslav republic, only intensified the volatile disputes among the territory's inhabitants over who can rightfully claim a majority and thus the land.[37]

At bottom, it is the purported transparency of census numbers that make them so powerful. Bodies exist and they are counted (or not). Yet this transparency, better understood as opaqueness, is linked to science's knowledge claims about bodies, specifically its claims about race. Census race categories, then, are not cast as social products but rather as more or less perfect transmitters of known scientific truths. For example, Federal Directive #15 of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has since 1977 provided the definitions of race and ethnic classifications for federal

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34 Ibid., p.145.

35 Ibid., p.145.

36 Arnon Soffer, "Lebanon - Where Demography is the Core of Politics and Life," Middle Eastern Studies, 2 (1986), pp.197-205.

37 Roger Cohen, "Macedonia Census Just Inflames the Dispute," *New York Times*, 17 July 1994, p.8.

statistics and administrative reporting. In the definitions' preamble, OMB cautions clearly that these classifications ". . .should not be interpreted as being *scientific* or anthropological in nature. . ."(italics mine).[38] It informs us that these classifications instead reflect a dimension of the U.S. racial order at the time as "[t]hey have been developed in response to needs expressed by both the executive branch and the Congress. . . " They are as follows:

a. *American Indian or Alaskan Native.* A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.
b. *Asian or Pacific Islander.* A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands. This area includes, for example, China, India, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, and Samoa.
c. *Black.* A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
d. *Hispanic.* A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
e. *White.* A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa or the Middle East.

My observation about these classifications is qualified temporally because before 1977 they did not exist. As we will see shortly, race and ethnic categories have changed frequently on U.S. decennial censuses. And, as we will explore in chapter 6, they will change yet again on the year 2000 census if organized groups get their way. There could be the addition of a "multi-racial" category; the removal of "middle-eastern" people from the

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[38] Federal Data Collection: Agencies' Use of Consistent Race and Ethnic Definitions, (United States: General Accounting Office, December 1992), Appendix I, p.10.

"white"category to a new "middle east"category; the addition of more groups to the Asian and Pacific Islander category; and the removal of Hawaiian from the Asian or Pacific Islander category to the American Indian or Alaskan Native category.[39]

Further, the temporality of these classifications reflects the temporality of race itself, including scientific conceptions of race. As several scholars have shown, science's conception of race has, at one point or another, been based on theories of distinct racial essences, polygenesis, differentiated evolution, phrenology (the reading of skulls) to physiognomy (the reading of faces).[40] Different "peoples" have variously been defined as a "race" in one historical epoch and not in another. Although most scientists and social scientists today eschew the notion of "superior" and "inferior" races, present day usages remain firmly rooted in race theories of the 19th and even 18th centuries with their insistence on the existence of distinct biologically constituted racial groups. That census categories are constructed socially is cast as some sort of unfortunate but unavoidable departure from the truth.

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[39] U.S. House Subcommittee on Census, Statistics and Postal Personnel, Review of Federal Measurements of Race and Ethnicity, 103 Cong., 1st sess., 1993.

[40] See, for example, Thomas Gossett, Race: The History of an Idea in America, (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963); Winthrop Jordan, White Over Black, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); Michael Banton, Racial Theories, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Nancy Stepan, The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800- 1950 , (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988).

There is no doubt then that science knows race or provides the "best" answer; it is regrettable simply that political considerations contaminate this knowledge.

In my view, how census categories are defined, to whom they purportedly apply, and how the numerical data, once produced, are interpreted are immanently political processes. Race, color and/or ethnic categories are discontinuous on census schedules (as they are in lived experiences). New ones appear, old ones disappear and sometimes reappear, each time bearing new meanings. The changing definition of "Jew" in pre-Nazi, Nazi and Post-War Germany is a striking example. Analyzing the German Statistical Yearbooks from the last volume of the pre-Nazi Weimar republic, 1932, through the first postwar volume 1952, Everett C. Hughes found that religious distinctions had become racial ones. As he writes: "Race, in the pre-Nazi Yearbooks, was a characteristic of stallions. The number of their registered services for the propagation of their respective races was faithfully recorded in the agricultural part of the book. Men, on the other hand, had religion."[41] The religions were Christian, either Protestant or Roman Catholic, and Israelite. By 1935, however, in addition to the religious tables, a new set of tables appeared. These tables referred to persons identified as

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41 Everett C. Hughes, "Census Problems of Racial Enumeration," in Edgar T. Thompson and Everett C. Hughes (eds.), Race: Individual and Collective Behavior, (Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press, 1958), 544-549.

"Glaubensjuden." This new data, derived from a special June 1933 census, were organized to show the percentage of Jews in the population along various geographic divisions (i.e. cities, towns, provinces). Also tabulated were the birth places of Jews and the percentage of those who were born in Germany or elsewhere.

By the 1939 - 40 Yearbook, new categories in addition to the Israelite category appeared: "Jews, Jewish mixtures of the first degree and Jewish mixtures of the second degree."[42] At this time also, racial identification replaced religious in the reporting of marriages. Under a table entitled: "Racial Classification of People who Married in 1938" were listed 5 categories of marriages: "German-blooded, Jewish Mixtures of the first degree, Jewish mixtures of the second degree, Jews and Jewesses, and persons of other foreign blood."[43] Finally, by 1941-42, Israelite was stricken from religious categorization altogether. The remaining categories were "Protestant, Roman Catholic, Believers in God, and others."[44] The Jews, according to German Statistical Yearbooks, were now a race. The 1952 Yearbook, the first produced after the war, eliminated all reference to race and restored religion, under which was included "the Jewish religious community."

While the case of Jews and German Statistics is both stark and predictable,

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42 Ibid., p.547.

43 Ibid., p.547.

44 Ibid., p.547.

given the horrific thoroughness and exactitude of Nazism, it is not exceptional. Rather, it is illustrative. Race, color and ethnic identifications change in the real world, and they change on censuses. This apparent discontinuity means that there should not be a presumption of a direct, unmediated correspondence between a census category, a social category and/or a human body. For one, census schedules do not list all social terms, either self-descriptive or externally ascribed. As scholars have documented, Brazilians use numerous color terms to describe themselves and others. In the now famous 1976 household survey (PNAD) which offered an open-ended color question, Brazilians responded with 136 different colors. And as we know, social (racial, ethnic, etc.) identifications themselves are constructed and experienced (not always reconcilably) within particular contexts. In an instructive way, the treatment of Irish immigrants to the U.S. makes this point.

The Irish's racial status as whites was by no means certain in nineteen century America. Frequently, they appeared in popular imagery as monkeys, an image largely reserved for "blacks." According to David Roediger, "nativist folk wisdom held that an 'Irishman' was a 'nigger', inside out."[45] While the Irish were counted on census schedules as "whites," their lived experiences in the 19th century were less "white." They performed menial and degrading

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[45] David R. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class, (New York: Verso, 1991), p.133.

tasks in northern cities, tasks they shared with blacks. Their morals and fitness for industrial life were constantly called into question. As Roediger argues, one path to whiteness for the Irish was membership in the Democratic Party. Similarly, Italians in the south were sometimes forced to attend black schools, thus calling their whiteness into question.[46] The story of other (mostly southern and eastern) European immigrants at the turn of the century is not entirely rosy ; yet, it is the great success story of twentieth century America that they too, like the Irish, eventually became "white" and American. In a recent census derived study of the U.S.'s racial and ethnic composition, Lieberson and Waters observe ". . .that a substantial segment of the white population are 'unhyphenated whites' . . . namely, they either report themselves as 'American' or are unable to indicate their ancestry."[47]

Thus, even with intrinsic plasticity of race, color and ethnic categories, census terms themselves impose order. On the one hand, censuses reflect, restrict and at times create the possibilities of identification, and on the other, they confer status (positive or negative) to the identifications they recognize and/or create. It is largely the possibility of securing positive benefit or staving off statistical extinction through official recognition which has had the effect

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46 Sharon M. Lee, "Racial Classifications in the U.S. Census: 1890 - 1990," Ethnic and Racial Studies, 16 (1993), p.85.

47 Stanley Lieberson and Mary C. Waters, From Many Strands: Ethnic and Racial Groups in Contemporary America, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1988), p.50.

of galvanizing persons to see themselves as distinct groups and to act collectively. Official categorization or not, then, often marks the line between visibility and invisibility, as far as many social actors are concerned. The use, for example, of "black color" as opposed to "black race" on Brazilian census schedules has led black activists to charge not only statistical genocide, but a "racial" genocide of sorts. If the "black" race is not officially recognized, how can "blacks" organize? Official categories are also the prerequisite steps before securing state benefits. Hispanic groups organized to get an "Hispanic origins" question included on the census. These consequences of census categorization help to expose, from another vantage point, the political nature of statistical data.

Racial / Ethnic Enumeration and U.S. Censuses

This dissertation takes as its principal subject the politics of race and censuses in Brazil. Yet, to better understand Brazil, comparison with U.S. censuses is necessary. It is necessary because the U.S. has often served as the explicit referent for Brazilians. That is, Brazilian racial politics have been cast, by Brazilian intellectuals especially,as positively not like the U.S. Racially discriminatory practices sanctioned by law and social customs have been absent in Brazil because of the fluidity of racial classification. Whereas American political and legal practices as well as social customs have created and observed strict boundaries between the "races"; in Brazil, so the story

goes, the races have fused into one race, the Brazilian race, with its numerous colors. Certain of these ideas correspond, of course, to historical and contemporary realities. The U.S. state has been openly and actively involved in constructing race categories and in sustaining them as axes upon which politics turn. The lack of Brazilian state involvement in these ways is clear. The U.S. and Brazil are typically cast as two opposing cases: one country highly stratified along racial lines, the other not, because of extensive racial mixture.

U.S. and Brazilian censuses largely sustain these characterizations and are used by scholars, in turn, to analyze and compare the "racial compositions" of each country. Census data are taken at face value. What is missing from most scholarly work is a regard for the temporality and contextuality of race and of specific race categories that the censuses themselves reveal. Put plainly, censuses register and reproduce race's social and political importance. What follows then is an analysis of U.S. census race and ethnic categories over time. Its first purpose is to disrupt (comparative) methods which presume both an universality, immutability and timelessness of ethnic, but especially race categories. Its second purpose is to point out the politics which such categories reflect and engender. The U.S. is an instructive place to begin.

"Race"/"Color" or "Ethnic" categories have appeared on U.S. decennial census schedules from the beginning of census-taking, and since 1930, the numbers of and names of categories have changed from one census to the

next. (see tables 2.1 and 2.2) However, the categories of "black" or "negro" and "white" have appeared most consistently. The first national census in 1790 listed the categories of "white," "slaves" and "Indians." At this time, "black" was synonymous with "slaves." However, with the entrenchment of slavery, the "black" category subsumed both the "slave" and "free" categories, meaning they became subcategories of "black." From 1790 through the antebellum period, the U.S. Census bureau did not provide enumerators with definitions of racial terms and thus each enumerator determined the race of persons in his district.[48] In 1850 the "mulatto" category first appeared as a separate census category, and enumerators were instructed to write either "B" (for "black") or "M" (for mulatto) or to leave the space blank for whites.[49] As in past censuses, enumerators decided how to classify the respondents. As the Census Bureau explained, "The census classification is necessarily based upon perceptibility, qualified by the ability of the enumerator to perceive."[50] Besides the mulatto category, a birthplace question, designed to sort out the first tide of European immigrants, appeared on the 1850 census.

While census forms provided no definitions of "black" or "mulatto"

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48 William Peterson, "Politics and Measurement of Ethnicity" in The Politics of Numbers, p.190.

49 "Color - Black and Mulatto Elements" in Negro Population in the United States, 1790 - 1915, (New York: Arno Press and the N.Y.Times, 1968), p.207. (Originally published by the U.S. Census Bureau in 1918).

50 Ibid., p.207.

Table 2.1 U.S. Race / Ethnic Census Classifications, 1790 - 1890

1790	1800-1840	1850	1870	1880	1890
White Indian Slave	White Indian Black: a.Slave b. Free Colored	White Indian Black: a. Slave b. Free Colored c. Free Mulatto	White Black Mulatto Indian Chinese	White Black Mulatto Indian Chinese	White Black Mulatto Qua- droon Octoroon Chinese Japanese Indian

Note: Mulatto figures from the 1850 census were not published.

Table 2.2 U.S. Race/Ethnic Census Classifications 1900 - 1990

1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
White Black Chinese Japanese Indian	White Black Mulatto Chinese Japanese Indian Other	White Black Mulatto Chinese Japanese Indian Other	White Negro Mexican Indian Chinese Japanese Filipino Hindu Korean Other	White Negro Indian Chinese Japanese Filipino Hindu Korean Other
1950	**1960**	**1970**	**1980**	**1990**
White Negro American- Indian Japanese Chinese Filipino Other	White Negro American- Indian Japanese Chinese Filipino Hawaiian Part- Hawaiian Aleut Eskimo Other, etc.	White Negro or Black Indian (Amer.) Japanese Chinese Filipino Hawaiian Korean Other	White Black or Negro Japanese Chinese Filipino Korean Vietnamese Indian- (Amer.) Asian- Indian Hawaiian Guamanian Samoan Eskimo Aleut Other	White Black or Negro Indian - (Amer.) Eskimo Aleut *Asian or* *Pacific* *Islander* *(API)* Chinese Filipino Hawaiian Korean Vietnamese Japanese Asian- Indian Samoan Guamanian Other

Source: U.S. Censuses as printed in Sharon Lee, (1993).

during the antebellum period, larger society and especially, state courts, did. The census bureau appears to have relied upon these social and legal understandings. In the South before the Civil War, a "negro" was presumed to be a slave. In South Carolina, for example, the Courts held that "Negro" was synonymous with "slave."[51] Yet the court clarified that for such a presumption to hold, the person ". . .must have appeared to be a Negro, and, if it was doubtful to which race he belonged, there was then no basis for presumption one way or the other."[52] In the North and West, state courts intervened to define "colored" or "negro" in response to particular circumstances or as problems arose. For example, in Michigan, the courts held that men who were less than "one-fourth" negro were to be considered "white" and thus eligible to vote according to the state constitutional provision which restricted the franchise to white male citizens.[53] In the 1852 case *Bailey v. Fiske* a Maine Court decided that a person having one-sixteenth or perhaps one-eighth African blood was not a Negro and was thus exempt from the state statute which disallowed marriages between whites

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51 Charles S. Mangum, The Legal Status of the Negro, (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1940), p.2.

52 Ibid., p.2.

53 Ibid., p.3.

and Negroes.[54]

The abolition of U.S. slavery demanded the reconstitution of a racial hierarchy with its clearly demarcated parameters. And again, the courts, both state and federal, were instrumental in setting these boundaries. Yet, given the rigidity of segregation and the often severe consequences suffered for breaking its rules, there was no "standard" definition of who precisely was a "negro."[55] While definitions varied both within states and from state to state, most definitions included one or some combination of blood quanta, appearance and ancestry. The exact combination differed both geographically and temporally, although by the 1930s most states defined "negro" broadly, meaning "one drop of 'black' blood" made a person black. For example, up until 1927 in Georgia, colored persons were classified as people who had one-eighth or more of Negro blood. After 1927, the statute was changed to define persons having any ascertainable trace of negro blood to be colored.[56]

Most statutory definitions were designed to prohibit black-white marriages and to maintain public school segregation. Neither Western states nor states north east of the Mississippi (except Indiana) had Jim Crow laws, although most enacted strict prohibitions against interracial marriage. Even in the

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[54] Ibid., p.3.

[55] Harold Cohen, "An Appraisal of the Legal Tests Used to Determine Who is a Negro," Cornell Law Quarterly, 34 (1948), pp.246-255.

[56] Magnum, p.7.

south, where Jim Crow and anti-miscegenation laws were strictly enforced, no uniformity of definition existed. In Virginia, for example, "white," "black" and "American Indian" were defined for the purposes of the state's "anti-miscegenation" law as follows:

> For the purpose of this chapter, the term 'white person' shall apply only to such person as has no trace whatever of any blood other than Caucasian; but persons who have one-sixteenth or less of the blood of the American Indian and have no other non-Causasic blood shall be deemed to be white persons. . . Every person in whom there is ascertainable any Negro blood shall be deemed and taken to be a colored person, and every person not a colored person having one fourth or more of American Indian blood shall be deemed an American Indian; except that members of Indian tribes existing in this Commonwealth having one fourth or more of Indian blood and less than one sixteenth of Negro blood shall be deemed tribal Indians.[57]

The exception made for persons with less than "one-sixteenth" Indian blood was included, according to the Registrar of the State Bureau of Vital Statistics, in order ". . .to recognize as an integral and honored part of the white race the descendants of John Rolfe and Pocahontas. . ."[58]

Given both the stakes attached to "proper" categorization and the lack of uniform definitions, measures which could sort out the racially "suspect" were employed and carried great weight. In court cases, for example, persons were subject to visual inspection by a judge and/or jury. In a 1861 Arkansas case, for example, a man's feet were examined to determine whether he was

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57 U.S. Supreme Court, October Term 1966, "Loving et ux v. Virginia," p.5, footnote #4.

58 Ibid, p.5, footnote #4.

"colored" since earlier testimony stated that Negroes' feet were peculiarly shaped.[59] Also, persons who were deemed familiar with the person's family history were allowed to testify as were persons who could attest to the general reputation of the uncategorized.[60] That is, did the person have the reputation of living as and carrying him/herself as a "white" or "black" person?

Census bureau race and color definitions have not been anymore consistent than those of individual states. They have instead usually reflected, broadly speaking, changing social sensibilities and political realities. The census of 1870, the first after the civil war, provided definitions which distinguished between "blacks" and "mulattoes." The Census Bureau did not offer a reason either for the introduction of the mulatto category or for the exact definitions of each category. In the past, enumerators were given no such definitions. "Mulattoes" were defined to include "quadroons, octoroons, and all persons have any perceptible trace of African blood."[61] By the 1890 census, enumerators were admonished to "be particularly careful to distinguish between blacks, mulattoes, quadroons, and octoroons."[62] "Black" included all persons "having three-fourth or more 'black blood'." Other

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59 Magnum, p.14.

60 Ibid., pp.14-17.

61 Negro Population in the United States 1798 - 1915, p.207.

62 Ibid., p.207.

persons having any proportion of "black blood" were classified as "mulattoes," "quadroons," or "octoroons".[63] This attempt to create even finer distinctions within the "mulatto" category was done only once in 1890. Apparently, the results from these efforts to measure "mulattoness" were judged as useless and the categories were eliminated.[64] In 1910, the Census Bureau returned to the two categories of "black" and "mulatto" in classifying the "Negro" population. Census enumerators were given the following definition:

> For census purposes the term "black" includes all persons who are evidently full-blooded Negroes, while the term "mulatto" includes all other persons having some proportion or perceptible trace of negro blood.

1920 was the last year in which census schedules included the mulatto category. Thereafter, "mulattoes" were included under the black and then negro category and now black or negro category. The Census Bureau did not offer an explanation for the discontinuance of the mulatto category. It is reasonable to surmise from that decision both that the data were considered "inaccurate" and that, mirroring the developments in statutory laws, the boundaries hardened between "negroes" and "whites."

In addition to changing "black" terms, there have been a variety of terms

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63 Ibid., p.207.

64 The report of the 11th census states: "These figures are of little value. Indeed, as an indication of the extent to which the races have mingled, they are misleading." Ibid., p.207, footnote #1.

used to categorize "non-white" persons. In 1870, "Chinese" first appeared on census schedules under "Color." In 1890, in addition to the "white," "black," "mulatto," "quadroon" and "octoroon" categories, there were the "Japanese" and "Indian" categories.[65] In 1930, "Mexican," "Filipino," "Hindu," Korean" categories appeared for the first time on U.S. census schedules. However, the Mexican category was removed from the 1940 census in response to pressure from the Mexican government and Mexican Americans who preferred to be categorized as "white."

In 1950, the Hindu category was eliminated, and Asian Indians were classified as "white." Also, on the 1950 and 1960 censuses, Koreans were reclassified as "other." The "Indian" category was also modified to read "American Indian." In 1960, there were 11 categories; Hawaiian, Part-Hawaiian, Aleuts, and Eskimos appeared for the first time. Moreover, enumerators were instructed to classify all persons of "Latin descent" as "white" unless they were "definitely Negro, Indian, or some other race." Southern European and Near Eastern people were also classified as "white" but Asian Indians were placed in the "other" category. The 1970 schedules contained nine categories; five of which were Asian- Pacific. The categories of Part Hawaiian, Aleut, and Eskimo were omitted.

In 1977, the Office of Management and Budget sought to standardize the

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65 Lee, "Racial Classifications in the U.S. Census: 1890 - 1990."

racial/ethnic definitions used for all Federal agencies. The five main classifications under which sub-categories subsequently were to fall are: American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic and White. For the 1980 and 1990 schedules, there were 15 categories under the race question. On the 1980 census, Asian Indians, who had been classified as "white" since 1950, were reclassified as "Asians" after lobbying efforts by the Association of Indians in America (AIA).[66] In 1990, nine of the 15 categories were grouped together under 'Asian or Pacific Islander' (API). An "Hispanic Origins" question was added to the 1980 census. The "Ancestry" question, designed primarily to measure white Americans' ethnic identities was also added to the 1980 census.[67]

What is most striking is not only the shifting numbers of categories but the type of categories as well. In one sense, they reflect the changing flow of immigration. However, more significantly, these categories reflect both the constant standard of U.S. citizenship: "whiteness" and a shifting U.S. racial order. Except for the "white" category, all of the other categories are "nonwhite" ones. Whereas waves of European immigrants were, for the purposes of censuses, simply "white", "blacks" included "mulattoes" and "blacks"; "mulattoes" meant, at one time, "quadroons" and "octoroons";

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[66] Yen Le Espiritu, Asian-American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and and Identities, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), pp.124-125.

[67] Leiberson and Waters, p.5.

American Indians were either "full" or "mixed blooded"; Hawaiians were "part-Hawaiians," and so on. Moreover, whereas Europeans had nationalities measured by "Birthplace" questions; Asians were "races." The first Chinese immigrants to enter the country in appreciable numbers came to California with the Gold rush of 1849. However in little more than a decade, by the 1860 census, they were enumerated separately as the Chinese "race." The "Yellow Peril" had to be contained and measured in a way which European immigration did not.

Censuses not only bear the mark of their context, they bear its myth as well. In the United States, the myth has been one of a "melting pot" in which European immigrants assimilate into Americanness and whiteness, and non-Europeans do not. As we have seen, European immigrants became "white" and then simply "American." Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indian, and blacks remain races and, at best, hyphenated-Americans. "White" then has not only corresponded to persons of European descent. It has also functioned as a standard of "purity," and of what constitutes an American, "native" or "naturalized." In the 1923 Supreme Court case U.S. vs. Bhaget Singh Thind, for example, the Court ruled that Asian Indians were ineligible for naturalization because although they were "caucasian" they were not "white." The term "white," the Court explained, was based upon the "common man's" understanding of race, not "scientific" definitions. As the Court explained: It may be true that the blond Scandinavian and the brown

Hindu have a common ancestor in the dim reaches of antiquity, but the average man knows person knows perfectly well that there are unmistakable and profound differences between them today."[68] The rights of naturalized citizenship were reserved for "that class of persons" know as "whites."

The "other" category on U.S. census schedules adds yet another twist to an already twisted story. Although the "other" category was first introduced in the U.S. census of 1910; the substantive problems it engenders only became glaring in the 1980 and 1990 census when there was a 45% increase in the numbers of people who claimed it.[69] 95% of these respondents identified as "Hispanics." They apparently thought of themselves first as Latin Americans, distinct from American "blacks" or "whites." Since 1980, census schedules have included a "Hispanic-origin" question in addition to the "race" question in response both to organized demands by Hispanic groups and in an effort to circumvent the problems posed by existing race categories and responses of Hispanics to them. The "Hispanic-origins" question reveals that Hispanics are considered and consider themselves to be outside of or awkwardly fitted within the U.S's racial hierarchy. Thus, although "hispanic" is not cast as a "racial" term in that it is not included under the "race" question; it certainly functions as one. In fact, 43% of those who responded to the Hispanic origin

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[68] Ronald Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian-Americans, (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), p.299.

[69] Lee, p.83.

question on the 1990 census most often wrote the same response in the "other" box on the "race" question. It is interesting to note, however, that 52% of persons who answered the Hispanic Origin question, also checked "white" as their race whereas only 3% listed "black." [70]

That the other category has, until recently, been a relatively non-contentious category attests to the entrenchment of the belief in "pure races" as signified by "pure categories."[71] A notion of "mixture" has been neither widely nor fully accommodated on U.S. census forms or in U.S. society. Even the "mulatto" category, which connotes "mixture," was placed under the "negro" category because, as disclosed in the definition provided by the Census bureau, the concern was in measuring the quanta of "black" and not "white" blood. Thus, any deviation from purity, synonymous with "white," results in contamination, synonymous with "negro". There is a commitment to upholding the myth of distinct races in general and the purity of "whiteness" in particular.

Official sanction of race/ethnic categories has not only meant the reinforcement of racial orders; it has also identified such categories as vehicles for advancing political aims. Larger political battles along racial/ethnic lines

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[70] Reynolds Farley, "Questions About Race, Spanish Origin and Ancestry: Findings from the Census of 1990 and Proposals for the Census of 2000," in U.S. House Subcommittee, Review of Federal Measurements of Race and Ethnicity, pp.53-64.

[71] Lee, pp. 83-84.

have intensified attempts to garner state recognition, in the form of official census categories, when political or economic benefits are at stake. Such has been the case with U.S. census racial/ethnic categories especially in the wake of significant federal legislation aimed at minority populations. In an important way, then, while U.S. census categories continue to reflect what is constant about the U.S. racial order; they also now reflect a shift in this order as groups seek the state-conferred benefits of minority status.

The history of the "Hispanic-Origin" category and the growth of "Asian or Pacific Islander" categories are such two cases in point. Agitation about the inadequacy of statistics on "hispanic" people in general and Mexicans specifically began in earnest in the late 1960's.[72] Such agitation was precipitated, in large measure, by the establishment of social legislation and programs targeted at minority populations.

Yet, given the virtual absence of vital statistics of Hispanic people and persistent undercounts, Hispanic leaders maintained that Hispanics were not in a position to take advantage of new Federal programs because they lacked the data that the programs required. For the Census Bureau's part, officials were also dissatisfied with the quantity of available data and the quality of the prevailing methodology. After abandoning the categorizing of "Mexicans" as a "race" in the 1930 census because of pressure from Mexicans and the

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72 Choldin, "Statistics and Politics: The 'Hispanic Issue' in the 1980 Census," pp.403-418.

Mexican government, Mexicans were reclassified as "white". The Bureau then relied on "Spanish surnames". In five Southwestern states (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas), the method used was to identify persons by "Spanish surnames" and persons who spoke spanish. However, as the 1950 and 1960 censuses revealed, there was no direct correspondence between hispanic surname and "spanish" origins. Many persons who claimed to be of "spanish" origins did not have "hispanic" surnames and those who did have hispanic surnames, especially in regions outside of the Southwest, did not claim "spanish" origins.[73]

Responding to organized pressure from Hispanic groups, the Census Bureau added an Hispanic self-identification question on the long form of the 1970 census that was administered to 10,000 households. This addition did not please either the Census Bureau or Hispanic representatives. The census bureau argued that existing methods (i.e. surnames) were more accurate than self-identification. Hispanic leaders preferred the self-identification method and countered that the question should have appeared on all, and not just long, census schedules. In 1975, the Census Advisory Committee on Spanish Origin Population was established. This Committee, on which social scientists, statisticians, and organizational representatives sat, was formed to assist the Census Bureau in more accurately counting Hispanics on the upcoming census. By the 1980 census, then, a "Hispanic Origin" question,

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[73] Farley, p.53.

separate from the race question, had been added. Under this term, "Hispanics" are defined as an ethnic group and all persons who come from Spanish-speaking countries are included. Brazilians presumably would respond only to the race and ancestry questions. In the end, Hispanic leaders quite successfully realized their aims. Hispanic self-identification questions appear on all census schedules in the form of the "Hispanic" origin question and bilingual enumerators are now assigned to largely spanish-speaking neighborhoods.

Asian American groups also organized to protect their perceived interests by lobbying for the maintenance of nine official categories. After the 1970 census, the Census Bureau established a number of minority advisory committees that included the Asian Pacific American Advisory Committee and the aforementioned Hispanic Committee. [74] The Committee advised, in the face of the census bureau's stiff resistance, that the groups listed under the Asian Pacific category be increased from five so that fewer or no Asian Pacific groups would be classified as "other." [75] A more accurately counted group, the Committee held, signaled and secured the status of Asian Americans as one of America's "major" minority groups. Further, the other category, to which many Asian Pacific people were assigned, was perceived as an identity "no-man's land." The Census Bureaus' initial response was to eliminate the five

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[74] Le Espiritu, p.119.

[75] Ibid., p.121.

already existing categories and to retain simply the Asian Pacific Islander category to which respondents would fill in his/her particular identity. From the Census Bureau's point of view, the possible list would never be inclusive enough to satisfy all. Yet, a pretest of this umbrella question in Oakland was unsuccessful, with respondents confused by or resistant to the question. In the end, the 1980 census contained 9 sub-categories (four more than the 1970 census) under "Asians and Pacific Islanders (APIs).[76]

For the 1990 census, the Census Bureau again proposed to replace these separate categories with a general "Asian or Pacific Islander" category. This change, known as the "short version" of the API, was pretested in the 1986 Los Angeles, Mississippi, and National Content Tests, among others.[77] The longer versions of the API question, like those which appeared on the 1980 census, were also tested. From these tests, the Census Bureau concluded that the short version would be as accurate as the long form.[78]

However, Asian American leaders were unconvinced of the Bureau's

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[76] These categories were: "Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, Asian Indian, Hawaiian, Guamanian, Samoan."

[77] Census Reform: Early Outreach and Decisions Needed on Race and Ethnic Questions, (Washington, D.C.: General Accounting Office, Jan. 1993), p.18.

[78] Ibid., p.19.

findings and remained staunchly opposed to a switch to a short version. Because Congress is ultimately responsible for the form and content of Census schedules, Asian American organizations directly lobbied the House Subcommittee on Census and Postal Personnel to have the categories maintained. Their lobbying supplemented the efforts of the Asian American Census Advisory Committee. Moreover, U.S. Representative Robert Matusi introduced a bill (H.R. 4432) mandating that the Census Bureau restore the 1980 API question. This bill passed unanimously in both the House and Senate. In the end, the Census Bureau was directed by the Department of Commerce to continue the use of the same pre-listed nine categories as in the 1980 census and to add another subcategory -- "other API."[79] Under this latest addition, respondents may write in their identity if it is not listed among the nine. Categories for the year 2000 census are currently being devised. This time, coalitions of Asian-American groups are lobbying for the addition of more subcategories and for the reclassification of Hawaiian from Asian Pacific Islander (API) to Native American.[80]

Conclusion

This chapter's main purpose has been to advance an approach to census

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79 Lee, p.90.

80 Henry Der, National Coalition for an Accurate Count of Asians and Pacific Islanders, in U.S. House Subcommittee Review of Federal Measurements, p.94.

statistics that removes them from their privileged positions by disclosing their contingent locations. Censuses exist within historical contexts which bear directly on how they are conducted, how categories are devised, which questions are (and are not) asked and on what data are obtained. More to the point, censuses are part of the apparatus of state power, helping to extend the state's reach in both the registering and structuring of social relations.

The power of statistics is enhanced, we have seen, by its purported ability to access the truth. Part of this truth speaks to "being," and more particularly to the existence and measurement of a "raced being." Census race/color categories, then, not only mirror society's racial hierarchies, they help to constitute them. They reflect social and political boundaries and locate a place for each individual within them. Yet, however restrictive and imposing census race/color categories are, the status of such can help to underscore political legitimacy and advance political claims. At bottom, censuses and census bureaus are actors in political contests they help both to construct and maintain.

As we will explore in the next chapter, the Brazilian political terrain has been significantly shaped by race in the construct of a whitened national identity. The Brazilian census bureau (IBGE) has been an active participant in both sustaining and constructing this whiter national face. Its involvement, it will be shown, rests in its decisions on whether to include a race/color question on census schedules and in its interpretations of census data.

Chapter Three: Making Up the National Face: Race and Brazilian Censuses

Censuses have served both as instruments in constructing Brazilian national identity and as weapons in dismantling such constructions. At stake are competing claims about whom Brazilians *are* or *are becoming* and assessments of the nature of Brazilian social relations which adhere to such claims. If the censuses present both a "racially mixed" and "lighter" population, then the myth of racial democracy is sustained. If, conversely, the methods and interpretations of the census can be thrown into doubt so too can the image of a racially assimilated and harmonious society.

This chapter argues that the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) has actively advanced, through its policy decisions and texts, a "whiter"and/or "mixed" national face. Its actions have had the following consequences. First, the IBGE's reinscription of the idea that distinct races do exist and mix sustains the narrative of racial democracy. The IBGE's explicit appeals to scientific knowledge promote the naturalization of race and effectively preclude discussions about and challenges to race as a ideologically and socially constructed category. The second and related consequence is that these biological explanations rob Brazilians of a language for talking about the lived experiences which color categories engender, especially those experiences which contradict official stories. The third and perhaps unintended consequence is that IBGE actions have prompted efforts, both within and outside of the IBGE, to rethink the color question and to

reinterpret the data it generates. The chapter is organized as follows: first it provides a brief history of the IBGE's development. It then offers an analysis of representative census texts and other official documents which disclose the IBGE's interest in and decisions about racial categorization and enumeration. The purpose is to show not only *that* the IBGE has upheld a "whiter" and/or "mixed" national identity but how the IBGE invokes scientific authority to do so.

History of the IBGE

The demographic census of 1872 is generally recognized as Brazil's first modern census. Conducted by the *Directoria Geral de Estatistica* (General Directory of Statistics), the census results, published in 1876, were contained in more than 800 tables and in 20 volumes. However, in spite of this apparent comprehensiveness, only very basic information is known about the organization, methods and definitions used in this census. For example, it is known that "the country was divided into provinces, parishes, and 'curatos'," and that information was gathered by canvassing. [1]

Although considered the first modern census both because it was carried out by a state bureau and explicitly relied upon prevailing statistical knowledge, it was not the first attempt made by authorities to count the

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[1] Doreen S. Goyer and Elaine Dornschke, The Handbook of National Population Censuses: Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Oceania, (Conn: Greenwood Press, 1983), p.83.

population. During the colonial period, church authorities counted the number of people within their parishes, and in 1808 a population count was initiated by the Ministry of War for military purposes. With the independence of Brazil in 1822, deliberate, albeit unsuccessful, attempts were made to begin the institutionalization of a statistical bureau.[2] For example, a decree issued on November 25, 1829 established the Commission of Geographical, Natural, Political and Civil Statistics.[3] However in the five years of its existence, no information was produced. In 1834, through an additional act to the Constitution, provincial legislative assemblies were encouraged to develop their own statistical departments.

A large part of the difficulty in establishing a Brazilian statistical bureau can be traced to the larger pattern of political institutional development. Although the State became increasingly more differentiated during the Empire period with the establishment of executive, legislative, judiciary and

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2 A historical note is in order: Brazil became independent in 1822 when Prince Pedro declared it so. He then received the title of emperor. The transition from colony to nation was a non-contentious one as Brazil's political elite were most concerned with maintaining national unity and this was easily achieved with Pedro as Emperor. Portugal's ruling family, the Braganzas, had both ruled from and lived in Rio de Janeiro for 13 years prior to independence thus greatly facilitating the development of a political consensus between Brazilian political elites and the Royal family. The period from 1822 until 1889 is known historically as the Empire period. E. Bradford Burns, A History of Brazil, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), pp.110-117.

3 Yedda Borges de Mendonca, "Roteiro para uma monografia sobre a Historia do I.B.G.E.," (Rio de Janeiro: I.B.G.E. Central Library, 1979), p.17.

moderative branches, its power was concentrated primarily within the executive. The Emperor could veto all legislation, convoke or dissolve the general assembly and select the presidents of the provinces, senators, and even bishops. Further, and as importantly, the reach of executive power, however extensive, was limited by the sheer territorial vastness of Brazil. Much of the effort of political and economic elites in the nineteenth and twentieth century has been directed toward strengthening state institutions and expanding their power.

Paradoxically, however, few political and intellectual elites perceived censuses as instruments of state-building: that is, of taxation and surveillance, as in Western Europe. Through-out most of the empire years, the Imperial government did not conduct censuses. Instead, it passed decrees and orders that called for population enumerations which were either not carried out or were carried out incompletely due to widespread resistance. A Regulation passed in January 1842, for example, assigned police officials to conduct an enumeration.[4] No such enumeration was carried out. A second attempt was made in 1850-51 when the government decreed that both a general census would be taken and a registry of births and deaths be established. However, masses of Brazilians reacted distrustfully and angrily to the decree-mandated census, viewing it and the registry as a means to

[4] Ibid., p.18.

enslave free people of color.[5] (Slavery was abolished in 1888.) Indeed, some Brazilians renamed the "Law of the Census" the "Law of Captivity." So serious were the disturbances that the Imperial government halted the census by decree on January 29, 1852. No other attempts were made at a census until 1871 when the General Directory of Statistics was created and January 1, 1872 chosen to be first day of the census.

A fundamental reason for the slow development of a national statistics apparatus lies in the (relative) lack of knowledge about statistical method itself. In Western Europe, more specifically in England, France, and Germany, statistics developed as a distinct body of knowledge within the larger and increasingly dominant domain of science on the one hand and social activism on the other. In early Victorian England, for example, practitioners understood statistics as a means both for charting social evolution and providing a scientific basis for social policies.[6] In Brazil, statistical knowledge was imported into a significantly different political and intellectual context: a political and economic system organized around chattel slavery and an intellectual landscape largely tied and indebted to developments in Europe. Generally, historians have treated the introduction of scientific and technological ideas into nineteenth century Latin America as an (imperfect) extension of the European Enlightenment. Their observation is borne out by

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[5] Ibid., p.18.

[6] T. Porter, The Rise of Statistical Thinking: 1820 - 1900 .

the significant influence which Romanticism and later Comtean Positivism welded in elite intellectual and political circles in Brazil. Their observation also holds true in regards to knowledge about statistics. Drawing from the scant historical works available, responsibility for the slow and intermittent establishment of a national statistics institute was borne by a select group of dedicated government officials, who were influenced, in great measure, by the prevailing currents of European thought.[7] The first of such men was Jose Candido Gomes who, inspired by the French thinkers Quetelet and Moreau de Jonnes, helped to establish the General Directory of Statistics during the Imperial period.[8]

The General Directory of Statistics which was responsible for conducting the 1872 census ceased to be an independent agency after the census was completed and was subordinated under the State Secretary of Imperial Business. One author has speculated that this lowering of status so

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7 After extensive searches, I have been able to find only two monographs which provide a history of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics. Both, while generally helpful, provide very little information about the internal political debates or the decision-making processes. Instead, each monograph presents the history as a series of decrees and administrative acts with very little attention paid to the politics behind the decrees. Furthermore, while there are many valuable texts on the history of social science in Brazil, scant attention has been paid to statistics. The two historical monographs consulted are: Yedda Borges de Mendonca, "Roteiro para uma Monografia sobre a Historia do I.B.G.E.," 1979 and Marilda Dias Alves, "O Desenvolvimento do Sistema Estatistico Nacional," (Rio de Janeiro: Fundacao I.B.G.E., 1988).

8 Alves, p.19.

demoralized the Directory's staff that they postponed the 1880 census to 1887 which, in turn, was never realized.[9] In 1889, the emperor was dethroned and the Republic established. Within two months of the Republic's existence, the General Directory of Statistics was reestablished on January 2, 1890 as an full-fledged agency. December 31, 1890 was the scheduled date for the next census. Although more ambitious than the census of 1872, the 1890 census has been characterized as less reliable and complete. Census schedules were incompletely distributed and of those distributed, results were neither all returned nor accurate. Because of both the number and complexity of the questions asked, both the tabulation and publishing of the results were significantly impeded.[10] With tables containing subtitles in French, only the information gathered from the Federal District, the state of Alagoas, and a country summary, including summarized information on each state were published.[11]

The census of 1900 is widely considered to have been even less reliable than that of 1890.[12] Conducted by the same agency, the General Directory of Statistics, the data compiled were unevenly reliable and available. Some states

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9 Mendonca, p.20.

10 Goyer, p.84.

11 Ibid., p.84.

12 Ibid., p.84.

conducted fairly comprehensive enumerations while others made up for lost schedules by using past censuses. In a particularly bad case, the Federal District's census was so incomplete that a new census was conducted in 1906 for that state alone.

However unreliable the 1900 census, within the decade of 1900 -1910 important measures were taken to ensure the establishment of a national statistical agency. Under the leadership of Jose Salao de Bulhoes Carvalho, a new statute in 1907 transferred the Directory of General Statistics (DGE) from under the authority of the State Secretary of Imperial Business, where it had been since 1871, to the Ministry of Industry, Transportation and Public Works. This move signified, at least, that the DGE would no longer be considered a relic from the days of empire but could become an important part of republican governance. The DGE, however, was largely ineffective in consolidating administrative power at the national level. This failure is revealed by the absence of a 1910 general census and by the continuance of uncoordinated statistical activities at the state and local levels. There was no national census in 1910; the 1920 census was carried out by the DGE under the directorship of Dr. Carvalho.

Dr. Carvalho, the advocate for statistical standardization and technical-administrative cooperation under one national agency, proposed that a national conference on statistics, the first of its kind, be held in October 1930. The Revolution of 1930, however, not only delayed the conference but

ushered in political and subsequent administrative changes which hastened dramatically the implementation of Dr. Carvalho's designs. The Revolution of 1930, led by Getulio Vargas of Rio Grande do Sul, resulted from a political impasse among political elites of dominant southern states who had historically brokered national political power. Its less immediate causes were the political exclusion of the masses of Brazilians in general and a growing urban middle class in particular who felt political power was disproportionately held by rural, landowning elites. However much Vargas in fact differed (or not) from these traditional interests, the Revolution signaled significant changes in economic, political and social arrangements.

Given the populist tenor of the Vargas regime, Vargas early on identified mass education as one of his concerns. This priority had important ramifications for the further development of a national statistics bureau as statistics were deemed crucial to ascertaining the quality of Brazilian education. In 1931, the government sponsored the Fourth National Conference on Education, organized by the Brazilian Association of Education. At this conference, delegates decided that uniform school statistics were necessary and for this, administrative collaboration was indispensable. Moreover, with the idea of a well-equipped and organizationally secure national statistics agency gaining political ground, proponents began to lobby the drafters of the new national constitution for a constitutional provision establishing a national statistical system. Chief among these lobbyists were

Heitor Eloy Alvim Pessoa and Teixeira de Freitas, director of the General Directory of Information and Dissemination for the Ministry of Education and Public Health.

As a result of these lobbying efforts, Vargas ordered in 1933 the creation of an Interministerial Commission to study the (re)-organization of the country's statistical apparatus. This commission, in turn, recommended the establishment of a National Institute of Statistics, one capable of functioning effectively on a national level. The following year, 1934, Getulio Vargas created by decree the National Institute of Statistics (INE). However, July 1936 is generally recognized as the official date of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics' creation. Since the late 1930s, the IBGE has been the official statistics-generating agency of the Brazilian state. It has been responsible for conducting all national demographic censuses as well as producing other statistics (i.e. industrial, labor, agricultural, military, educational). In the 1950s, the IBGE's secured its position among other state institutions as state-led developmentalist policies demanded economic statistics and analyses. Despite the IBGE's centrality within the Brazilian state apparatus, its policies have largely escaped scholarly scrutiny, although scholars rely upon its products (that is, numbers). IBGE policies on racial enumeration have been ignored or dismissed as unimportant. Yet, they indicate both the politics of producing census data and the Brazilian state's role in making up the "whiter" national face.

The Color Question and Color Categories on Brazilian Censuses

Color questions and categories have appeared inconsistently on Brazilian censuses in the twentieth century. (See tables 3.1 and 3.2.) The 1940 census was the first census this century to ask a color question. The 1900 census asked about nationality and the 1920 had no question. There was no census in 1910 or 1930. But although the question did not appear on the 1920 census does not mean that race was not a concern. The official reason given for excluding the question was that "the responses largely hide the truth." What was meant by that statement is clearly open to interpretation. Thomas Skidmore, for one, has speculated that the truth was that Brazilians were "darker" than the proponents of "whitening" cared to acknowledge or measure. [13] Far more revealing of the state's concern about race than the exclusion of the question, however, is the text which accompanied the 1920 census. The section, entitled "Evolution of the Race," both recorded each "racial group's" contribution to Brazil's racial heritage and charted Brazil's inevitable march toward "whiteness." This text later appeared unaltered as a separate volume entitled *Evolucao do Povo Brasileiro* (Evolution of the Brazilian People).[14]

On its face, the text predictably reflects the prevailing scientific and social ideas about and preoccupations with race and Brazilian national identity.

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13 Thomas Skidmore, Black into White, p.201.

14 Oliveira Vianna, Evolucao do Povo Brasileiro, (Rio de Janeiro: Jose Olympio, 1956).

Table 3.1 Brazilian Census Color Questions and Categories, 1900 - 1991 88

Year	Color Question	Color Terms Used
1900 1910 - No census	No	
1920	No color question but extended discussion in census text about the "whitening" of Brazil.	
1930 - No census		
1940	Yes	Black, White, and Yellow. If respondent did not fit into one of these three categories, enumerator was instructed to place a horizontal line on census schedule.
1950	Yes	Black, White, Brown, and Yellow. Auto-classification according to designated categories is introduced.
1960	Yes	White, Black, Brown, and Yellow. Pre-codified rectangles are provided for first time.
1970	No	
1980	Yes	Same as 1960.

Source: IBGE Demographic Censuses

Table 3.1 Brazilian Census Color Questions and Categories, 1900 - 1991

1991	Yes. Question asks what is your color *or* race? Race corresponds to the new indigenous category.	White, Black, Brown, Yellow, and Indigenous.

Source: IBGE Demographic Censuses

Table 3.2 Color Composition of Brazilian Population According to Brazilian Censuses, 1940 - 1980

Color	1940	1950	1960	1980
White	26,172 (63.5%)	32,028 (61.8%)	42,838 (61.0%)	64,540 (54.2%)
Brown	8, 744 (21.2%)	13,786 (26.5%)	20,706 (29.5%)	46,233 (38.8%)
Black	6,036 (14.6%)	5,692 (11.0%)	6,117 (8.7%)	7, 047 (5.9%)
Yellow	242 (0.6%)	329 (0.6%)	483 (0.7%)	673 (0.7%)
Missing	42 (0.1%)	108 (0.2%)	47 (0.1%)	517 (0.4%)
Total	41,236 (100%)	51,944 (100%)	70,191 (100%)	119,011 (100%)

Source: IBGE Demographic Censuses as printed in Charles Wood, "Categorias Censitarias e Classificacoes Subjetivas de Raca no Brasil."

However, that Oliveira Vianna, a highly influential and devoted adherent to the idea of the whitening or in his words, "aryanization" of Brazil, wrote the text speaks to both the influence of his ideas and the willingness of the DGE to assign them official status.[15] Among the many Brazilian intellectuals of his day writing about race, Vianna was an influential and strident voice. His stature was due to the breadth of his intellectual concerns about issues seemingly other than race. He was, for example, a forceful proponent of corporatist-authoritarianism and fierce critic of liberalism.

Yet all of Vianna's writings are suffused with concerns about race.[16] The basis and justification for authoritarian-oligarchical rule was, in part, a racial one: only whites were capable of competent governance. Further, racial development and national development were inextricably linked: as the race developed so did the nation. Unlike other intellectuals, most notably politician Rui Barbosa his intellectual nemesis, who defined governance and institutional development in terms of legislation, Vianna concentrated on

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15 In making the same observation about Vianna's writing of the 1920 census text, Thomas Skidmore writes that Vianna's views about Whitening did not carry "any government endorsement." However, I wonder what would constitute government endorsement if not the official text of the national census. Thomas Skidmore, Black Into White, p.202.

16 A scholar of Vianna's work has observed that "analysis of the composition and behavior" of Brazilian people is a "permanent theme" of Vianna's writings. Evaldo Amaro Vieira, Oliveira Vianna & O Estado Corporativo, (Sao Paulo:Editorial Grijalbo, 1976), p.105.

Brazil's lived political realities.[17] In his eyes, Brazilian realities exposed large numbers (although never the majority) of degraded, backward Africans, Indians and mixed bloods on one side and an even larger number of civilized whites on the other. "Whiteness" and especially the intellectual and cultural guidance provided by white elites was both a prerequisite for and guarantor of progress.

Vianna's ideas were, relative to other Brazilian thinkers of the day, most clearly associated with Western science's tenets on race. He did not, for example, celebrate the virtues of "mulattoness" or "mixture," in and of itself. Rather, he understood it as an intermediary step to "whiteness." At times, however, his writings betrayed an uncertainty about the possibilities of either rescuing Africans and Indians from barbarism or of transforming mulattoes into whites. His assurances of the inevitability of whitening in the 1920 census text appear, in this sense, uncharacteristically optimistic. In later works such as *Raca e Assimilacao* (Race and Assimilation) (1932), Vianna laments what he perceives to be the declining interest in the study of racial difference among Brazilians, to their peril. For his part, however, he retained his commitment to the idea of race as an observable determinant of human

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17 Simon Schwartzman, "Changing Roles of New Knowledge: Research Institutions and Societal Transformations in Brazil" in Peter Wagner, et al, Social Sciences and Modern States: National Experiences and Theoretical Crossroads, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 245.

affairs.[18]

Vianna's views echoed those of the Eugenics movement which was becoming increasingly influential in the 1920s. The first eugenics society was founded in Brazil in 1918. Vianna's language suggests a familiarity with their ideas. The Eugenics movement of Brazil, as of Latin America, was distinct from its European predecessors in important ways. In Europe, eugenics was a logical extension in race thinking which drew on new understandings of human heredity. According to eugenic theories, racial improvement was possible through reproduction of that race's most fit individuals. Not every race, however, was suitable for eugenic remedy. Eugenicists theorized that Europeans, and certain Europeans at that, were the only ones both worthy and capable of improvement. Racial betterment in Latin America was, on its face, an impossibility. Latin American and specifically Brazilian eugenicists saw it differently. While agreeing on the racial inferiority of Africans and Indigenous Americans, they argued that through both "better breeding" and better living conditions, the Brazilian race could be improved. Their eugenics was a mix of both social reform and neo-Lamarckian theories. Brazilians would improve racially as their genes physiologically improved first through sanitation, hygiene and exercise and then through reproduction with other

[18] Jarbas Medeiros, Ideologia Autoritaria no Brasil 1930-1945, (Rio de Janeiro: Editora da Fundacao Getulio Vargas, 1978), p.190-91.

"fit" persons.[19] By the end of the 1920s, the eugenics movement began to shift markedly from a Neo-Lamarckian position to a Mendelian. And with this shift came less emphasis on sanitation and general hygienic improvement and more emphasis on forced sterilization, pre-nuptial examinations and birth control. Yet even in this shift, the commitment to whitening survived as Brazilian geneticists argued that using Mendelian laws, the power of "white" skin and Brazil's racial ratios, would naturally result in a "whiter" people.[20]

The census text captured and reflected the elite's political concern about race, and their encounter with science. Brazil's political and economic present and future depended upon the "racial stock" of its inhabitants -- the 1920 census text informed both Brazilians and outsiders that the future was white. Vianna presents a story that has appeared both in subsequent IBGE documents and literary texts throughout this century. It is the staple of Brazilian racial discourse according to which three "fundamental" races, each

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[19] Neo-Lamarckian biological theories, as opposed to Mendelian, proposed that the environment was capable of influencing characteristics which are inherited. Thus, if the social environment is improved through better sanitation, hygiene and personal habits, these improvements will affect the germ plasm which in turn affects the physiology of reproductive cells. As Nancy Stepan has shown, however, although Brazilian eugenics had its intellectual origins in France, many of its Brazilian practitioners were neither geneticists nor well-read in the scientific literature on genetics. See Nancy Leys Stepan, "Eugenics in Brazil: 1917-1940" in Mark B. Adams (ed.), The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil and Russia, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[20] Ibid., p.136.

different from the other and diversified within, have mixed in different and varying degrees through-out the country. In some regions, the "Indian component" predominates, in others the African or the European. In any event, according to Vianna, given the "geographic distribution of the three formative races, the regional ethnic types present neither the same unity of morphological characteristics nor the same identity of temperament and mentality thus making it impossible to bind them, from the point of view of anthropology and of ethnology, into a single, national type".[21]

But although Vianna explains that there could be no generalization about a single national type, he does discuss the overall improvement racially of Brazilians through this "mixing" – meaning, more specifically, the mixing of superior Europeans with inferior Africans and Indians. It is important to note that although Vianna refers implicitly and often explicitly to the inferiority of Indians and Africans and the superiority of Europeans, these evaluations are, on a theoretical level at least, not absolute. That is, the superiority and inferiority of races is relative; such an evaluation depends upon each race's ability to reproduce, at a higher rate, persons of talent and ability. There are , Vianna explains, no absolutely inferior races, but races that become inferior due to their contact with races richer in "eugenics."[22] Invariably, the "eugenically stronger" race is "white" and the "eugenically

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21 Vianna, Evolucao do Povo Brasileiro, p.140.

22 Ibid., p.153.

weaker" races are "black" and "red."

In their "pure" states of being, the text states, "blacks," even exemplary ones, will never completely assimilate into what Vianna calls "aryan" culture.[23] Their capacity to be civilized will not go beyond the more or less perfect imitation of the habits and customs of whites.[24] Like blacks, Indians too would be unable to assimilate aryan culture. Yet unlike blacks, Indians lacked even the capabilities of imitation and would thus remain uncivilized and uncivilizable. When the possibilities for civilization presented themselves to them in the form of Christian missionaries and later Portuguese colonizers, the Indians fled into the forests, Vianna laments, thus sealing their fate.

The only hope for civilization and racial improvement for Africans and Indians lay in their crossing with the eugenically sound white race. The cross between the European and the Indian and Negro produced a human being, a *mestizo,* far better suited for and capable of advancement than its pure Indian and Negro forebears. He adds, however, that although this mixture was clearly a positive development, it also confounded attempts to categorize anthropologically (and "psychologically") the "types" of humans who were produced. This claim about the impossibility of devising adequate scientific categories for the various "racial" types has been repeated in subsequent IBGE

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23 "Aryan" is synonymous with "white."

24 Ibid., p.155.

texts as justifications for both the inadequacy of terms and the inevitable inaccuracy of the data collected.

Yet however difficult the categorization, there emerged, according to Vianna, a clear tendency toward the "aryanization" of the various regional groups.[25] This aryanization is not only the result of massive European immigration but of the (re)-crossing with the mestizo population, which has contributed ". . .in elevating the aryan grade of our blood." That is, within mestizo groups the "quanta" of "barbaric bloods" decreases while the quanta of "white blood" increases, each time refining the race.[26] This progressive whitening means, Vianna asserts, that the "barbarous elements which formed our people are being rapidly reduced" due to a number of factors previously identified: a) the stationary situation of the black population; b) the influx of Europeans; c)" by the conjunction of favorable conditions within our environment which provide for the vitality and fertility of white people over men of other races."[27]

Admitting that the changes, or in his words, "the complex mechanisms of ethnic selections" which he identifies are not immediately perceptible, they

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[25] Ibid., p.170.

[26] Ibid., p.183.

[27] Ibid., p.183.

are revealed, he writes, by "the light of statistical data."[28] Using data from the 1872 and 1890 censuses, Vianna observes that as predicted the African population decreased, in less than 20 years, from 19.7% of the population to 14.6%. Although there was, using this same data, an increase in the percentage of Indians, from 3.9% in 1872 to 9.0% in 1890, Vianna makes only passing reference and goes on to state, in the same sentence, that the two most important points indicated by this data are the increase of whites on one hand and the decrease of mestizos on the other, in near exact proportion. In 1872, 38.1% of the population was classified as white and in 1890, 44% were. Conversely, in 1872, 38.3% of the population was classified as mestizo and in 1890, 32.4% were.[29] These numbers bear out, according to Vianna, his assertions about the inevitable whitening of the population. Ironically, although the text accompanying the 1920 census used racial data from the 1872 and 1890 censuses to substantiate claims about whitening, the census itself did not ask a color question.

The largely biological focus of Vianna's thought on Brazil's past and future was challenged forcefully in the 1930's by anthropologist Gilberto Freyre. While Freyre frequently echoed Vianna's belief in both the desirability and inevitability of "whitening," he identified and emphasized the "positive contributions" of Africans and Indians to Brazilian culture and identity.

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[28] Ibid., pp.188-189.

[29] Ibid., p.189.

Their "backwardness" was a result of social and historical circumstance - namely, slavery and colonization - and not exclusively or even primarily, biology. With this conceptual move, Freyre was able to rescue Africans and Indians from permanent denigration while affirming the superiority of Europeans. Each group has made its own contribution to Brazilian culture, and predictably, the European contribution was both the most evident and important. Biological explanations did not disappear from Freyre's claims. Like Vianna, Freyre envisioned a "lighter" race, formed out of the mixture of all three races. Whereas Vianna spoke of "aryanization", Freyre spoke of "Brazilianness". This Brazilianness was, however, predominantly European in its origin and "light" if not "white" in its color. Later in his life, Freyre spoke increasingly of a "brown" Brazil. The text accompanying the 1940 census reflects Freyre's influence.

The 1940 census was the first Brazilian census in the twentieth century to ask a color question. Specifically, the question asked: "Color" and left a blank to be filled in by the census enumerators with the following choices: "black," "white," and "yellow". If the person did not fit into these categories, enumerators were told to draw a horizontal line in its place.[30] Curiously, "brown"(meaning "mixed"), the centerpiece of Brazilian racial ideology, was not included among the choices. In explaining its decision to exclude it,

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30 Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatistica, "Estudos Sobre a Composicao da Populacao do Brasil Segundo a Cor", in Estudos de Estatistica Teorica e Applicada, Estatistica Demografica, 11(1950), p.7.

official IBGE documents point to both the larger historical context of the 1940s and the rise of fascism on one side and the desire to avoid the North American preoccupation with discerning quantas of "black" blood, on the other.

The racism of the German and Italian fascist states bore directly on the National Census Commission's deliberations on the color question. While only obliquely hinted at, it appears that prevailing ideas about racial "mongrelization" and unfit races, so central to German Nazism, undergirded in part the IBGE's decision to exclude a specific "brown" choice from among the color options. Specifically, the text states: "The preparation of the 1940 census developed within a period in which racist aberrations appeared headed toward world domination."[31] Further, the IBGE's explanation focuses both on Brazil's traditional belief in "the equality of races" and on the desire to eliminate the suspicion that census results would be used for anything other than purely scientific objectives.[32] The IBGE's intention, the document explains, was to quell fears that census results might be used for discriminatory purposes. Given these concerns and the desire to keep Brazilians from having to respond to terms which are "sometimes used with disdain," the IBGE decided to limit the choices to white, black and yellow, with a horizontal line for brown.

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[31] Ibid., p.8.

[32] Ibid., p.8.

While its decision to exclude "brown," according to the IBGE, may have had "little technical basis," the decision preserved "human dignity". Such preservation, the text assures us, is in the end the best solution to a "difficult problem".[33] Further, the IBGE presented two key considerations that informed its decision on the color categories. The first was that the IBGE wanted to keep distinct those Brazilians who maintained the color characteristic of Brazil's "three fundamental ethnic groups"—"whites, for those of European origin; black, for those of African origin; and yellow, those of Asiatic-Oriental"— from those of mixed origin.[34] Related to this consideration was the IBGE's desire to resist appearing like the United States with its rigid color line; an appearance which would have been created, from the IBGE's viewpoint, had it tried to distinguish among the many "mixed" Brazilians.[35] A rigid color line does not exist in Brazil, according to the IBGE, with the following possible consequences. Those persons who would be classified as "black" in the United States because they have "1/8 or 1/16 black blood" would, in contrast, be considered "white" in Brazil.[36] And further mixed people who are "clearly brown" in appearance but who are well-

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[33] Ibid., p.8.

[34] Ibid., p.8.

[35] Ibid., p.8.

[36] Ibid., p.8.

educated and/or well-mannered are considered white since whites constitute the majority of the economic and intellectual elite. Similarly, in marriages in which one spouse is white and the other is brown, it is most common that the family assume the color of the white spouse, at least as far as censuses are concerned.[37]

Not only did IBGE officials debate the exclusion of a "mixed" category, they debated the exclusion of the color question itself.[38] In fact, the decision on whether to include the question or not hinged on the advice of the IBGE technical division. Other members of the Commission thought the inevitable inaccuracy of the results suggested strongly that they exclude the question. However, upon consultation with the technical division, as advised by the IBGE President, the balance was tipped back toward the question's inclusion. Giorgio Mortara, chief consultant, held that the question was more political than technical. Mr. Lourival Fontes concurred with Mortara's opinion, adding that the question's inclusion was necessary for foreign propaganda. Unfortunately, Mr. Fontes' point is not elaborated upon so we do not know exactly what he meant by the question being "necessary for foreign

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37 Ibid., p.9.

38 Xerox copy of the (available) report from the National Census Commission's deliberations on the color question of the 1970 census. I.B.G.E., "Ata dos Trabalhos: A Quesito Cor no Censo de 1970," 1969. This report provides a brief history of past IBGE decisions on color questions. The information on the 1940 census within the report is taken from a summary written by Mr. Afranio de Carvalho, "Observations about the Organization and Execution of the General Census of Brazil."

propaganda." The inclusion may have been less controversial than its exclusion, potentially enhancing, and certainly not tarnishing of Brazil's growing image as a racial democracy.

Finally, international perceptions and external references weighed heavily in the IBGE's decision making and by extension, on self-perceptions of national identity. First, we see explicitly stated Brazilian desires not to appear as either the United States or Nazi Germany because Brazil, of course, does not have any significant color or race problems. And we see a clear connection drawn between the census question itself and its use for foreign propaganda, suggesting again that race or color has no socially or politically important coordinates within Brazilian society itself.

The census results, the IBGE said, met official expectations. The data showed that whites were the majority, 63%, browns were 21% of the population and blacks 15%. And while these numbers were considered reliable, the IBGE cautioned that due to the plasticity of Brazilian color boundaries, they were not completely accurate. Thus the IBGE concluded had it been possible to use "objective" criterion, meaning criterion based on scientific definitions of racial group membership, the numbers of whites and blacks would have been perceptibly lower as many browns were "incorrectly" classified as blacks but more frequently as whites. Consequently, the number of browns would be higher. With these qualifications, however, the IBGE affirmed the integrity of the census results.

The text which accompanied the 1940 census, however, in no way reveals the nuances and qualifications of less accessible but public IBGE documents. Instead, it provides a narrative unwavering in its commitment to and optimism about the whitening of Brazil. Written by Fernando de Azevedo, esteemed educator, the text recounts once again the myth of the founding of Brazil and the evolution of its unique people. Race lies at the core of Azevedo's discussion, with its emphasis on the distinct physical, cultural and intellectual characteristics of each race and their respective contributions to Brazilian civilization. [39]

In a chapter entitled, "Land and Race," (race like land is assigned a natural and fundamental status), Azevedo carefully describes the three constitutive elements of the new Brazilian race. As Vianna had written in the 1920 census, Azevedo too identifies the diversity within the groups of European colonizers, African slaves and indigenous inhabitants. For example, the Portuguese were not a "pure race" themselves but were rather a race produced by "the mixture of the primitive inhabitants of the peninsula - the early Iberians- and races and peoples which mingled in constant migrations across that peninsula, such as the Celts, the Greeks, the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Visigoths, and the Arabs, not to mention the Jews, of whom at a

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[39] The Introduction to the 1940 census text was published in English in 1950 and it is from that text that I will cite henceforth. Fernando de Azevedo, Brazilian Culture: An Introduction to the Study of Culture in Brazil, translated by William Rex Crawford, (New York: MacMillan, 1950), p.31.

single time it received fifty thousand families, moved thither by order of Hadrian.[40] Similarly, enslaved Africans were not a homogeneous group, but were people taken from different nations and cultures at varying historical junctures. (Brazil participated in the transatlantic slave trade until 1850.) "The Africans of Brazil", according to Azevedo, include "authentic Negroes like the Hottentots and the Bushmen, and the Fulahs, who are sometimes called 'white Negroes'" and "mixtures like the slaves drawn from Senegambia or Portuguese Guinea, who are 'considered by some to be superior to the rest from an anthropological point of view. . .."[41]

Azevedo categorized indigenous people into four main groups: the Tupi, the Tapuya, the Arawak, and the Carib. Of these four, it has been the Tupi, says the text, who have contributed most to Brazilian culture in terms of culture and language. Evaluation and hierarchical ordering pervade Azevedo's interpretation. First, he identifies and organizes the "primitive" and "civilized" European sources of the "impure" Portuguese race. He then goes on to make similar evaluations of Africans and Indians. It is not only then that Europeans, in general, are above Africans and Indians, but that the "primitives" themselves are evaluated, where "racially mixed" ones are considered superior to "authentic" ones.

But whatever the biological and hence cultural contributions of the Tupi

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40 Ibid., p.31.

41 Ibid., p.33.

and other indigenous inhabitants and enslaved Africans to Brazilian civilization, the European contribution has been both most fundamental and evident. It has been "white blood" into which "black" and "red" have been mixed and "diluted," giving way to a mixed but whiter people. Although, then, it is impossible to discern with certainty all of the dimensions of race mixture in Brazil, Azevedo assures readers that, in the end, such mixture will lead to a white Brazil. He concludes the chapter with the following comforting prediction:

> If we admit that Negroes and Indians are continuing to disappear, both in the successive dilutions of white blood and in the constant process of biological and social selection, and that immigration, especially that of Mediterranean origin, is not at a standstill, the white man will not only have in Brazil his major field of life and culture in the tropics, but be able to take from Old Europe - citadel of the white race - before it passes to other hands, the torch of Western Civilization to which Brazilians will give a new and intense light - that of the atmosphere of their own civilization.[42]

Another IBGE document, ***Boletim Geografico*** (Geographical Bulletin), published in 1946 also predicted and affirmed a "whiter" Brazil. Using data from the censuses of 1872, 1890 and 1940, the only censuses it should be remembered which contained color questions, the author concludes that the numbers show clearly the "whitening" of Brazil. In his words, "The result of their [blacks' and browns'] fusion with whites indicates that there is an increase in favor of whites. It is the ethnic phenomenon of the predominance

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[42] Ibid., p.41.

of the strongest, both intellectually and psychologically. . ."[43] Contrasting the situation of the "black race" in Brazil with that of the United States, the author states that blacks in Brazil have not had to confront a "chinese wall" of segregation, barring them from entrance into society, the press, intellectual circles, and most importantly, into interracial marriages.[44] This short article concludes as have IBGE publications before it with the happy and confident prediction that "black blood" is being absorbed by "white blood." The author underscores that certainty of whitening by absorption by comparing it to the natural process of when the waters of a small river meet that of a larger one. He writes: " As we see, in 1872, the census showed us 19.49% blacks and 43.74% mestizos. In 1940, the census computation presented us with 14.63% blacks and 21.24% mestizos. The absorption is evident, a phenomenon very similar to that in which the Amazon river receives that waters of the Black river. The waters of [blacks' and browns'] dilute themselves in the great white mass . . ."[45]

The 1950 census introduced both the "brown" category and auto-classification, meaning that enumerators were bound to record the respondents' answer. The Brown category, then,was added to the white, black

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[43] Angelo Bittencourt, "A nossa gente de cor," Boletim Geografico, 45 (1946) p.1145.

[44] Ibid., p.1145.

[45] Ibid., p.1146.

and yellow categories. Controversy surrounding the unreliability of color data persisted, as with past Brazilian censuses, and there were again suggestions that the question be excluded. The IBGE decided that the question would be maintained, despite the unease which its inclusion inspired, because it provided the best, albeit flawed, way of charting the progress of Brazil's "melting pot".[46] The overall accuracy of the 1950 census, however, was not questioned due to its association with the Committee on the 1950 Census of the Americas (COTA).[47]

In 1940, the Inter-American Statistical Institute (IASI) formed in order to encourage and advance the use of statistical methods in the hemisphere. COTA, an ad hoc group created by the IASI's executive committee, convened regularly in the 1940s to ensure methodological standardization among the 22 participating countries.[48] For our purposes, however, what is most interesting are the items COTA chose to include and exclude from the hemisphere wide census. The committee drew up two lists of items: the first was of mandatory items, including: total population, sex, age, marital status,

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[46] Xerox copy, 1969 National Census Commission, p. 2-3.

[47] Inter-American Statistical Institute, The Story of the 1950 Census of the Americas, (Washington, D.C: Inter-American Statistical Institute, 1953).

[48] The countries included: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, the United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

place of birth, citizenship (nationality) and language. The second list consisted of optional topics which included: cultural characteristics , additional income, (un) employment and housing data. On neither list did race nor color appear. Three of the items: language, citizenship and cultural characteristics, however, appear to broach a notion of "difference." Yet language identified mother tongue or language currently spoken, and nationality identified all foreign nationals. Cultural characteristics referred specifically to Indian groups which ". . .hold to their native cultures, and pursue ways of life which are outside the national social and economic structures". [49] Thus, even these three items fit squarely within Brazilian, and for that matter Latin American, nationalist ideologies which hold that "difference" is easily recognizable and external to their racially and culturally assimilated societies.

Up until the early 1950s , IBGE documents disclose a near-exclusive focus on whitening. As we have seen, IBGE interpretations rest on the premise that distinct human races exist and that mixture between these races produces a distinctly mixed-raced human being. As importantly, these races are hierarchically ranked in terms of value and importance of existence with the white race on top, the black and red on the bottom and the new brown race somewhere in the middle. The tenets of science both grounded these assessments and informed the Brazilian ordering of races.

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[49] Ibid., pp. 44-45.

The scientific grounding of race was increasingly called into question in the wake of World War II. This development precipitated, in part, subtle and yet important shifts in IBGE interpretations of Brazil's racial make-up. Nazi atrocities helped to dislodge the scientific precepts which had organized humanity into distinct and unequal groups with fixed and absolute biological differences. Increasingly, scientists began to speak of the unity of humanity and of the intrinsic fluidity of both phenotypes but especially of genotypes. Human genetics came were judged too complex to be reduced to a simple and evident correspondence between phenotype and genotype. Thus, although persons may have similar phenotypes, they do not necessarily share similar genotypes and vice versa. This fluidity, in turn, rendered racial classifications specious and the explicit ordering of races unacceptable. Scientists, especially those connected with the United Nations, have been especially aggressive about this latter point. In the years immediately following the war, the newly founded United Nations, for example, not only passed a Convention against genocide but enlisted UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) in gathering and disseminating science's new knowledge about race.[50] The UN continues with these efforts, sponsoring one such gathering in 1981.[51] Further, the critiques of science and race have

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[50] Paul Gordon Lauren, Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), Chapter 6.

[51] The proceedings were published as Racism, Science and Pseudo-Science, (Paris: UNESCO, 1983).

not been limited to the scientific community. Anthropologists have been influential as well. Ashley Montagu, for example, was in the forefront in characterizing race as both artificial and arbitrary.[52]

IBGE documents incorporate, in a distinctly Brazilian way, science's new stance on race. For one, IBGE texts have spoken less aggressively and frequently of both "whitening" and of the regenerative and redemptive powers of mixture. Instead, race mixture has been reported matter-of-factly and has not been equated automatically with whitening. However, race itself has not been completely abandoned, even as science itself has sought to dispel its former creation. Rather, the commitment to a notion of distinct races has remained. It has been, however, a commitment easier to maintain and negotiate as science no longer endorses either the hierarchial ordering of humanity or damns racial mixture as degenerative. As importantly, scientific knowledge has retained its authority and has become indispensable to IBGE efforts in fending off critique of its color question, color terms, interpretations, and decisions. By laying claim to scientific authority, the IBGE has been able to uphold Brazil's racialized national identity and its accompanying narrative while silencing contradicting voices.

The apparent sensitivity to developments in scientific knowledge should not be surprising in light of Brazilian intellectual history. Intellectual and

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52 See, for example, Ashley Montagu, The Concept of Race, (New York: The Free Press, 1964), and The Idea of Race, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965).

technocrat elites have been especially attuned, as we have seen, to scientific racial thought as it has emanated from Europe and later the United States. And, as importantly, they have been consumed with discerning the meanings and implications of these theories for Brazilian national identity. Thus when the ideas of inherent racial superiority and inferiority were reputed, members of the Brazilian intellectual elite responded by promoting even more aggressively the idea of a racial democracy. In the past, Brazilians had two choices, given their commitment to scientific authority: they had either to resign themselves to the horror of racial mixture or they could minimize racial mixture's perceived ill effects by promoting a notion of "whitening." The latter option was chosen, though not without a contortion of the very racial ideas upon which whitening was based. In light of the changes in scientific thinking , these efforts appeared both less necessary and less disjointed. Race mixture was not, on its face, a national liability. It could be perceived rather as a national asset, one which set Brazil apart from all nations of the world.This is not to suggest, however, that the whitening ideal was or would be completely abandoned. It remains encoded and enmeshed in the language of "a mixed people" which is generally taken to mean, a "lighter" if not "whiter" people.

The new life breathed into Brazilian racial ideology by science's stripping of race after World War II was, in one sense, brief. In the 1950's, UNESCO commissioned a team of Brazilian and foreign scholars to study Brazil's racial

democracy. But instead, these scholars documented widespread and consequential racial discrimination. Their findings dramatically contradicted the near idyllic portraits and descriptions offered by Freyre and others. From the late 1950s, scholars and others have steadily chipped away at the edifice of racial democracy. However, the myth of racial democracy and the idea of race itself still have a largely steady and faithful ally in the policies and interpretations of the IBGE.

A report analyzing the 1950 census printed in 1956 is clear evidence of the evolving conceptual moves made by the IBGE.[53] It speaks briefly and dispassionately of the various ethnic groups which have come together to form the Brazilian people. Widespread miscegenation is, of course, cited as the principal reason for the ambiguities of color classifications and hence the difficulties in conforming to scientifically legitimated categories of color. Further, the nonexistence of U.S. style racial prejudice has meant that the "white"category has been applied with "a liberty inconceivable in Washington."[54] Even with the caveat that the numbers of "white" people may be inflated, the text assures us that the whitening of the population is progressing. However, unlike earlier explanations, the IBGE does not discuss the shrinking numbers of blacks and browns in terms of the superiority of the

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53 This report was reprinted in Estudos de Estatistica Teorica e Aplicada, Contribuicoes para o Estudo da Demografica do Brasil 2 Edicao, (Rio de Janeiro: Fundacao IBGE, 1970), p.169.

54 Ibid., p.169.

white group. Rather, the decrease is the result of higher mortality rates among browns but especially blacks. Further, the documents identify the influx of Europeans at the turn of the century as a factor in the higher rates of whites. There has been no similar immigration of Africans since the abolition of the slave trade (in part, a result of severe restrictions against voluntary African immigration). Thus, this interpretation relies explicitly on social and historical explanations and not primarily on a premise of the superiority of "white blood".

The 1960 census, like the 2 previous censuses, asked a color question and for the first time provided five pre-codified rectangles corresponding to the five colors: white, black, yellow, brown and Indian. The IBGE classified Indians living off of the tribal territories as Browns (*pardos*). And once again, reservations were expressed about the accuracy of color data given the plasticity of color or racial classification. These oft-cited reservations resurfaced again when the National Census Commission (CCN) held a public forum on the possible elimination of the color question from the 1970 census.[55] The data were viewed as unreliable and without significant scientific merit, and many argued that the CCN exclude the question until a better method was devised. Several Brazilian sociologists presented their

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55 Xerox copy of report of the National Census Commission's deliberations on the color question of the 1970 census. Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatistica: Commissao Censitaria Nacional, "Ata dos Trabalhos: 6a Sessao Ordinaria, 'A Quesito Cor no Censo de 1970," September 9, 1969.

views and two specialists, Dr. Jose Arthur Rios and Dr. Manuel Diegues Junior submitted written opinions. Overall, the positions were split between those who held that the data were unacceptably subjective and unreliable, and those who held that however imperfect, the data were the best available. The written opinions of the specialists concurred with the latter position, although in different ways.

In his written opinion, Manuel Diegues Junior first acknowledged the difficulties in fixing a definitive concept of color on the Brazilian people. Brazilians are a mixed population, he reminds readers, just as all of the people of the world are, although in lesser proportions, of course. Predictably, he identifies the three founding races: "The Caucasian Portuguese, the Mongoloid Indian and the Negroid African." He argues that Brazil's already extensive process of miscegenation is still occurring. Thus, there has not yet evolved a distinctive ethnic type, although the color "morena"most closely approaches a distinctively Brazilian ethnic characteristic. [56] This high occurrence of miscegenation, he maintains, has resulted in a small number of either "pure" black or whites. Further confounding these difficulties, he reminds us, is the extent to which "ethnic expression" takes on a social or cultural meanings. In other words, "ethnic" identity is a signifier of cultural and/or social status. His observation about the disappearance of "pure" types

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56 Note that he uses the term "ethnic" and not "racial," It appears to me that the terms are interchangeable.

in Brazil echoes the thoughts of earlier intellectuals. Roquette Pinto, for example, writing in the 1933 declared that very few "pure blacks" existed in Brazil.

Appealing to physical anthropology, Junior argues that color is not today the decisive element in determining the ethnic classification of a population. Physical anthropologists use other methods in determining a group's ethnicity, such as classifying facial features (i.e eyes, nose, lips) and skull sizes. However, these techniques cannot be used in a national census. We are left then, according to Junior, with color. Even the respected technical consultant Giorgio Mortara, he adds, has recognized that the difficulty in delimiting the boundaries of various colors does not, on its face, invalidate the utility of color declarations on censuses. Junior recommends, then, that the color question be retained until color categories have been devised which are able to, within scientific standards, capture Brazil's ethnic reality. The categories should be kept for two reasons: 1) they provide an idea of how the Brazilian population defines itself, and 2) they allow for comparison with past censuses.

Dr. Jose Arthur Rios was the other specialist. Like Junior, he supported the inclusion of the color question on the census. He began with a discussion of the conceptual difficulties intrinsic to race. Precisely what race is, he points outs, has been debated and defined differently by scientists, biologists, and sociologists. Given these difficulties and especially those of biological science

in establishing clear racial boundaries, it is clear, he argues, that an arbitrary and superficial characteristic such as color neither captures other potentially significant characteristics of race membership nor identifies distinct cultural traditions.

Challenging the optimism of Oliveira Vianna's 1920 Census introduction regarding the fusion of the races, or whitening, although Rios never explicitly calls it such, Rios argues that it is impossible to interpret Brazil's racial future when such predictions are based upon the superficial classification of the Brazilian population into whites, blacks, browns and yellows. The ambiguity, superficiality, and inconsistency of the terms' use has led to consistently imprecise and deficient results. Skin color, while commonly understood to be connected to a physical anthropological type, is distinct from such a type. Therefore, he reasons, using skin color gives us no reliable measurement of the "true" anthropological or racial types and mixtures among Brazilians. Further, even the social use of color categories in Brazil varies regionally and contextually. Addressing the use of the brown category, he maintains that the inclusiveness of the term renders it incapable of saying anything definitive about Brazil's racial composition. Like Junior, Rios concludes that the terms should be included on the census. He thinks, as did Junior, although useless scientifically and anthropologically, the color terms do offer a picture of the "mentality of the Brazilian in relation to the *problem* of color." (italics

mine)[57] And for this reason, the question is useful.

Neither Junior nor Rios predicts or celebrates "whitening." Instead, their remarks emphasize both the difficulties which extensive racial miscegenation presents for classification and the conceptual incoherence of race itself. However, their recognition of science's tentativeness about race does not lead them to abandon their search for a scientifically sanctioned method of categorizing and counting Brazilians according to race. To the contrary, they argue that until such a method is devised, racial enumeration will merely bear social and not scientific significance. Science provides the standards to which methods and categories must conform, not to do so is to render Brazilian racial data suspect and of limited value.

The Commission finally decided, over the objections of Junior and Rios, to eliminate the color question from the 1970 census. Their opinions that the color question and terms have social, if not scientific, meaning and value were recognized, however. The Commission also recommended that the 1976 National Household Survey (PNAD) include a Supplement of Social Mobility and Color with two color questions. One question would consist of four pre-coded options and the other would be open-ended. The purpose of the CCN 's proposal for a special color question was to advance the development of color questions which are more (social) scientifically accurate.

In the survey's wake, however, the search for an acceptable method

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57 Ibid., p.8.

seemed as elusive as ever. To the open-ended sample question which was asked in three southern states, Brazilians responded with 136 different colors. These results, in turn, inspired competing interpretations. For those who held that the census color question leads to hopelessly imprecise and subjective data, the responses seemed proof apparent. Conversely, for those who maintained that a census color question is necessary, the 136 responses were striking evidence of color's significance. That is, the answers reveal the length to which Brazilians will go to "whiten" themselves or, at least, to make clear that they are not "black." They also reveal the power of the Myth of Racial democracy to reinforce and yet obscure those desires. The regional location of the sample is also important to this latter position since the three southern states of Parana, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul are thought to be the "whiter" of all Brazil's states. And for those determined to devise satisfactory terms, further analysis of the 136 responses suggested that the options offered by the IBGE may not terribly distort Brazil's racial portrait. That is, statisticians condensed the responses which fell within the IBGE census categories in the following percentages: white - 41.9%, black - 7.6%, yellow -.97% and brown (*parda*) - 7.6%. The three other terms most cited did not correspond to IBGE options, they were: light 2.5%, light brown 2.8% and brown (*morena*) - 34.4%.[58]

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58 Lucia Elena Garcia de Oliveira, Rosa Maria Porcaro and Tereza Cristina N. Araujo, O Lugar do Negro na Forca de Trabalho, (Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 1985), p.10.

The assumptions of the 1976 PNAD's special color supplement were made plain in a 1974 article written by Tereza Cristina N. Araujo Costa, a statistician within the Social Indicators Group of the IBGE.[59] The article attempted to clarify the category of color and in so doing to provide an argument for why color should be included on Brazilian censuses. While Costa describes her argument as speculative, it signals the further peeling away of the IBGE's use of science to render suspect color questions and categorization on censuses. This denuding of IBGE justifications began with the 1969 opinions of Junior and Rios before the National Census Commission.

Referring to U.N. and U.S. Bureau of Census documents, Costa notes the difficulties which scholars have had in defining race. In fact, the documents report that demographers must live with the impossibility of conforming to "scientific" standards of racial categorization and must content themselves instead to the methods of physical anthropology. The impossibility of accurate racial measurement, they explain, is due to the irreversible and unchartable fact of global race mixture. And it is on these claims that Costa hooks her argument. For Costa, the color question and color terms (both social and census) are important in Brazil precisely because they do not conform to scientific standards. This lack of conformity does not exhaust them of meaning; instead, they carry great social weight and provide great insight into

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[59] Tereza Cristina N. Araujo Costa, "O principio classificatorio 'cor', sua complexidade e implicacoes para un estudo censitario", Revista Brasileira de Geografia, 3 (1974), pp. 91-103.

Brazilian culture.

According to Costa then race mixture in Brazil as elsewhere is not only a natural fact; it is also one which cannot be brandished by the IBGE to avoid the process of enumeration by color completely. Costa agrees that "race mixture" in a biological sense exists, and recognizes the ambiguities which characterize the conceptual terrain of racial demography, but in a break with past IBGE thinking she recommends that the IBGE maintain color categories on censuses. She argues that although color is a "fragile approximation to racial classification", [60]it is the only feasible measure. It is fragile because color in Brazil imperfectly corresponds to "racial" origins. More than that, it is a fragile approximation because color encompasses social and class status. Further, color is the only feasible vehicle because methods more closely aligned with physical anthropology (i.e. classifying of facial and other physical characteristics) would be financially and technically impossible. Having proved the necessity of color categories on censuses, she concludes by proposing a sample survey which utilizes both an open-ended and closed color question. This method was the one used for the aforementioned 1976 PNAD.

Costa makes her point about the importance of color classification and

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[60] Ibid., p.100.

censuses even more sharply in an article published in 1987.[61] She argues, as she did in her previous article, that color categories are only partially and imperfectly understood in terms of physical characteristics. They are, as importantly, imbued with social meanings, meanings which operate in daily interactions. Thus, because they are socially significant, they should be valued by the IBGE. Further, it is their very multiplicity which she argues, indicates the importance and complexity of social classification based in race. In both articles, Costa appears as an important, if isolated voice, within the IBGE. Responding to the repeated claim that Brazilians are mixed racially, she does not conclude, as have technicians and ideologues alike, that ambiguity renders them pointless and makes race a non-issue in Brazil. She argues the contrary. If the categories are merely of social and not scientific significance, the question remains what is their social significance? How do they function in Brazil? This is a question which the IBGE and many Brazilians have been loathe to answer fully.

Even as the opinion that the color question is important and necessary gained limited ground among certain IBGE technicians and academics, the 1980 census was first designed without a color question.[62] According to IBGE

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[61] Tereza Cristina N. Araujo, "A Classificacao de 'Cor' nas Pesquisas do IBGE: Notas Para Uma Discussao," Cadernos de Pesquisas, 63, (Nov. 1987), pp. 14 - 16.

[62] According to Carlos Hasenbalg, IBGE President Issac Kerstenetzky remained opposed to inclusion of color question through-out his tenure. (He approved the decision to exclude it from the 1970 census.) He was

President, Jesse Montello, inclusion of the question would have been "unconstitutional." [63] The Institute's decision did not go unchallenged however, and both academics and black activists lobbied to have the question restored. Academics claimed that the question was needed to insure consistency in research methodologies and analyses. For activists, restoration would insure both that Brazil's racial or ethnic composition was registered and social stratification analyzed in terms of color. On November 8, 1979, President Montello met officially with representatives of academic and black movement organizations. In attendance at this meeting were the executive secretary of the National Association of Post-Graduate Education, Olavo Brasil de Lima; the President and Vice-President of the Institute for the Study of Black Culture, Orlando Fernandes and Olimpio Marques dos Santos, Giralda Seiferth of the Association of the National Museum, and Carlos Hasenbalg of the Institute of University Research of Rio de Janeiro.[64] After the meeting, President Montello announced that the IBGE would restore the question. He also added that in order to avoid the confusion which the color

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replaced by Jesse Montello in 1979. Type-written Transcript of Seminar Proceedings, "Temas Relevantes para Producao de Novos Indicadores Socio-Economicos sobre a Populacao Negra e Mestica", IBASE, Rio de Janeiro, 28 September 1991.

63 "Colour counts. . . but blacks begin to organise,"*Latin America Regional Reports - Brazil,* 8 February 1980, p.4.

64 "Censo-80 vai pesquisar cor, decide o IBGE,"*A Folha de Sao Paulo* , (Sao Paulo), 9 November 1979, p.6.

question engenders, the census enumerator would first register the respondee's answer to the four available options: white, black, yellow and brown. If there was any doubt, the enumerator would then check the color which s/he observed. He also informed Brazilians that the census would have 2 schedules: a general form for the entire population that did not include a color question and a sample form for 25% of the population that did.[65]

While the IBGE's reversal of its initial decision to exclude the color question was welcomed by interested academics and activists, it was critiqued by none other than Gilberto Freyre. In a newspaper article entitled "Brazilian - Your Color?" that appeared a month after the IBGE's decision, Freyre laments the return of the question and thus of an issue which, he thought, had been resolved years ago. [66] According to Freyre, there was no need for the question because Brazilians are simply Brazilians. Each Brazilian has transcended his or her consciousness of racial origin and has become Brazilian, a member of a "meta-race." He argues further that it is impossible to capture, with 4 choices, the multiplicity of colors of a "miscegenated and nationally Brazilian" people. [67] Moreover, he argues, the IBGE's use of the question threatens to

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[65] Ibid., p.6.

[66] Gilberto Freyre, "Brasileiro - Sua Cor," *A Folha de Sao Paulo* , 5 December 1979, p.3.

[67] Ibid., p.3.

undermine the respectability of the IBGE itself. He reminds readers that at the very moment of the IBGE's decision to restore the question, scientists and anthropologists are questioning the notion of race itself and its connection to skin color. For Freyre, the correct response, or in his words "the Brazilian response," is "*morena* " (brown). "*Morenidade* " (brownness) corresponds most closely to Brazil's meta-racial reality and thus stands above the ideological positions of "whiteness, blackness or yellowness." He concludes his article by recounting the remarks made by a Colombian speaker about Brazil. In this speech, the speaker praised and held out Brazil as being on the "vanguard" in its "assimilation of people of color." Brazil alone represented, according to the speaker, "the triumph of the mixed person."

Freyre's discussion displays his skillfulness in redirecting the terms of debate, as he had done effectively in the past, and in so doing reveals precisely what is at stake. For Freyre, a racialized national identity, one which is the result of and yet transcends racial mixture, is touted even as he acknowledges that race itself is an unknown, at least in scientific terms. At issue, then, is the discursive construction of Brazilian identity, both collective and individual. Who will tell the story of Brazilian identity and what will the story be? Up until this point, following Freyre's reasoning, the story had been one of racial assimilation and racial democracy, and the IBGE had appeared to be a capable transmitter. Yet with the reintroduction of the color question, in my view, the possibility for another and probably contradicting narrative is

allowed. The proponents of a competing narrative of racial suppression and discrimination have exposed their attachment to the census color question, and the IBGE's decision is therefore implicated in their project. In this sense, the IBGE's decision is not only bad social science, it is bad, even traitorous, national policy. Finally, it is not by accident that Freyre concludes with the remarks of a foreign observer. The narrative of a Brazilian identity constituted in racial mixture and manifested in a racial democracy partly derives its value, after all, from its influence abroad.

The controversy of the 1980 census but especially the color data from the 1976 PNAD resulted in another attempt by the IBGE to clarify its use of terms. This time, however, the rethinking was taken up not by the National Census Commission but by a small group of statisticians and analysts within the IBGE's Department of Social Studies and Indicators (DIESO). However, their deliberations and conclusions have not informed IBGE policy in general or the policies of census demographers in particular.

The DEISO analysts, while working on a book about black labor force participation, were confronted with the issue of terminology: specifically whether "race" or "color" would be the terms of reference and between these, which words would be used to describe them, i.e. black, white, non-white, brown.[68] They drew an analytical distinction between race and color. In the

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[68] Lucia Elena Garcia de Oliveira, et al., O Lugar do Negro na Forca de Trabalho.

past analysts used the terms interchangeably or even more frequently privileged color because, they reasoned, racial distinctions had been rendered insignificant by miscegenation. The importance of their decision to distinguish between color and race rests in its ability to lay bare the suppositions beneath the terms. That is, if race is used, it explodes the myth of a Brazilian meta-race. If colors or combinations of colors (i.e. black and white or white and non-white) are used, the image of an racially egalitarian society is replaced by a one of a society stratified along color lines. Their examination of terms then is explicitly linked to a project of exposing the "true" nature of Brazilian social relations.

According to the authors, in their analysis of the 1976 PNAD and its color supplement they united *"pardos "* (browns) and *"pretos "* (blacks) under the term *"negro "*(black) because the two groups had a similar socio-economic profile. They justify their decision to use the unifying term of *"negro"* with the following additional reasons: first, it is a term widely used by Brazilian social scientists.[69] Secondly and even more importantly, they write, it is a term currently used by black organizations, whom were consulted. Given, then, their decision to unite "browns" and "blacks," they concluded that the term race captured this unity in a way which color did not. The problem with color, they explain, is that in its emphasis on phenotypes, it ignores ". . .the cultural and historical aspects of the constitution of these social

69 Ibid., p.11.

groups."[70] Race, on the other hand, ". . .signifies a common origin of groups and their historical trajectory." [71] Yet the authors stress that they do not mean race in its biological sense. Their use of the term race, they claim, is in keeping with that of social scientists and black organizations. Finally, they punctuate their explanation with a reference to the observations of Brazilian anthropologist Roberto da Matta. He suggests that race in Brazil is a "culturally elaborated and scientifically invalid concept" which is synonymous with "culture" and "ethnicity." That is, it is not only that race is created by cultural practices but that race, once constituted, speaks to and about culture.[72]

Here is a positive conception of race: a definition based on culture and history and not biology. This definition also embraces the notion of a "black" race and rejects the notion of Brazilian meta-race. However, several fundamental questions emerge from the definition which point to the strategic utility and political weight of race thinking. To begin, what is meant by "common origin?" What is its boundaries and in what directions do they extend? What are the cultural and historical commonalities which race captures and color does not? Race was chosen, according to the authors, because it is more than just "skin deep." But just how deep does it go? And

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[70] Ibid., p.12.

[71] Ibid., p.12.

[72] Ibid., p.12.

what is the connection, if any, between skin color and race categories? For persons categorized as "mixed" and grouped under "negro," their definition does not explain why certain "origins" are more salient to one's racial categorization than others. At bottom, do the authors delineate a system of categorization akin to that of the U.S. and South Africa, a group constituted in subordination is assigned a contaminating mark? (i.e. ancestry, color, culture) And if so, why the embracing of a conception of race which implicitly presumes a "peoplehood" a priori? That is, in coming to their decision to use "negro," the authors write that they were guided by the observation that "blacks" and "browns" were similarly situated socio-economically. But they go on to provide a "thick" definition of racial identity itself, a definition that goes far beyond shared subordination.

Lobbying by Brazilian academics and black activists to restore the 1980 census' color question and the limited but significant steps taken by DEISO all indicate that important, albeit limited, changes are afoot. Beginning with the decision to include a special color supplement on the 1976 PNAD, there has been a veritable boom in quantitative research using demographic data obtained from censuses and other national surveys. [73] For example, the aforementioned The Black's Place in the Labor Force, was the first work

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[73] Examples include: Elza Berquo, "Demografia da Desigualdade", Novos Estudos CEBRAP, 21 (1988), pp. 74-84; Peggy A. Lovell (org.), Desigualdade Racial no Brasil Contemporaneo, (Belo Horizonte: MGSP Editores, 1991).

published by the IBGE which specifically included race as an independent variable in analyzing employment, income and education data.[74] It also was not publicly available for two years after its completion because a IBGE director considered its findings politically embarrassing.[75] Overall, this book and other such research has made it clear that color is an independent and significant variable in determining levels of educational attainment, employment prospects and income earned.

In a broader context, these research initiatives and discussions about terms reflect the gradual opening of civil society since the late 1970s. Small numbers of Brazilian scholars have come to recognize the existence of racial discrimination and growing numbers of self-identified black activists' have taken to social agitation. Certainly, the concerns of DEISO within the IBGE and that of Brazilian academics have coincided well, providing ammunition for charges of racism. And yet these discussions may also be traced within the much narrower of context of the IBGE. That is, a context in which the IBGE has and continues to rely on scientific notions of race in order both to sustain the image of a racially assimilated society and to arrest discussion about the political and economic significance of color categories. However, because the IBGE (excepting DEISO) cloaks its decisions in scientific authority as science

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[74] Thomas Skidmore, "Fact and Myth: Discovering a Racial Problem in Brazil," working paper #173, The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies: University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, April 1992, p.12.

[75] *VEJA* , 28 August 1985.

itself hesitantly sheds itself of race; its policies appear increasingly untenable.

However, what the IBGE loses in conceptual coherence, it gains in political efficacy as the casting of race as natural not only suspends debate, it captures the opposition and leads them to hook their argument on naturalness as well. It would be a mistake then to underestimate the resiliency of IBGE policy , especially when we consider that census demography appears presently beyond reach. The 1991 census is proof: color and not race was the term used and the colors offered were white, brown, black, yellow and indigenous and not white, black, yellow and indigenous. And even in the case of DEISO, its definition of race is not clear and has made little difference in political discussions about or public perceptions of race and Brazilian national identity.

Conclusion

The most recent attempt to force the issue of racial or color categorization both within and outside of the IBGE was the 1991 census campaign, "Don't Let Your Color Pass into White: Respond with Good Sense". And the campaign reveals how much it is both a response to and product of past IBGE policies. It is also an attempt to enliven political mobilization among "blacks." As we know, the IBGE has consistently emphasized both the subjectivity of responses to census color questions and the categories' lack of scientific validity. This emphasis has, in turn, set the stage for two apparently

contradictory claims. The first claim minimizes the color data's significance because of their intrinsic unreliability. The second claim asserts that Brazilians continue to mix and are forever becoming a "lighter" if not "whiter" people. Appeals to science sustain these claims and yet the IBGE has consciously negotiated on what terms scientific knowledge will be received and which interests such knowledge will serve.

The census campaign, as we will see, makes appeals to nature, although not necessarily to science. It is a move which in part directly responds to the IBGE and in part, attempts to create a constituency. In urging Brazilians to choose a "darker" color which is based, in turn, on one's "ethnic origins," the campaign sought to address the IBGE's charge of debilitating subjectivity by offering an anchor: ethnic origins are biologically based. Further, if one's racial identity is natural, one is, in turn, part of a constituency which is naturally constituted. Political allegiances simply emerge, it follows, they are not fought over or through. The IBGE has used science first as an tool to construct a racialized national identity. The IBGE has then used it as a shield to deflect discussion about its construction or the political claims which adhere to it. The census campaign uses nature first to ground identity and then to mobilize around it. The logistics of the campaign as well as the effectiveness and limitations of its discursive and organizing strategies will be taken up in the following two chapters.

Chapter Four: "Don't Let Your Color Pass into White: Respond with Good Sense" - The Campaign

Interpretations of census data, we know, have served to uphold Brazil's whiter national face and to sustain attendant claims of harmonious social relations, borne of racial mixture. The power of Brazilian censuses, at least as far as color enumeration is concerned, has rested in their ability to underwrite the symbolic value of "whiteness" and to promote images in which whiteness, Brazilian national identity, and racial harmony all share a certain commensurability. The census campaign, in turn, sought to disrupt this commensurability by, on the one hand, erecting clear boundaries of racial identities, and on the other, undercutting whiteness' value. It sought also to strengthen charges of racial discrimination by contributing to the generation of more "accurate" data.

This chapter has three purposes. The first is to chart the logistical and discursive strategies of the campaign and to situate it within the larger political context of census taking in 1990 and then 1991. The second purpose is tied to the first, and it is to analyze how the campaign attempted to reconstruct the boundaries of and values assigned both to "black" identity and national identity. That is, the campaign worked to extend the boundaries of "blackness" and to contract those of "whiteness." Extending "blackness" required both providing an anchor for "Black" identity, which the campaign did in the notion of "ethnic" origins [read: African ancestry] and in assigning

that identity positive value. Contracting "whiteness" meant breaking its associations with both "mixture" and national identity. Put plainly, Brazilian society, the campaign suggested, is made up of distinct groups. It is not a homogenized and whiter one. Further, these groups can rightfully lay claim to a Brazilian identity. The third purpose of this chapter is to reexamine recent theories of collective action and race. Such theories often presume that an identity, a priori, informs and directs collective action. Works about social movements often presume race. Yet the census campaign exemplifies a collective act which is organizing an identity itself as much as it is organizing around an identity.

The chapter proceeds as follows: first there is a theoretical discussion focusing on how the campaign renders recent treatments of racial social movements problematic. It then moves to a brief recounting of the 1990, then 1991 census and an analysis of the campaign itself. Finally, the chapter concludes by comparing the IBGE's image of and discourse about the "Disappearing Black" with that of the "Vanishing" Native American in the U.S. and by contrasting the census campaign's strategies of black identity formation with those of language campaigns among the Basque of Spain.

"New" Social Movement Theory and Race

The emergence of newly organized social actors and forms of collective action in Western Europe and Latin America especially have been

accompanied by attempts to give them theoretical coherence. What has emerged is a literature largely preoccupied with identifying what is "new," both theoretically and empirically, about these social movements and in the case of Latin America, determining how its varieties differ from their Western European counterparts. On the whole, scholars have argued that the "newness"of Latin American social movements is due to distinct socio-economic and political arrangements resulting from the failure of developmentalist economic models in general and the opportunities of democratization in particular. These movements consequently are peopled by heretofore neglected or nonexistent social actors – ecologists, women, urban dwellers, and ethnic groups. Further, the aims of these groups are different from earlier collective actors in that they look to mediate social relations and to pursue political action outside of the traditional domains of the state and the market. These "new" social actors derive their identities not only or primarily from their structural positions, but from their social positions. Identity assertion is at the theoretical core of this literature. Goals and strategies are understood in terms of normative commitments and not solely or even primarily in terms of "strategic or instrumental rationality"[1]

What is most important, for my purposes, is the inclusion of Latin American racial social movements, meaning most often black movements,

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1 Jean L. Cohen, "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements" Social Research 52 (Winter 1985): 691.

within this new conceptual rubric. Their inclusion is linked, most obviously, to their explicit use of a racial identity as their basis. Yet, how black or race itself is constituted is usually theoretically unaccounted for. Further, the apparent ease with which black movements are included on the roster of new social movements is not reflected in the actual scholarship or in the general discussions of social and political relations of Latin America. That is, Latin American and Brazilian black movements appear in written works as little more than passing references. [2] They have not, with notable exceptions, received sustained scholarly attention.[3] Overall, then, the nominal inclusion of black movements within this literature has meant that we still know little about them empirically. We also know little about them theoretically because although this literature focuses on identity, it does not attend to the ideological constitution of race itself. In other words, if, as Escobar and Alvarez point out, the theoretical trend has been to "highlight the importance of new social movements proper (for example, those initiated by women, ecologists, and homosexuals) based on the search for autonomous identity, pluralism, and the right to difference," this trend has little to say to

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[2] A definitional note is in order. I use the term "black movement" because it is the one used by self-identified black activists to describe their activities. How much these activities actually conform to even minimal definitions of a social movement is open to question.

[3] An important exception is the recent work on Brazil's black movement by Michael Hanchard. See Michael G. Hanchard, Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Brazil's black movement which is in search of an anchor from whence to (re) -interpret "black" identity.[4]

In my view, attending to race's ideologically and politically constituted nature would mean both that the state be included as a source of race's constitution and not simply as one of the sites to which black movement demands are directed. The state is more than a "fundamental referent" for collective action.[5] It is also a participant in the production of racial identities. As we have seen, the Brazilian state census bureau has been a powerful actor in the (re)-inscription of race, and the mounting of the census campaign situates the IBGE's involvement in even sharper relief.

Thus, the census campaign "Don't Let Your Color Pass into White: Respond with Good Sense," holds out important insights for theorizing about identity politics or, more precisely, the politics of identity. That is, the campaign and by extension, census race/color categories themselves, force recognition of the politics which racial enumeration engenders: how many blacks and whites are there and why and how does it matter? They also force recognition of the politics they reflect: that is, the constitution of racial identities: Who is Black? Who is White? Who is Brown? And what does it all mean and to whom? For campaign organizers, especially for black

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4 Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez (ed.), The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) p.33.

5 Ibid., p.25.

movement activists among them, much hinged on whether Brazilians chose a "darker" color. At stake was the official registering of a "black"population, and on trial was the black movement's ability to persuade Brazilians to conceive of their color and racial identities differently. Brazilians, they urged, should think of themselves not as members of one assimilated race with different colors but as members of "distinct" races. This distinct racial identity, encoded in the campaign's language of "ethnic origins," would compel Brazilians to self-select either "brown" (*parda*) but especially "black" (*preta*). The 1991 census provided the venue in which to conduct this test.

The 1990, then 1991 Census

The tenth national demographic census was first scheduled to take place in 1990, beginning on September 1st. However, due to labor strikes, budget constraints, and the administrative reforms of then President Fernando Collor do Mello, the IBGE postponed it until 1991. The IBGE' s decision was made in neither a timely nor non-contentious manner. Instead, confusion, indecision and ill-will characterized the entire process leading up to the census' delay.

At the beginning of 1990, however, there were few indications that the census would not go forth as planned, and the IBGE released preliminary predictions about both the size of the Brazilian population (150 million) and

of the size of the personnel needed to count it (210 thousand).[6] The IBGE also announced that it would add new questions to ascertain the size the informal economy and Brazilian consumption patterns. Also added, at the behest of mental health practitioners and organizations, was a question about "mental deficiency."

More importantly, for our purposes, the IBGE added race and indigenous options within the color question. That is, the color question was rephrased to ask: "what is your color or race?", and indigenous (*indigena*) was added to the list of colors: black, white, brown, and yellow. In the past, the IBGE classified Indians as "Browns" (*pardos*). These two new options were linked: the race option applied only to the indigenous category. This qualification, however, was not spelled out explicitly either in the census enumerator manual or on the census schedule itself. Instead, it was treated as "common sense", without need of explanation. As we will see, it was just this presumption that color and not race is the proper measure which the campaign sought to throw into doubt. Yet this presumption, at the same time, also undermined the campaign's ability to articulate its message(s) to Brazilians and, on some level, to itself.

Further, the IBGE's decision to include the "indigenous" option was reportedly made after consultations with anthropologists and representatives

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[6] Luciana Nunes Leal, "Brasil: 150 milhoes em 90," *Jornal do Brasil*, (Rio), 20 January 1990, p.5.

of FUNAI, the State Indian Affairs Bureau.[7] Those connected to the campaign speculated, however, that the category was included at the request of the World Bank. It needed such demographic information for upcoming Bank policy initiatives on the protection of indigenous territories. The addition of this category, however, did not necessarily portend greater cooperation from indigenous people. In 1991, the Caiapo Indians of Para refused to allow enumerators onto their territories.[8] The internationally recognized Cacique leader Paulinho Paiakan supported the Caiapos' decision on the grounds that the census data would be used in research prejudicial to Indian interests. The Brazilian government, he charged, intended to use such data to show that there are few Indians and to reduce indigenous territorial boundaries accordingly.

In spite of the IBGE's grand designs, by June plans for administrative reform that could have possibly delayed the census were announced.[9] The National Secretary of Administration, Joao Santana, had not released the funds, although already approved by the National Congress, needed to hire the temporary personnel of 22,000 supervisors and 160,000 enumerators. At

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[7] "Indios Serao Contados,"*O Dia* (Rio), 13 May 1990, p.5.

[8] Abnor Gondim, "Indios Caiapo barram recenseadores no Para: Cacique diz que Censo ajuda a reduzir reservas,"*Folha de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo), 14 November 1991, p.9.

[9] "Reforma administrativa compromete censo de 90," *Jornal do Brasil*, (Rio), 29 June 1990, p.4.

this point, the IBGE projected that the census would cost close to $300 million dollars (U.S.). With congressional approval but without funds, the IBGE would be unable to conduct the census as planned.

In a reversal, by July the IBGE was reassured that its funds would be released and, the IBGE, in turn, announced that the census would move forward as planned.[10] Again, the IBGE made clear its plans both to hire temporary workers and to divulge results in a timely manner. By August, however, IBGE President and economist Eduardo Augusto Guimaraes announced that the IBGE would postpone the 1990 census until 1991.[11] According to Guimaraes, he based his decision on his inability to ensure the reliability and accuracy of census results. The Secretary of Federal Administration was late in authorizing the contracting of temporary workers.[12] Given that the IBGE began hiring in early August and that personnel training required three months, it was impossible for the IBGE both to begin the census in September and to maintain confidence in its social scientific quality. Further, Guimaraes reasoned that the delay would not bear longstanding and detrimental consequences for census-taking and thus

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10 "Governo garante Cr$ 5 bilhoes para a realizacao do censo 90,"*Jornal do Brasil* (Rio), 11 July 1990, p.7.

11 "IBGE confirma adiamento do Censo por falta de Funcionarios," *Folha de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo), 11 August 1990, p.4.

12 "Presidente do IBGE culpa a burocracia," *Folha de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo), 31 August 1991, p.9.

appeared, however undesirable, as the lesser of two evils. The fault then rested not with the IBGE but with the bureaucratic lethargy and incompetence of other government agencies. Although Guimaraes publicly announced the postponement, the decision on whether the census would be postponed or not ultimately rested with the President of the Republic, Fernando Collor de Mello. He confirmed Guimaraes' announcement.

Guimaraes' explanation of the decision was met with critique and derision from the IBGE's employee's union, the Association of IBGE Employees. They charged the IBGE President and not the Collor government with technical, political, and administrative incompetence. According to a union representative, the IBGE had already spent Cr$ 5 billion dollars on the training of enumerators and the purchase of equipment.[13] It was disorganization within the IBGE and not unavailability of funds from without which ultimately accounted for the census' delay, according to the union.

In 1991, preparations began again for the conducting of the 10th general national census scheduled for September. And again, the IBGE predicted that the first set of numbers on the total population and composition by sex and by municipality would be divulged in December. Given what was described by IBGE Research Director, Lenildo Fernandes, as a "technical revolution"

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13 "Funcionarios criticam adiamento do Censo 90", *Jornal do Brasil*,, (Rio) 16 August 1990, p.6.

within the IBGE, the results of the basic questionnaire would be available within the first six months of 1992 and by the end of 1993, those of the sample questionnaire would be available.[14] Further, given the general skepticism engendered by the census' delay, President Guimaraes expressed publicly his concerns about the reactions to and willingness of Brazilians to cooperate with census-takers. The IBGE would take steps, consequently, to generate a more receptive climate for the census. The IBGE would, he announced, launch both a general publicity campaign on T.V. and one targeted to children in hopes that they would encourage their parents to cooperate. And to address the public's concern about safety, he reported that the IBGE planned to set up a 3-digit telephone number (only in Rio de Janeiro, however) which would allow persons to confirm that the person knocking on the door was really a census enumerator.[15] By census' end, critics assessed these publicity efforts to have been either nonexistent or insufficient.[16]

The IBGE soon found it difficult, in certain states, to find adequate numbers of people to serve for five months (Aug.-Dec.) as interviewers,

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14 *Ibid* , p.3.

15 Vera Saavedra Durao, "Pesquisador devera ser treinado," *Gazeta Mercantil*, 21 March 1991, p.3.

16 Marcelo Parada, "Pais faz de Conta," *Isto E Senhor*, 15 February 1992: 12-18.

supervisors and computer workers.[17] On July 14, competition for positions as enumerators began in 4,191 of the 4,491 cities where the census would be conducted. Hiring was to be completed 3-4 weeks later (August 7 - 14). Once the hires had been determined, training, anticipated to last a week, was scheduled to begin.[18] The time allotted for training of enumerators decreased significantly, from 3 months in 1990 to one week in 1991. Recall that the official justification for 1990 census' postponement was that the suspension of funds resulted in insufficient time to train personnel. In retrospect, with training lasting only one week, this explanation rang hollow. Moreover, on June 27th, 1991 a 48 day strike, which threatened the census' viability, began.

However, in spite of the obstacles – strikes and lack of temporary personnel– which appeared to portend another delay of the already once postponed census, it actually began on September 1st, although not without difficulty. Disorganization and enduring labor disputes characterized the IBGE's efforts, especially at the beginning. For example, many of the people contracted to work as enumerators in various regions of Sao Paulo state simply did not show up. According to fellow enumerators, poor pay was the

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17 Luiz Guilhermino, "IBGE encontra dificuldades para contratar as pessoas que iniciarao no proximo semestre o censo," *O Estado de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo), 9 April 1991, p. 14.

18 Luiz Guilhermino, "IBGE vai gastar US$250 milhoes para fazer Censo," *O Estado de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo), 13 July 1991, p.8.

main reason.[19] In Paraiba, 50 workers were on strike, demanding better pay and workers in Salvador, Bahia threatened to strike for the same reason. In Bahia, the census was scheduled to begin on Sept. 4th, instead of the 2nd, because of strikes by IBGE drivers and other employees. In the state of Santos, all of the needed written materials were unavailable. And throughout the country, reports filtered in about the lack of materials and resources needed to reach rural areas especially.

By December, as the census neared completion, early assessments of the census doubted its accuracy. For example, a newspaper article recounted the story of an enumerator in Sao Paulo who was unable to secure information about a family in the census sector for which he was responsible. He knocked on the door, threw pebbles at the door, yelled and even asked neighbors, but without success. He even went by at non-working hours, 9:00 one evening, and still no-one was home. Finally, he was able to get a neighbor to provide him with basic information about the family: how many members and their occupations. He invented the rest. According to the enumerator, such invention was an "order" from his supervisor. He was told to find a way to meet his quota in the quickest way possible.[20] Such an incident, presumed to have occurred many times over, necessarily generated great suspicion about

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19 "Falta de gente, material e transporte prejudica o Censo em todo o Brasil," *Folha de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo), 3 September 1991, p.1.

20 Katia Perin, "Censo 91, o Brasil se perde na mulditao", *Jornal da Tarde*, 10 December 1991, p.32.

the quality and reliability of the census results. Most enumerators, however, were reportedly not nearly as diligent or resourceful as the one mentioned. The more common scenarios were ones in which enumerators did not bother either to show up, or when they did, to complete the areas to which they were assigned. The most common reasons cited for their non-cooperation were low and irregular compensation and lack of transportation and food allowances. Interviewed enumerators complained of not being given passes for public buses, as promised, or lunch money. Finally, enumerators complained that the rewards of the job were not worth the personal danger they faced in going to reputedly dangerous neighborhoods and slums.

Behavior inimical to successful census-taking was not restricted to that of enumerators. It included apathy, cynicism and, at times, outright resistance to census-takers by the public. For example, census-takers were unable, until the census' final week, to reach the inhabitants of a condo in the South zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro where wealthy and famous people live, for example, singers and ex-presidents (Joao Baptista Figueiredo). According to the building manager, access to the building was restricted in the interest of security.[21] Finally, the IBGE intervened and after long negotiations, census-takers were allowed in.

These unfavorable assessments, and especially those made by IBGE full-time employees, were quickly dismissed by IBGE administrators. According

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[21] *Ibid*., p.14

to David Wu Tai, operational coordinator of censuses, permanent IBGE employees had an vested interest in publicly doubting the census in order both to strengthen their leverage and to call attention to their strikes. In September and December, there were strikes in several IBGE regional offices.[22] The Institute, as a result of these enduring labor stoppages and slowdowns, only functioned at 30% of its capacity.[23] He added also that as in all censuses there are false and insufficient answers. He assured the public that the IBGE had corrective statistical mechanisms in place to insure the census' overall accuracy. Further, IBGE President Guimaraes sought to reassure critics by stressing that in census sectors where "strange" results were obtained, they would be reexamined by a group of technicians.[24] Social scientists and demographers outside of the IBGE did not share the IBGE's confidence and widely maintained that the one year delay severely, if not fatally, undermined the census' validity, and that the general sloppiness of census '91 only inspired further doubt.

Although scheduled to end in mid-December, the census did not officially end until February 3, 1992.[25] Soon thereafter, as estimates of its results began

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22 Parada, "Pais faz de Conta," p.14.

23 *Ibid,.* , p.32.

24 "IBGE reconhece que o Censo nao reflectira a realidade,"*Jo.nal do Brasil,* (Rio) 3 February 1992, p.3.

25 *Ibid* ., p.3.

to circulate, the chorus of criticism grew louder and the stakes grew sharper. Critics charged that because of the tardiness of the census, the IBGE had to work with population projections greater than one year. Population estimates are used to determine the share which each city will receive from the Federal City Fund which secures its money, in turn, from revenues generated by the National Industrial Products and Income Tax. As importantly, the Fund's value increased with the 1988 Constitution, thus enhancing the importance of census statistics.[26] In the past, various mayors who disagreed with population estimates have paid the IBGE to conduct a recount, and in recent years, the IBGE has recounted the populations of 600 cities.[27] In most cases, however, the estimates of these mini-censuses are often lower than those of the national censuses. Concerns about population undercounts and consequent underfunding then topped the list of criticisms. Thus, although the IBGE sought to downplay charges of extensive errors, mayors and governors steadfastly maintained that the population of their cities and states had been undercounted.[28]

The IBGE, for example, put the population of the territory of Roraima at 196,000 inhabitants. However, Governor Ottomar de Souza Pinto (PTB)

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[26] Adriana Fernandes, "Censo vem com um ano de atraso e muita polemica,"*Jornal do Commercio* , 18-19 August 1991, p.25.

[27] *Ibid* ., p.25.

[28] "Especialistas Atacam Falhas do Censo de 91,"*Folha de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo), 5 January 1992, p.4.

disagreed and provided the IBGE with two airplanes, a helicopter, cars and boats so that they could come back with a more accurate picture. In the end, the IBGE counted 23.8 thousand more people, nearly 12% more, than the initial estimate.[29] The Governor was driven to show the Court of Union Accounts that the state had more people and thus was entitled to more money. Roraima depends almost exclusively upon federal funds. With the initial census projection, however, Roraima stood to lose almost Cr$ billion a month from the amount it then received.[30] The 24,000 thousand new people were reported to have been prospectors, according to the Governor's office. However, this explanation was refuted by a representative from another state organ, FUNAI, the Indian Affairs Bureau, who called the discovery of more than 5,000 prospectors in the interior an "invention".[31]

In the end, journalists held that the failure for this census was borne not only by the IBGE but by the Collor government as well. The public did not cooperate because they placed little faith in the newly elected government or its reforms. The census debacle, then, was cast by newspapers as an indictment of government itself. Academics, in turn, who spoke publicly about the census also critiqued the government writ large but maintained confidence in the IBGE's ability to correct statistically widespread errors and to make the

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[29] Parada, "Paiz faz de conta," p.13.

[30] *Ibid.*, p.13.

[31] *Ibid* ., p.13.

census useful.

Thus, the census campaign was launched within a context characterized by uncertainty, controversy, and contention. In an obvious way, it would appear that this context, one in which the census itself appeared deeply compromised, would render the campaign inconsequential. Yet the outcomes which hinged on the census extended beyond the census itself. One desired outcome was greater self-identification as blacks. But before Brazilians would self-select a "darker" color, they had to be "sensitized" to their ethnic roots. This task, while aided by the process of census-taking, did not rely upon this particular census. As importantly, the power of numbers to sustain symbolic and political claims about Brazil's racial composition made the final census results as important, if not more than, the processes by which the numbers were produced. In the end, what mattered was a more "consciously black" population and a resultant "darker" national face. How the numbers were produced was less of a concern than achieving the "right" numbers. And therein lies the rub. Achieving the right numbers depended upon the reliability (or the perception of) of the census itself. In this sense, the campaign's effect was limited from the start.

The Census Campaign

The initial impetus for the campaign according to Wania Sant'Anna, the campaign's originator and first coordinator, was to help in the production of

more reliable socio-economic data on blacks.[32] While working at the Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analyses (IBASE), Sant'Anna was often equipped with insufficient data about the socio-economic conditions of Brazil's "black population". The absence of data, in turn, undermined her ability to advocate within IBASE for greater sensitivity to the racial dimensions of Brazilian class inequality in Brazil. Thus, the census campaign, she thought, would be a way both of getting IBASE involved in the "racial" question and of putting the issue of racial identity "in the mouth and head of the black community".[33]

Others shared her concern about the lack of reliable data as well as the absence of a black racial consciousness. Nine non-governmental organizations in addition to IBASE formed the organizational nucleus of the campaign, of these nine, seven were part of the black movement and two were affiliated with academic institutions.[34] The Ford Foundation's contribution was modest but was, until the campaign's postponement, its

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32 Wania Sant'Anna, interview by author, tape recording, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 10 July 1992.

33 Ibid.

34 The seven black movement entities included: Research Institute of Black Cultures (IPCN), the newspaper ***Maioria Falante*** , the Palmares Institute for Human Rights (IPDH); The Center of the Articulation of Marginal Populations (CEAP); Center of Negromestica Reference (CERNE); Black Pastoral Agents (APN); Institute of Religious Studies / Brazilian Negritude Program (ISER). The two academic-affiliated groups were: Center of Afro-Asiastic Studies (CEAA) and Nucleus of Color of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro - Laboratory of Social Research.

sole financial source. In 1991, Terra Nuovo, an Italian Foundation, provided limited support to campaign activities in Salvador, Bahia, where it was based. Even with this addition, the Ford Foundation remained the campaign's chief source of revenue. Significantly, all financial support came from foreign sources. External funding has often presented a problem of legitimacy for black movement recipients. For white political and intellectual elites, black movement reliance on Foundation funding has fueled the charge that the movement itself is, in its material as well as ideological basis, un-Brazilian. Black activists who are denied or choose not to receive funding, sometimes consider those who do politically compromised and, at some level, inauthentic.

What was meant by and who consequently would be members of the "black population" was of course the raison d'etre of the campaign. In order for there to be reliable socio-economic data pegged to color, there has to be "accurate" color enumeration. However, such numbers are thought to be misleading because Brazilians "lie" about their color, meaning most often that they self-select a lighter color on their census schedules. The campaign's point, hence its slogan, was to urge Brazilians to assume their "African origins" and then to select a color darker than what they would have chosen in the campaign's absence. "Color", then, was an imperfect and obfuscating measure, from the campaign's viewpoint. The preferred measure would have been "race" (and not color) and corresponding census category would

have been simply black (*negra*), meaning black race. This alternative would replace not only the existing census term for black (*preta*), a term commonly used to describe objects, but would subsume the color brown (*parda*) as well. "*Preta* ", as Regina Domingues explained, only connotes color but *negra* connotes both culture and history. However, "race" on the census schedules only applied, as stated earlier, to the indigenous option.

Even though campaign organizers were generally dissatisfied with the precodified census terms, and there was considerable support for the use of "race" in general and the "black race" (*raca negra*) in particular; there was still no consensus about what alternative terms would be. For example, Januario Garcia, President of the Institute for the Study of Black Cultures, responded in an interview that he preferred simply "white" and "non-white".[35] When the same question was put to Regina Domingues, Wania Sant'Anna's successor as campaign coordinator, she thought that there should be a more satisfactory way to accommodate the notion of "mixture" other than the "*parda* " term, which she maintained, meant little. [36] Father David Raimundo dos Santos thought that there should be two questions: one which asked about race and another about color. That way, a person could assume both his or her race and

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35 Januario Garcia, interview by author, tape recording, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20 July 1992.

36 Regina Domingues, interview by author, tape recording, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 5 July 1992.

"brownness".[37] Voicing opposition to existing census terms and discussing possible alternatives, however, were secondary to the tasks of convincing Brazilians not only to heed the campaign's advice, but to take its appeals and the census seriously at all. After all, the campaign was, despite its aspirations for national proportions, a limited effort. Most of its activities were centered in Rio de Janeiro, although there were noteworthy efforts in the cities/states of Salvador, Bahia; Belem, Para; Sao Luis, Maranhao; Recife, Pernambuco; and Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais.

The campaign's propaganda centerpiece was its poster and accompanying pamphlet which were distributed to nine cities (including Rio de Janeiro). The poster was both provocative and effective. Below the campaign's slogan was a photograph of three nude bodies of different skin tones, with only their backs revealed. At the center of this photograph was a small rectangle in which the precodified census terms are listed, each followed by a question mark. According to campaign coordinator Domingues, the brochures were generally well received among non-white Brazilians. Others, though, thought the photograph of the nude bodies indecent, contributing only to the further reproduction of sexual stereotypes about blacks.[38]

The pamphlet's text spells out clearly the stakes, reasons for and objectives

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[37] "Negros querem sua cor assumida no censo 91," *Jornal do Brasil*, (Rio), 24 September 1991, p.3.

[38] Regina Domingues, interview with author, tape recording, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 5 July 1992.

of the campaign. It identifies immediately its audience: those Brazilians who have "African origins" but who are embarrassed to claim them. African origins, then, are the basis of one's identity, the acknowledgement of which should result in a self-declaration of "black". While the text acknowledges "mixture", as evidenced in its use of the terms "negra" and "mestica", in the end, "African origins" are the ties that bind. Further, the assertion of a "black" identity is bound to claims both of deepening citizenship and democratization. That is, being "black" ought not, as it currently does, preclude full participation in Brazil's political but especially economic life. "Whiteness", then, is the price of entry into full Brazilian citizenship, and it is this perception which the campaign holds up and seeks to challenge. The pamphlet's language is instructive in its clarity, and it worth quoting at length. It begins with the following observations and question:

> Here in Brazil, many people are embarrassed to be *pretas* (blacks) and because of this they say that they are *mulatas, morenas,* etc. Many white people also feel ashamed to have black friends and generally say that these friends are a little dark (*escurinhos)* or are blacks of white souls (*pretos de alma branca).* Have you frequently perceived such occurrences? Blacks and whites, therefore try to disguise that here in Brazil exists a population descended from Africans who have contributed to the construction of our country's wealth.

It then explains that the reason so many Brazilians are embarrassed to say that they are of African ancestry is due to the "ideology of whitening". In my view, their definition shows clearly the mutually constituting character of color and class categories. The whitening ideology is defined as:

> . . . the desire to be white and all that white represents. And what does white represent? It represents a better house, a better education, a better salary, good food, a new car, a bank account, good social relations, a fashionable wardrobe, vacations, a good marriage, better medical attention, a beautiful face on T.V., etc.

All of these associations with "whiteness", the pamphlet reminds readers, are ". . .the right of anyone of our society, independent of his or her color. And in order to obtain this right, it is not necessary to abandon being *preto, mulato, pardo, morena, etc.*" The three objectives of the campaign, then, were not only to encourage *negros* and *mesticos* to declare their color but to foster more positive self-images and to contribute to the development of statistics which reveal the true living conditions of *negros* and *mesticos*. The brochure also provided general information about the census in which the census is presented as a potentially empowering and unobtrusive state action. This final aspect of the campaign – its potential to generate public interest in the census at all -- was the one with which the IBGE felt most comfortable. Other aspects of the campaign were not received as readily. While IBGE officials met with both black movement representatives and campaign representatives, neither proposals for greater cooperation nor recommendations moved beyond discussion. Campaign organizers, for example, insisted that the color question appear on the basic forms distributed to every household and not only on the long survey forms distributed to 1 out every ten households. It did not. Campaign organizers also asked that they be allowed to meet with enumerators in order to alert them to the

importance of the color question and to sensitize them to the "racial issue" in general. These meetings were never held.

The campaign organizers' difficulties in gaining access to census enumerators was, in some respects, one of its smaller obstacles, given the contentious context of the census itself. The census' postponement in 1990 undermined the campaign's momentum and left organizers initially doubtful of whether it could be regenerated in 1991. However, in 1990, the planning of the campaign moved forward and in July, using the facilities of EMBRATEL, Wania Sant'Anna and others organized a teleconference which allowed members of the campaign's nucleus to contact organizers in nine other cities via television.[39] In Rio, a live studio audience was present. The purpose of this teleconference was to answer questions and to clarify the campaign's objectives to participating organizations, all of which were members of the black movement.

In opening remarks by the panelists, the campaign was described as an historic moment for Brazil's black movement in that it was a proactive rather than reactive project.[40] Panelists observed that more often black activists find

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39 EMBRATEL (Empresa Brasileira de Telecomunicacoes) is the state television station established by the Military Government in 1967.

40 The panelists were: Januario Garcia, President of the Research Institute of Black Cultures (IPCN); Father David Raimundo dos Santos of the Black Pastoral Agents; Wania Sant'Anna of the Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analyses (IBASE); Ana Davis, Journalist; and Carlos Alberto Medeiras.

themselves issuing denunciations after a racist act has been committed. The campaign, in contrast, was a concrete and proactive effort to put the issue of race at the center of public discussion. From callers, the most frequently asked question was why the IBGE chose "color" rather than "race" as its measure. Most held that in using color, the IBGE purposely divided the "black race" (*raca negra*) into two groups: blacks and browns and thus diluted the race's numerical strength.[41] However, one caller from Belem, capital of the northern state of Para, pointed out that the difficulty many would face in Belem would be whether to choose the "indigenous" or "brown" category since there is a "very strong Indian presence".

Panelists Januario Garcia and Wania Sant'Anna responded to these opinions and questions by both acknowledging the widespread dissatisfaction with the existing census color question and by insisting that all concerned bore some responsibility in devising alternatives and organizing to have them implemented for the 2000 year census. Sant'Anna was especially adamant about this latter point because she viewed the campaign as an ongoing rather than one-time political project. Concerns and complaints about the campaign's loose organization and inadequate amount of written materials were voiced frequently. In their responses, panelists emphasized the restricted financial and thus material resources of the campaign and

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[41] I attended the teleconference as a representative of the Ford Foundation's Brazil office. As a researcher, I obtained a video-copy of the conference from campaign coordinator, Regina Domingues.

encouraged participants, in turn, to take the initiative in getting the message out locally. In the end, Sant'Anna reminded them, the campaign's success depended upon open and honest discussion where-ever Brazilians were present. In the absence of such discussion, more posters and brochures could do little.

In 1990, the campaign received some press coverage, with many of the articles printed on May 13th, the anniversary of slavery's abolition in 1888. One article, for example, casts the campaign as a continuation of a national wave of black protest which began with the 1988 centennial observation of slavery's abolition.[42] This characterization appears to have been drawn from a campaign organizer himself, Father David Raimundo dos Santos, who considered the campaign "a test of fire for the black movement." [43] It would prove, according to dos Santos, whether or not the black movement's consciousness raising rhetoric has worked or not. At the same time, however, he conceded that the myth of racial democracy and ideology of whitening might well continue to exert their influence. Father dos Santos then confessed that he only "discovered" that he was black 12 years hence when he was discriminated against. "Before", he stated, "even with my black

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42 Carlos Nobre, "Negro Quer Declarar Cor no Censo," *O Dia* (Rio), 13 May 1990, p.5.

43 "Uma Nova Tomada de Consciencia," *O Dia* (Rio), 13 May 1990, p.5.

features, I thought I was white."[44]

With the exception of the activities organized by Father dos Santos' Commission of Black Priests, Seminarians and Clergy in the Baixada Fluminese on May 13, 1990, the campaign had yet to mount a full-scale effort when the census was postponed. Although initially disappointed, Coordinator Regina Domingues and others saw the postponement as an opportunity to enlist more organizational and financial support. To that end, the Italian Foundation, Terra Nuova, was approached as were major media outlets.

The starting date for the 1991 campaign was May 12th and not May 13. May 12th was chosen as a way of challenging the official State commemorations scheduled for the 13th. The campaign would not participate in the "farce" of celebrating slavery's abolition when, organizers maintained, slavery-like living conditions still exist. The park, Quinta da Boa Vista, was chosen as the site for the Rio launching because it is a place where many residents of Rio's North Zone (*zona norte*) and the Baixada Fluminese gather. Besides such grass-roots activities, the Rio operation used local and national media channels to get the message out. Through-out the month of September, for example, the campaign's message was run across an electronic bulletin board during soccer matches. In addition, Sports Radio announcer Ricardo Mazella read the message for radio listeners. These efforts were made possible with

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[44] Ibid.

the support of the Bureau of Sports for the State of Rio de Janeiro (SUDERRJ). Also, campaign materials were distributed as soccer fans entered Maracana Stadium.

Even more important for national exposure was the airing in September of a commercial promoting the campaign and the census on the channels of Globo T.V, Brazil's most powerful media conglomerate. This commercial stressed the importance of answering the color question, and yet, to campaign organizers' consternation, it advocated the self-selection of "brown". While not comfortable with T.V. Globo producers' spin on the campaign's message, campaign organizers did not refuse the commercial, given that it would reach millions of Brazilians. It aired on September 1, 1991, the census' first day. Also, campaign coordinator Domingues was interviewed on a number of Rio radio talk shows as well as on nationally aired talk shows. The campaign also received international attention. Domingues was featured on the BCC's News Hour Radio program and was interviewed for a Chicago Tribune newspaper article about the campaign.

Yet of all the events and outreach efforts, the visit of Nelson and Winnie Mandela in August of 1991 most energized the campaign. Their six-day visit (August 1-6) received extensive media coverage, and the Mandelas attracted huge crowds to all of their public appearances at which campaign workers eagerly distributed pamphlets and buttons. An estimated 40,000 Brazilians attended a show in the Mandelas' honor held at a huge outdoor plaza in Rio's

Praca da Apoteose on August 1st.[45] As importantly, the visit set the stage for public discussion and debate about Brazilian racial politics and about black solidarity, the very issues the campaign sought to raise. Yet such discussion and debate took some surprising turns. This unpredictability suggests, in my view, an ongoing groping for an adequate vocabulary. While there are few who publicly adhere to the myth of racial democracy, there are also few who speak assuredly and forcefully about the existence of racial discrimination. And, as a fragile black movement keeps discovering, the vast majority of Brazilians appear unprepared to respond to explicit appeals which presume a shared "black" racial identity. In this light, the census campaign appeared to be as much a trial balloon as a proactive political project.

That the Mandela visit enlivened public discussion about Brazil's racialized social relations is, in and of itself, not surprising. In the past, external sources have been the impetus for such discussion and even for state action. The 1951 Afonso Arinos Act which outlawed racial discrimination, Brazil's first law in this century to address directly such discrimination, was introduced and passed by the National Congress in response to Black American dancer Katherine Dunham's being denied entry into a luxury Sao Paulo hotel. What was surprising, then, about the Mandela visit were both the terms of public discussion and who set them. Given the pervasive use of

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[45] "Mandela atrai 40 mil a Praca da Apoteose", *Jornal do Brasil*, (Rio), 2 August 1991, p.1.

South Africa as an external referent for all which Brazil is not, one would have expected Brazilian politicians and intellectuals to tout Brazil as an example of what South Africa could become. Yet surprisingly it was Nelson Mandela who held out this prospect, not Brazilian politicians.

Upon arriving in Rio de Janeiro Mandela in his first speech thanked the Brazilian government and people for their support of the anti-apartheid struggle. He then went on to say that Brazilian society, like South African, was comprised of a "mixture of people", and that Brazil as a successful multi-racial society would serve as a "guide" for South Africans. [46] Further, he said that ". . .black Brazilians had already reached the stage where they could use their own resources, leaders, and schools for their betterment". South African blacks were still fighting for the right to vote.[47] In contrast to Mandela, a few prominent Brazilian politicians and newspaper editorials used the visit to point up Brazil's shortcomings, not its achievements. The Governor of Rio de Janeiro Leonel Brizzola and Sao Paulo Governor Luiz Antonio Fleury were reported to have initiated, in their private meetings with Mandela, discussion about racism's existence in Brazil and the struggles

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46 "Mandela agradece ao Brasil apoio na luta anti-apartheid,"*Jornal do Commercio* , 2 August 1991, p.1.

47 "Mandela contradiz lideres negros do Brasil,"*Folha de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo) 2 August 1991, p.7.

against it.[48] As importantly, one of Brazil's most influential newspapers, **Folha de Sao Paulo,** ran an editorial which questioned the suitability of Brazil as a symbol of multi-racial and yet non-discriminatory society. While acknowledging that Mandela's characterization of Brazil was largely a part of the diplomatic process, the remarks betrayed the power of the image of Brazil as a racial democracy. An image, the editorial holds, which is far from reality. That is, while Brazil historically has not had a legal system of discrimination does not mean that racism and prejudice do not exist. It urged, then, Brazilians neither to abandon, in face of the Mandela's visit, recent efforts within Brazilian society to unmask racism nor to return to the false security provided by the myth of racial democracy.[49]

In the wake of Mandela's remarks, black activists found themselves in an uncomfortable position. Not only had party politicians stolen their thunder but they were in the position of contradicting and being contradicted by a revered champion of human and Black rights. Brazilian black activists have used South Africa as a point for comparison in which South African apartheid is viewed more, not less, favorably than Brazil's purported racial democracy. That is, Brazil, like South Africa, is ruled by a white minority, but at least in South Africa, whites openly acknowledge their racism and blacks,

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[48] "Mandela agradece apoio dos brasileiros,"*O Estado de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo) 4 August 1991, p.11; "Mandela elogia Igreja na luta contra racismo," *Jornal do Commercio* , 5 August 1991.

[49] "Igualdade ilusoria,"*Folha de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo), 2 August 1991.

as blacks, actively fight against it. Moreover, the socio-economic status of Brazilian blacks is perceived as being as bad as, if not worse than, that of South African blacks. Thus, black activists did not openly refute Mandela but charged instead that they had been purposely prevented from meeting with him. Januario Garcia, President of the Institute of Black Culture (IPCN), accused both the Federal and Rio de Janeiro state governments of racial discrimination in its organizing of Mr. Mandela's visit to Rio.[50] Federal Deputy Benedita da Silva charged that Mandela's visit had been hijacked by party politicians and that ". . .neighborhood associations, labor unions, Indian groups, etc" in addition to black movement organizations had been excluded.[51]

The importance, then, of symbolically embracing the Mandelas while scoring political points was lost neither to Brazilian party politicians nor to black movement activists. For black Federal Deputy and former Rio de Janeiro mayoral candidate Benedita da Silva (PT), Mandela's appearance before the Brazilian Congress provided an occasion to contrast Brazilian racism from South African. In her speech, which she dedicated to her "sister in the struggle - Winnie Mandela", da Silva held that subtlety was the main difference between Brazil and South Africa. And as if in inadvertent

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50 "Movimentos negros veem discriminacao," *Jornal do Commercio* , 2 August 1991, p.2.

51 "Movimento negro protesta," *Folha de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo), 2 August 1991, p.7.

confirmation of her observation of racism's subtlety, Brazilian legislators stood up and applauded loudly. These are the very same legislators who have steadfastly refused, either rhetorically but especially programmatically, to broach the issue of racism in Brazil. After her speech, she embraced Winnie Mandela which in turn led to even greater applause and shouting of their names.[52] President Collor , in contrast, used his meeting with Mandela to confirm Brazil's connection with Africa when he remarked in English, "Between Brazil and Africa there is no distance because we have the same roots".[53]

Even with their displeasure with Mandela's initial comments, black movement activists neither abandoned their comparisons of Brazil with South Africa nor their attempts to have Mandela speak about the "true" conditions of black Brazilians. In response to attempts to eliminate a Rio State-level Secretariat dedicated to the defense of the "black community", Secretary Abdias do Nascimento retorted that "the apartheid of Brazil is much worse than that of South Africa."[54] Meanwhile, in latter speeches, Mandela spoke less glowingly about the multi-racial character of Brazilian society or of blacks' place within it. In a speech delivered in Salvador, Bahia on August

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[52] "Benedita dedica seu discurso a 'irma de luta' ,"*O Globo* (Rio), 6 August 1991, p.3.

[53] "Presidente lembra as raizes comuns,"*O Globo* (Rio), 6 August 1991, p.3.

[54] "Apartheid no Brasil e pior que na Africa, diz secretario,"*Folha de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo), 2 August 1991.

3rd, Mandela said that Black Brazilians have not been totally integrated into the economic and social life of the society. Even with these efforts, Mandela was quoted as having felt "bitterness" among the blacks he met.[55] In one of his last interviews in Brazil before returning to South Africa, Mandela was asked to clarify what he meant when he said that he felt "at home" in Brazil. Was that, the interviewer wanted to know, an endorsement or critique of the similarities between Brazil and South Africa. He responded:

> When I said upon my arrival that I felt at home, I was referring to the warm reception of Brazilians. However, in my discussions with governors and mayors, they raised, spontaneously, the question of racism in Brazil. We are confident that the Brazilian people will, like the American people were able to do in the '60s, confront with courage the problem of racism in Brazil.[56]

In these final words, Brazil is cast not as a country which has already solved its racial problem but as one which has yet to confront it. It was precisely this stripping of and confrontation with official narratives of racial harmony in Brazil which the campaign sought to encourage. And yet the Mandela visit also pointed up the instability of Brazil's political terrain regarding discrimination and racial identification. On the one hand, there were certain politicians who appeared willing to engage rhetorically, at least, racism's existence, and none who went on the public record as adherents to

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55 "Lider nota amargura do negro," ***Jornal do Brasil***, (Rio), 6 August 1991, p.5.

56 Ruth de Aquino, "Lembrancas do Brasil: Entrevista/Nelson Mandela," *O Dia* (Rio), 8 August 1991.

the myth of racial democracy. Yet there exists only one ineffectual law prohibiting racial discrimination; racial issues are not featured significantly on political party agendas, and compensatory or redistributive legislation (i.e. Affirmative Action) remains a distant possibility. And on the other hand, there were Black activists who continued to invoke a symbol of racial tyranny: South African apartheid and a resistance leader: Nelson Mandela when such invocation became visibly awkward and untenable. South Africa, by August 1991, was on its way to majority rule, and Nelson Mandela was acting more like a future Presidential candidate than a resistance leader. Further, given Mandela's remarks it was clear that he and Brazilian black activists were not reading from the same script. Finally, the campaign's targeted constituency openly expressed feelings of a black racial pride and solidarity during the visit, yet would such pride and identification translate into self -selection as black on census schedules?

Once the census officially began on September 1st, the lion's share of the campaign's work had been done, although the nationally televised commercial and promotions at Rio soccer games lasted through-out September. In mid-September, IBASE sponsored a day-long seminar intended both to emphasize the importance of racial data and to advance discussion about new census race or color questions and/or terms for the year

2001 census.[57] In the end, participants, drawn from the ranks of non-profit organizations and academic institutions, appeared as divided on the issue of census categorization as the IBGE and campaign organizers themselves. As would be expected, some black movement representatives maintained that the brown option be eliminated and that the question ask one's race and not color. Other activists, in contrast, thought that the brown category's removal would only further distort the statistical portrait as many more Brazilians would classify themselves as "white". At least with the brown category, it is possible to combine it with black in order to get a more accurate picture, relatively speaking. The task remained then for the black movement to stop their "would be" or "should be" constituency from declaring themselves as "brown" but especially as "white".

Conversely, academics and an IBGE representative held that the color question remain unaltered. Carlos Hasenbalg, director of the Center for Afro-Asiastic Studies at Candido Mendes University, argued that the census offers a more rather than less true reflection of Brazil's racial composition. "Whitening" is , in his view, a social and biological fact. Thus, the question should not be changed nor should census enumerators ignore the responses they receive, even if such responses appear "false". Further, IBGE official Valeria da Motta Leite did not consider seriously the possibility of modifying

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[57] Typewritten Transcript of Seminar Proceedings, "Temas Relevantes para Producao de Novos Indicadores Socio-Economicas sobre a Populacao Negra e Mestica", IBASE, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 28 September 1991.

the question. She did, however, take up the issue of whether color be considered a basic demographic characteristic. If so classified, it would be included on the basic census schedule. In the end, she concluded that it would be fiscally infeasible and technically impractical for the IBGE to do so. The IBGE could, she conceded, commit itself to making of all its data, especially color data, easily and quickly accessible to the public. Three years later, the complete 1991 census results are still unavailable, and the IBGE claimed that they would release them in December 1994. This delay frustrates attempts of activists and scholars to assess the campaign's success. Yet it is also entirely consistent with the disorganization that has characterized the entire undertaking.

"Vanishing Native Americans" and "Passing into White" Brazilians

The symbolic stakes attached to censuses, as the 1991 census campaign makes clear, can be high. The official (statistical) existence or not of "blacks" (*pretos*) hinged on Brazilians checking the right box. Refutation of the prediction that "blacks" and then "browns" would disappear into "white" also hanged in the balance. "Disappearance" is, of course, central to the myth of racial democracy, and statistics purportedly reflect this inevitability. As recently as 1990, for example, an article in VEJA magazine, the Brazilian version of TIME, reported that "the blacks appear to be disappearing into extinction", as predicted by Gilberto Freyre and as revealed in the latest IBGE

demographic research.[58] For black activists, however, blacks' descent into statistical invisibility reflects and reinforces their enduring social, political, and economic marginalization.

In important and instructive ways, the image of the disappearing "black" in Brazil is analogous to that of the "disappearing Indian" in the United States. Dominant images of native Americas have mostly presented a "beaten and disappearing" race, and census data have been instrumental in sustaining those images. As historians of U.S. Indian policy have shown, the specter of a vanishing race has informed definitively white American attitudes and federal policies towards Native Americans. There is a way, of course, in which this image has corresponded to reality; millions of people died. Yet the power of these predictions and images has extended far beyond description. They have conveyed both celebration of and resignation to the prospect. Given the weight of prevailing expectations, it is not surprising that census data have been marshalled as evidence. As Brian Dippie has observed, "the expansion and shrinkage of Indian population estimates correlate with changing attitudes about the native American's rights and prospects".[59] For example, the idea of the vanishing Indian was so pervasive at the turn of the century that a broad definition of "Indian" was applied on the 1910 and 1930s

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58 "As Cores do Brasil," VEJA, 30 May 1990: 40-44.

59 Brian W. Dippie, The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), p.xv.

censuses because it was believed that each would be the "last chance" for an "accurate" count. According to the U.S. Census Bureau:

> In 1910 a special effort was made to secure a complete enumeration of persons with any perceptible amount of Indian ancestry. This probably resulted in the enumeration as Indian of a considerable number of persons who would have been reported as white in earlier censuses. There were no special efforts in 1920, and the returns showed a much smaller number of Indians than in 1910. Again in 1930 emphasis was placed on securing a complete count of Indians, with the result that the returns probably overstated the decennial increase in the number of Indians.[60]

The numbers of Native Americans have changed according to how the Census Bureau chose to define the category. The changes in numbers have, as importantly, depended upon the judgments of census enumerators. Before 1960, the census bureau relied upon the observations of census-takers, and since 1960, it has relied upon the self-identifications of respondents.[61] Taken together, Census Bureau definitions and enumerator observations have been deeply conditioned by the direction of Federal policy and the prevailing perceptions of Native Americans and their future (or not) within the American polity. For example, the censuses of 1890, 1900, 1910, and 1920, all included separate enumerations of Indians who lived on reservations, in keeping with the perception and attendant Federal policies that Indian

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60 U.S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957, (Washington D.C., 1960), p.3.

61 C. Matthew Snipp, "Who are American Indians? Some Observations about the perils and pitfalls of data for race and ethnicity", Population Research and Policy Review, 5 (1986):237-252.

existence was both separate from that of white America and headed towards extinction.[62] Those Indians who lived among the general population were counted as such. Further, the quanta of "Indian blood" ("full" or "half-breed") and type of mixture (with "black" or "white" blood) were also recorded on the separate reservation schedules. However, by 1930, Brian Dippie argues, there was a marked shift in perceptions about and federal policies determining Native American prospects. The "Vanishing American" became the "Indian American", still disappearing, not into extinction but into "Americanness".[63] Assimilation was deemed both possible and desirable. The 1930 census, in turn, discontinued use of separate schedules for counting Indians who lived on reservations. Instead, a supplement was attached to the general population schedule which allowed for data collection about Indians living on reservations. And by the 1950 census, the "Indian" category was renamed "American Indian".

Yet explanation for the shifts in the numbers of Native Americans also lies in the willingness (or not) of persons to claim and assert identities as Native Americans and the opportunities provided to do so. As mentioned, the method of self-identification was introduced with the 1960 census. Unsurprisingly, since the 1960s, there has been a noticeable increase in the

62 Lee, "Racial Classifications in the U.S. Census: 1890-1990."

63 Dippie, pp.273-274.

number of people classified as American Indian. For example, a recent study using census housing data found many more Indians living outside of the 9 western states and Alaska, traditionally known as "Indian areas", over the past 60 years. The author concluded that this dispersal was better understood not as a result of actual migration from one region to another, but as the result of a more persons self-selecting "Indian" identity on their census form. In other words, Indians did not move to New York, for instance, but more New Yorkers identified as Indians. [64] A study of the 1970 census found 67,000 more Indians on that census than that of 1960. The author concluded that this increase could not be accounted for either in terms of birth and death rates or of a 1960 undercount. It is due, he argues, to a shift in racial identification with persons who declared themselves as "white" in the 1960 census, declaring themselves as "Indian" in the 1970.[65]

Scholars have attributed this increase in self-identification as Native Americans to both greater organized political action in the 1960s and 1970s under a "Pan-Tribal" Indian identity on the one hand, and the incentives introduced by Federal policies aimed at addressing specific tribal claims, on the other. Also, claiming a "Indian" identity even became chic in certain quarters. According to whichever combination of factors, recent census data

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[64] Karl Eschbach, "Changing Identification among American Indians and Alaska Natives," Demography, 30 (1993): 635-652.

[65] Jeffrey S. Passel, "Provisional Evaluation of the 1970 Census Count of American Indians," Demography, 13 (1976): 397-409.

explode the image of the vanishing Indian. In this sense, organized political action has helped to fight off statistical extinction in much the same way as the Brazilian census campaign attempted to do.

In the Brazilian case, however, the census was used as a vehicle to build an identity and not simply to reflect its strength. Why one would declare him or herself as "American Indian" is far clearer, ironically, than why one would declare him or herself "black" in Brazil. And yet, because assertions of native American identity are often perceived as merely reactions to political agitation or to federal policy incentives, the "authenticity" of those persons who call themselves native Americans is often called into question. Reflecting the unequal power dynamics intrinsic to "White-Indian" relations, who is and what it means to be an "Indian" have been set largely and required demonstration on "white" terms. "Indians" have rarely been in the position to demand the same of "whites". Similarly, the census campaign's and the black movement's attempts to construct an encompassing "black" identity have been criticized by naysayers as a project with no real social or political coordinates within Brazilian society. "Pure Blacks" are disappearing; the campaign is both a desperate act to stave off the inevitable and an futile attempt by black activists to create a power base. In this view, there are few "authentic" blacks and no corresponding "authentically black" political agenda which need be taken seriously.

"When you go to have fun, Speak Basque": Comparisons with the 1983 Basque Language Campaign

In addition to the analogous discursive practices which created both disappearing Indians in the United States and Blacks in Brazil, the census campaign itself has a counterpart in a 1983 Basque language campaign.[66] Whereas the census campaign offered common "ethnic" origins [read: African ancestry] as the basis of a black identity, the Basque language campaign promoted active language use. Both campaigns sought to reinforce the parameters of identity in contexts perceived as oppressive and threatening. In Basque country, nationalists perceived this campaign necessary because although the language euskera is considered a defining characteristic of the Basque nation, its use as a publicly spoken language has declined steadily. When spoken, its use is confined to private and rural places, while castilian occupies public space. This decline, which has fueled calls for the language's re-emergence, is attributable in part to the repressive language policies of the Franco regime which sought to eliminate the language altogether. Thus, to the extent that language use and national boundaries are considered coterminous, language surveys and censuses have proven powerfully influential and fiercely contested. On their results have hinged not only the numbers of Basque speakers but the size of the Basque nation itself.

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[66] This discussion draws entirely on the work of Jacqueline Urla, "Cultural Politics in an age of statistics: numbers, nations, and the making of Basque identity," American Ethnologist, 20 (1993): 818-843.

As in Brazil, then, censuses have figured prominently in setting the terms of the political debate and configuring the demographic landscape. While Basque speakers themselves distinguish broadly between speakers and non-speakers; the 1981 census made 3 distinctions: 1. "those who know Basque well", 2. "those who use Basque with difficulty" and 3. "those who do not know it at all".[67] The middle category - those who speak with some difficulty- included those who do not feel that they speak "well" and those who are learning. Whereas nationalists only wish to distinguish between speakers and non-speakers, the Census bureau's introduction of a third category opened up, in Urla's words, "the possibility of envisioning 'degrees' of Basqueness" and of diluting the strength of the basque-speaking nation.[68] That is, by exploding the perception of two bounded, mutually exclusive ethnolinguistic communities, the census reconfigured the political landscape, making it a much more fluid one. Similarly, the Brazilian census' brown category also makes it possible to envision degrees of "blackness", "whiteness" or simply "brownness" depending upon one's ideological position. From the black movement's point of view, the brown category divides what should be conceived as a "race of black people" into two groups: those of "pure" African ancestry and those of "mixed" African ancestry. Conversely, the IBGE maintains that the "brown" category aptly captures

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67 Ibid., p.830.

68 Ibid., p.830

those of "mixed" racial origins. According to the ideology of "whitening", the brown category constitutes a middle passage to the destination of "whiteness".

The 1983 language campaign organized in the town of Usurbil in Basque country was one of the many efforts pursued through out the 1980s to get Basque people to speak euskera. For example, language schools were established as were Basque-speaking television and radio stations, print media and music production facilities. There were also demonstrations and graffiti which encouraged people to speak or learn Basque. This particular campaign, held during the town's week-long festival for its patron saint, was organized by a local group of young basque activists who wanted to alert the town's inhabitants to the precarious status of the language. To prove their point, campaign organizers enlisted school teachers, other town dwellers and students to conduct a survey to determine how much the language was actually spoken. These surveyors visited a variety of public spaces: bars, handball courts, streets and recorded how much Eskera they actually heard.

As had been expected, they found virtually no Eskera use; Castilian was spoken everywhere. This result, then, made evident the need both for such a campaign and for renewed vigilance to the Basque language cause in general. A display in the town plaza's captured sharply the stakes attached to the campaign. On one wall in the city plaza, the dismal yet expected results of the informal survey were posted on a billboard. On the opposite wall, was a bright, colorful mural painted by local children with the campaign's slogan

above. It is not by accident, as Urla points out, that organizers enlisted children. They figure prominently as symbols of a renewed Basque nation, where the people know, speak and write in Basque. The Brazilian census campaign was also in response to the notion of a "dwindling away" of blacks and of recuperating a disparaged identity. Claiming one's ethnic origins is analogous to speaking basque; identities, in order to maintain their currency, require public display. The issue is on whose and on what terms. In both the language and census campaigns, the terms of demonstration were set by political activists qua campaign organizers.

The language organizers' informal survey, unlike a census, relied upon observation of behavior and not on self-reporting . It did not seek to access proficiency; campaign organizers were interested in praxis and not knowledge. In contrast, the census campaign was interested less in how people assume their "blackness" in day to day life, and more in how they identify themselves on the census, presuming, of course, that most people neither assert their "blackness" daily nor self-select black on their census schedules. After this survey, the language campaign organizers turned their attention to the campaign itself recognizing that, in the end, language preservation rests not in talking about the language's centrality to a shared identity but in actually speaking the language. The campaign's slogan, which appeared on murals, tee-shirts, and buttons said, " When you go to have fun,

speak Basque" ("Irten farra egitera, hitz eginaz euskaraz"). [69] Importantly, connecting Basque language use to "fun" was an attempt to link it to the pleasures of everyday life and to wrest it from the grip of political sloganeering.

The success of this language campaign is, in some ways, less easily ascertained than that of the census campaign. In theory, at least, an increase in the number of persons declaring themselves brown, but especially "black" would suggest that the campaign had some effect, especially since the black category has steadily declined numerically on every Brazilian census. Simply checking a box on a census schedule is infinitely easier than incorporating a new language into one's everyday life. Yet, given the profoundly negative associations with black, self-selection as black is still not an easy choice. In important ways, however, just mounting the campaigns were considered by their organizers to be successes in and of themselves. Their shared point was to invoke a notion of "peoplehood" and to reinforce or create, as in the census campaign, the boundaries of membership. The campaigns' activities went a way in advancing such objectives. And yet because campaigns are intrinsically contrived and sometimes alarmist, they reveal the constructedness of identities and the artificiality of appeals aimed at the assertion of them. In the end, whether or not a person will speak Basque or whether Brazilians would chose a "darker" color are decisions only partly

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[69] Ibid., p.833.

calculated in terms of the campaigns' appeals. Also figured in are assessments of what is to be gained (and lost), both materially and symbolically, from these actions and gestures. Using this measure, the campaigns' limitations become apparent.

Conclusion

The "Don't Let Your Color Pass into White: Respond with Good Sense" census campaign holds out important implications for both theorizing about and the empirical study of race-based social movements. First, it shows that how racial identities are constituted is as much a part of the story as the political actions which do and do not flow from them. In Brazil, the battle is over where the boundaries of national identity end and where those of distinct racial identities begin. Given the IBGE's role in the reinscription of Brazil's whiter national identity, it was necessarily identified as the referent for the campaign's and black movements' efforts to redraw the boundaries of racial identities. Finally, the campaign points up the logistical difficulties not only in organizing but in fashioning a compelling appeal as well. In the absence of material and symbolic benefits to be had from declaring oneself black, why would one? In this sense, the lens for assessing the campaign's potential for success includes not only the immediate context of the 1991 census but the larger cultural, social and political context also. It is a context, as we will examine in the following chapter, in which "darkness" and

"blackness" bear profoundly negative symbolic associations and material consequences. It is a context then which invites us to revisit the campaign's slogan: "Respond with Good Sense" and to ask what is good sense?

Chapter Five: Identities in Search of Bodies: Assessing the Campaign

In preceding chapters, attention to the political constitution of race and color categories has focused largely on how the state through the formulation of census questions and through interpretations of census data both constructs and sustains the notion of a "whiter" and "lighter" Brazil. This chapter assesses the census campaign strategies to undermine this national self-image in its urging of Brazilians to select a "darker" color. Yet, as I will argue, because the campaign ground its appeals in "blood" (ethnic ancestry), it disabled itself from confronting directly the intrinsically political nature of color categorization, and how it functions in Brazil to ensure and justify privilege and subordination. That is, within a discursive context which celebrates the power of blood to "cleanse" and which openly embraces "mixture" and privileges "whiteness", why would one assert a "black" identity? The campaign does not offer an answer other than people attempt to "escape" from their African origins. But without an explicit engagement of what racial origins and "colors" mean in Brazil and how they are applied, the campaign appeals appear counter-intuitive and its efforts ineffective.

Rather than challenging "race", the campaign choose to invest it with new power and meaning. Brazilians have distinct "racial" origins and it is on this basis that one should interpret one's identity. "Black" and "Brown" are recast not as colors within the Brazilian race but as colors of the Black race. Politics, then, through this conceptual move remains firmly implanted within the

realm of nature. Political action, then, becomes an act not of debate and persuasion but a act of claiming bodies. That the campaign was organized around a census, whose purpose is to count bodies, reveals its logic even more sharply.

In instructive ways, the campaign's efforts to claim bodies mirrors the U.S. Gay and Lesbian Movement and its tactic of exposing or "outing" celebrities and politicians as secretly homosexual. Proponents of "outing" presume that sheer assertion of gay identity (on terms decided by the "outers") and the resultant numbers will advance a gay political agenda.[1] Thus, "outing" and the census campaign are tactics employed by movements in search of bodies. Yet, these efforts to claim bodies carry with them inherent tensions and perhaps unintended negative consequences which vitiate their political efficacy.

The chapter begins with a return to and closer examination of the competing meaning(s) of Brazilian colors according to scholarship, the census campaign, and Brazil's cultural terrain. This examination will support both my observation of the counter-intuitiveness of the campaign's appeals, and my characterization of the campaign as an act to enlist bodies and thus circumvent the difficulties that constructions of the Brazilian race and its colors present. The chapter concludes then by analyzing both the limits and

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[1] As will be discussed later on in this chapter, the terms gay and homosexual are not synonymous.

consequences of the campaign's and U.S. gay /lesbian movement's discursive strategies which presume both group membership and the propriety of demanding group loyalty.

"Brazilians: The 'New' People"

The process of color classification in Brazil has been cast in "race relations literature" as a key explanation for the purportedly harmonious nature of Brazilian social relations. Much of this discussion takes its cue from Gilberto Freyre and his literary celebration of Brazil's "racial experiment". Freyre's ideas, captured succinctly in Roberto da Matta's notion of the "fable of the three races", assign a mystical power to "miscegenation" to cleanse, to whiten, and to resolve the conflicts supposedly born of differences between races.[2] While scholarship, beginning in the 1940s and continuing to the present has not spoken in such explicitly glowing terms about the power of "miscegenation", it has largely minimized the material and political consequences of color classification. This tendency has displayed two mutually enforcing but discrete components. The first is that because color or racial terms are so numerous in Brazil, discrimination based upon them is rendered impossible. Employment of terms is often context specific and even idiosyncratic in ways which defy both operable generalizations and systematic

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2 Roberto da Matta, Relativizando, (Petropolis: Vozes, 1984).

discrimination.[3] The second is that although numerous, these terms may be reasonably grouped in broad categories which, in turn, neither distort reality nor disallow general assessments of group socio-economic status.[4]

What unites these positions is that interrogation of the color terms' significance is held hostage to how determinative they are of social stratification. Their importance, then, is largely exhausted by their connection (or not) to social and economic discrimination. It is important to note also that the explicit but more often implicit comparison with the United States sustains this interpretation. Scholarship, then, since the 1940s has documented extensively both the hierarchial order of colors and the profoundly racist and degrading associations with "black" people and excessively positive ones with "white" people. Yet these observations have not led scholars to assign more explanatory weight to race/color distinctions but rather has led them to argue that to the extent that one's social or economic status was not primarily determined by color, such identities were of less importance.

Consider the position of Marvin Harris who over the past forty years has written extensively about race/color in Brazil. As part of the 1950's UNESCO

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[3] John Saunders, "Class, Color, and Prejudice: A Brazilian Counterpoint," in Ernest Q. Campbell (ed.), Racial Tensions and National Identity (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1972). Marvin Harris, Patterns of Race in the Americas.

[4] Carlos Hasenbalg and Nelson do Valle Silva, Estructura Social, Mobilidade e Raca.

studies, Harris conducted a study of a rural community in Central Brazil.[5] In this study, Harris recorded profoundly racist perceptions of "blacks" and "black". In his words, "In Minas Velhas, the superiority of the white man over the Negro is considered to be a scientific fact as well as the incontrovertible lesson of daily experience."[6] He also observed, "All these different characteristics have different values attached to them - high if corresponding with the features of a white man and low if corresponding with the features of a Negro."[7] He concludes that in this community, even with its color-value schema, "the implications of the racial gradient and of the racial stereotypes are only partially fulfilled in actual behavior.", and that "race is secondary to economics as a diagnostic of rank."

In a 1964 comparative work on "race relations " in the Americas, Harris wrote about Brazil: "A moment's reflection should suffice to bring into prominence the fact that without a method for clearly distinguishing between one group and another, systematic discrimination cannot be practiced".[8] Given this premise, social inequalities exist between and discrimination is

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5 Marvin Harris, "Race Relations in Minas Velhas, A Community in the Mountain Region of Central Brazil", in Charles Wagley (ed), Race and Class in Rural Brazil.

6 Ibid., p.51.

7 Ibid., p.57.

8 M. Harris, Patterns of Race in the Americas , p54.

directed against class groups. "Color is one of the criterion of class identity, but it is not the only criterion."[9] For Harris, however, the significance of such fluid and multiple categorization is even greater than what it tells us about Brazilian social stratification. The complexity or variety of color terms or racial classification is more "real", more "natural", than other places, namely the U.S. because it reflects ". . .the actual complexity of hereditary processes."[10] In his most recent work (1993), Harris' argument extends to outright admiration when he writes: "Brazil may be no closer to racial democracy than other countries, but its system for establishing racial identity has many features from which the world has much to learn."[11] Harris, then, not only privileges class as the primary determinant of subordination but he also treats color terms as if they were natural rather than ideological.

Partly in response to the claim that color categories bore no material consequences, scholars, especially since the late 1970s, have focused on proving race/color to be significant determinants of discrimination and life chances. However in so doing, they have collapsed color terms thus flattening distinctions which exist socially and in so doing, disregard the terms' discursive and symbolic power.

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[9] Ibid., p.61.

[10] Ibid., p.57.

[11] Marvin Harris, et al.,"Who are the Whites ?: Imposed Census Categories and the Racial Demography of Brazil", Social Forces, p.459.

Yet, race and color terms can only be understood discursively. What they mean in Brazil and how and to whom they are applied lie at the heart of the matter. As Harris and others have shown (unwittingly perhaps), the reach of color/race terms extends far beyond the bodies they purportedly simply describe. They not only assign values to physical difference, and to cultural expressions; they inform class standing as well (i.e. rich = white). In fact, it is the comprehensiveness of race and color which renders not only Harris' and others' conclusions about class' primacy puzzling but the census campaign's logic puzzling as well. Put plainly, why would anyone assume, given a choice, an ideologically constructed identity - such as black- which carries such great social stigma, on the one hand, and provides such little symbolic or material benefit, on the other ?

A major component of the census campaign, as we have seen, was designed to do just that: to provide symbolic, if not material, benefits. The difficulties, however, in devising such benefits are intelligible within the context of how race and race/color categories are constructed ideologically in Brazil. As we have seen, racial discourse has identified and organized human difference such that Brazilians, borne of "three races" are becoming a "whiter race". The "contributions" of Africans, Indians, and Europeans have been carefully delineated and organized in ways which both rank them and (re)enforce their (mutual) exclusivity. In this ranking, African and Indian contributions are limited to expressive forms of music, food, and dance, while

European contributions encompass the most significant foundations of contemporary Brazilian society. Race, then, in this sense, is a signifier of historical experience and is intimately bound to the notion of the Brazilian national identity.

However, at the same time, as Brazilians have "mixed", their "original" roots are less important than their "color". The idea of the mark of "origin"(U.S.) versus the mark of "color"(Brazil) was postulated by Oracy Nogueira in the 1950s as the key difference between prejudice in the U.S. and Brazil.[12] And we know that these colors are ranked hierarchically from most desirable or positively valued to negatively valued, that is, from "lighter" or "white" to "darker" or "black". This scale parallels and corresponds to the ranking of Brazil's three formative "races" but is not synonymous with it, both because color designation is informed by class standing, level of education, etc and because the color boundaries within this "new" Brazilian race are less rigid than those of the three original races.

The dilemma which the campaign faced was how to get Brazilians to self-select a "darker" color. They chose the route of "racial" origins, meaning "African" or "Black", (the two are used interchangeably) as the basis. Yet they were still confronted and constrained by both the dominant discursive construction of "African" identity and the simultaneous devaluation of it. In

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[12] Oracy Nogueira, Tanto Preto Quanto Branco: Estudos de Relacoes Raciais (Sao Paulo: T.A. Queiroz, 1985). This book is a collection of previously published essays.

other words, given their strategy, campaign organizers were left with the option of either celebrating and affirming things "African" on the terms set by Brazilian intellectuals or of rejecting them. They chose the former. And therein lies part of the problem. In the end, however much one embraces or rejects his/her African origins, one is still left with leading a "black" or "brown" life in Brazil. And at the present, these lives are mostly circumscribed politically, impoverished materially and degraded symbolically.

Brazilian Popular Representations of "Blackness", "Brownness" and "Whiteness"

A recent New York Times article reported a "Freedom" train ride to the Brazilian northeastern state of Alagoas to commemorate the death of Zumbi, the king of the maroon society of Palmares.[13] Palmares, established by runaway slaves in the early seventeenth century, was presided over by Zumbi until its defeat in 1694 and his capture by the Portuguese in 1695. Despite the three centuries which separate Zumbi's life from those of contemporary Brazilian black activists, he is still aggressively claimed as a fallen hero, whose life bears some meaning in and to contemporary Brazil. At the very least, the persistent resuscitation of Zumbi both points up the paucity of contemporary black heroes in Brazil and explains the inability of the black movement to devise compelling symbols with which their presumed constituency can identify. As one scholar of the black movement has argued, the movement's

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13 James Brooke, "From Brazil's Misty Past, a Black Hero Emerges", *New York Times* , 30 November 1994, sec.A, p.4.

excessive reliance on cultural and historical symbols has severely impaired its organizing capabilities.[14]

For my purposes, what is most important about the endless appeals to Zumbi and to a romanticized (and monolithic) African ethnic identity is the extent to which such appeals are capable of counteracting the mostly negative imagery of "blacks" and "mesticos" in Brazilian mass media (T.V. shows, commercials, movies) and in school textbooks. Of course, Zumbi is embraced precisely because he represents an authentically "African" or "Black" identity, one which predates and is out of reach of an assimilative national narrative. That is, Zumbi resisted slavery and had no desire to live under or among "whites". He, in short, represents the "black" race and not the color "black" or "brown" which bear particular meanings within the idea of the "new" and ever whiter Brazilian race.

What, then, are the popular images of "whites", "blacks", and "browns"? Predictably, they are images which put whites in both superordinate and desirable positions and blacks and browns in subordinate and demeaning ones. That black and darkness are viewed negatively in Brazil is not news. As we have seen, scholars have been documenting profoundly racist attitudes and perceptions even as they touted Brazil as a racial democracy. What is news then is not only the endurance of the image of Brazil as somehow less racist, or worst, non-racial, but the presumption,in turn, that Brazilians don't

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[14] M. Hanchard, Orpheus and Power.

identify as "blacks" because there is no racism or because they don't know that they are "black". To the contrary, Brazilians do not identify as "black" mostly because it defies reason to do so. Given the overwhelming negative associations with black and the choice of colors available within an overarching national identity, why would one? Watching Brazilian television shows, commercial, movies or reading school textbooks, as we will see, do not provide good enough reason.

As authors of a recent study of Brazilian T.V. commercials have observed, "When one watches television in Brazil, it appears that the characters are from Scandinavia, with the exception of the help who are generally descendants of Africans."[15] In fact, the ubiquity of blonds on Brazilian television is due to the multiple ways in which "whiteness" and even more specifically "blondness" signifies goodness and health. In a Sunday newspaper article about talent scouts for advertising agencies and the types of people who whom they search, the author wrote: "All producers must have in their little telephone books an endless gallery of stereotypes - a fat woman for a food commercial, a slim comic, an elderly man for the role of grandfather, *a blond*

15 Federico A. Subervi-Velez and Omar Souki Oliveira, "Negros (e outras etnias) em comerciais da televisao brasileira: uma investigacao exploratoria", Comunicacao e Sociedade: Revista Semestral de Estudos de Comunicacao, 17 (August 1991):79-101.

child as a symbol of health , a dwarf for a humorous scene." (Italics mine).[16]

After watching 59.5 hours of television on Brazil's most popular channels and viewing 1500 commercials (including repeats), Subervi-Valez and Oliveira found that blacks, Indians, and Asians infrequently appeared in commercials: 47 appearances. And when they did they did appear they were not speaking. In fact, in only nine of the forty-seven appearances did non-whites have a speaking role for at least *one line.* For example, in a commercial celebrating the 100th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, two famous black actors, Grande Otelo and Watusi, say only "We're Free?", in an apparent questioning of the socio-economic status of blacks in contemporary Brazil.[17] Most frequently, however, blacks, as well as Asians and Indians surface in ancillary roles.

This study's findings confirm both other scholarly and journalistic assessments of Brazilian television. In general, then, blacks, when they are seen on television, appear as supporting characters - -maids and obedient service staff. They are also frequently associated with exotic themes and extravagant and often spooky religious practices. The main reason given for

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16 "Cacadores de talentos", *Jornal do Brasil* , Sunday Magazine*Domingo* , 22 July 1990, p.14. When reading this sentence, I was struck by its casual and matter-of-factly sentiment, suggesting that these stereotypes make perfect sense. This article does not acknowledge that these stereotypes while effective in selling products may also be problematic and offensive.

17 Federico A. Subervi-Valez and Omar Souke Oliveira, p.91.

the paucity of black persons in major roles is one of viewer preference. According to T.V. producers, blacks as principal characters not only do not attract large viewing audiences but that viewers react negatively to shows with such characters. The reason for the limited and stereotypical images of blacks, though rarely explicitly stated, is due to the vast cultural reservoir that assigns black its multi-dimensional negative meanings. Watching Brazilian cinema is more of the same, as least as far black characters are concerned.[18]

Perhaps predictably, Brazilian school textbooks do not serve as correctives for these demeaning characterizations but act rather as the producers and disseminators of them. Numerous studies of instructional texts tell the same and by now familiar story: "whiteness" is positively valued and "blackness" and "brownness" are not.[19] What is somewhat surprising however is this story's pervasiveness. It appears in historical accounts and in fictional narratives, in words and in pictures. For however long a child's tenure in the Brazilian school systems, s/he receives repeatedly the same unambiguous message about the values of Brazil's colors and of the contributions of each of the founding "races". Reinforced subtly also is the specter of disappearing blacks and then mesticos.

For example, a study of the contents of 48 first grade textbooks were

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18 Joao Carlos Rodrigues, O Negro Brasileiro e O Cinema, (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Globo: Fundacao do Cinema Brasileiro, 1988).

19 In this section, the terms "black" and "*mestico* " will be used as they are the terms used by the authors of these studies.

analyzed to assess the importance attributed to each character as conveyed in written texts and in pictures.[20] In all, 1,378 illustrated characters and 4,449 written characters were analyzed. In the texts' illustrations, whites were always positions of authority and privilege in relations to the black and brown characters, and they appeared far more frequently in all illustrations. While white characters, for example, were involved in 36 types of occupations, blacks were involved in 9 and mesticos in 5. In group pictures, blacks and mesticos are marginal. Further, mestico but especially black characters are portrayed with grossly exaggerated and distorted facial features.

The words of the texts further convey the marginality and subordinate status of non-whites. White characters appear much more frequently, and when no color is mentioned, it is assumed that the character is white, since white is the universal standard. The vast majority of historical figures are white while blacks, when discussed, appear as folkloric characters or as slaves. Students meet mesticos through biographical narratives of famous writers and politicians; as important but ultimately historical figures. Further, white characters are presented as individuals, introduced to students through their names. Black and mestico characters, conversely, are introduced through their color. To round out this picture, white characters generally live

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20 Regina Pahim Pinto, "A Representacao do negro em Livros Didaticos de de Leitura, Cadernos de Pesquisa: Sao Paulo. 63 (1987), pp.88-92. These books were taken from lists published annually by the Secretary of Education for the State of Sao Paulo between the years 1941 to 1975.

throughout a story, whereas the black and mestico characters die somewhere in the narrative.

In 1991 the Rio de Janeiro State Secretary of the Defense and Promotion of Black Populations (SEDEPRON) and the Institute of Afro-Brazilian Studies and Research (IPEAFRO) analyzed elementary and middle-school textbooks in order both to suggest changes and to integrate Afro-Brazilian themes and culture.[21] Importantly, this group's work went beyond analyzing the text to both explicating their objections to the text and communicating suggestions to the texts' publishers themselves. Perhaps one of the most egregious examples offered in the report come from a small textbook entitled **The Dream of Talita**. Fortunately, after an open letter from (campaign organizer) Father David Raimundo dos Santos, the text was eventually modified. Before the revisions, however, the book contained a series of scenarios which feature one disobedient young black girl character who is both ridiculed and castigated. In one scene, for example, a group of young girls, all white with the exception of Diva, the black girl, are going to the beach. The rhyme accompanying the picture says: "On Saturday, all went to Copacabana. All went in the father's car. Mauro, Nara, Vera and Diva were taken. They drank Coca-Cola from the bottle. How beautiful the sea is! And the colorful [beach] stalls! They all laughed at Diva's face." In the picture, Diva, like the other

21 SEDEPRON and IPEAFRO. A Africa na Escola Brasileira, (Rio de Janeiro: Gabinete do Senador Abdias do Nascimento, 1991).

girls, is simply smiling. Apparently, her face is something to be laughed at.

The idea that Brazilians are both the product of mixture between three formative races and are, at the same time, becoming whiter is powerfully reinforced in the textbooks analyzed by SEDEPRON. For example, the textbook entitled: **Let's Get to Know Brazil: Social, Scientific and Health Studies** , Brazil's ethnic composition is described as the result of the mixture of the white, the black and the Indian. It also goes on to state that:

> The majority of Brazilians have the color white because they are descendants of Europeans: primarily Portuguese people but later Italian, Spanish, German, Slavic-Polish, Lithuanian, Russian, Lebanonese and others. Appearing in less quantity are the blacks, who are descended from those taken from Africa in times past.

There is no recognition of different national and cultural differences among the "blacks". The "blacks" simply come from Africa. In another textbook, **Passage through the World,** the contributions of each of the founding races are spelled out. Unsurprisingly, the contributions of Indians are limited to a few words and musical instruments. However, they are attributed to have given to Brazil "the sentiment of love for liberty and the relaxed manner of the Brazilian man". Blacks, in turn, also made contributions to Brazilian food, music, language, dress (i.e. they introduced "flip-flop" sandals), and religion. They, unlike the Indian, were accustomed to hard work and could endure the demands of slavery. The most important material and spiritual contributions,"too numerous to enumerate", are assigned to the Portuguese.

From this evidence in tandem with IBGE census interpretations, we can only conclude then that race and color categories are powerful signifiers and carry great discursive weight. We can also conclude given the black movement's difficulties in organizing that these difficulties , in significant measure, are due to what "black" means in Brazil. Recent surveys of youths' attitudes towards people of different skin colors demonstrate that these young people have learned their lessons well.[22] When students were shown photos of black and white people, invariably positive attributes were assigned to whites and negative to blacks.[23] For example, 81.4% assigned intelligence to whites while 82.1% assigned stupidity to blacks. 95% associated whites with beauty while 90.3% associated blacks with ugliness. Further, recent ethnographic work (much of which is driven to invalidate the move among certain scholars towards bi-color classification) has shown that even with the relative plasticity of and context-specific nature of the use of color terms, black

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22 Vera Moreira Figueira, "O preconceito racial na escola", Estudos Afro-Asiaticos 18 (May 1990): 63-72.

23 The color categorization of the students into "black", "brown" or "white" was based on the author's assessments which, in turn, were based upon "common sense", and visual inspection with attention paid to "skin tone" and "hair type." The research consisted of an individual interview in which students were shown various monochrome photographs of anonymous black and white people. These photos showed not only the person's face but accessories such as earrings, bows, ties, etc, which were intended to convey social and economic position.

is still "bad" and lowly valued.[24]

This work has also shown that the informants steadily deny either that they are prejudiced or that color matters even as they describe themselves and others in terms of color, because, as they see it, they are simply offering descriptions, not evaluations.The black movement, then, has tried to mobilize Brazilians as blacks by both defining and assigning positive meanings to black as a "race" and not a color. The black race, then, is comprised of "Africans and their descendants", broadly defined. The census campaign's job, as organizers saw it, was simply to get Brazilians to acknowledge their roots so that they could be counted. Yet as will be analyzed in the following section, who gets counted as what is not easily discerned.

The Census Campaign: A form of "outing"?

In my view, the census campaign's urging of Brazilians to select a darker color and the U.S. gay/lesbian movement's tactic of "outing" closeted homosexuals reveals starkly the politics of identity construction. In Brazil and the United States, blackness and homosexuality are highly stigmatized identities, ones which are not easily assumed or embraced. The Brazilian black and U.S. gay/lesbian movements have attempted to destigmatize these identities in hopes of advancing an agenda based upon them. Yet, how these

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[24] Moema do Poli T. Pacheco, "A Questao da Cor nas Relacoes de um Grupo de Baixa Renda", Estudos Afro-Asiaticos 14 (1987): 85-97.

identities are defined often provide powerful constraints to organizing. In both instances, scientific authority has weighed heavily in definitions which have been both delimiting and stigmatizing. And yet it is appeals to nature, if not science, on which these movements rely. In the end, they both attempt to recast the boundaries of group membership in ways which set the stage for demands of obligation, allegiance and accountability to a group identity.

How successful they are in exacting such demands depends, in significant measure, on the broader political context in which the movements operate. That the Brazilian black movement chose a campaign around a census appears reasonable within a society in which there is no institutional recognition of distinct racial identities. That the campaign's tone was plaintive rather than demanding reflects both the fluidity of racial categorization in Brazil and the inability of the black movement to provide or press for material and symbolic incentives to check "black". In contrast, the U.S. gay/lesbian movement has modeled itself on ethnic and race based movements and has thus positioned itself to demand civil rights protections within institutional arrangements which recognize and structure such claims. That "outing" is both a punitive and disempowering act against the person "outed" reflects both the perceived stakes in securing group membership and in advancing a gay/lesbian political agenda just as U.S. racial and ethnic groups do.

However, before allegiance and obligation can be demanded of a group

member, the group must be established. What constitutes the "group", and the consequent "rules" of group membership remain the sticking point. As I will examine, both movements provide definitions which naturalize group identity and in so doing attempt to bypass the politics of group membership itself. That is, appeals to nature are intended not only to supersede other identities (i.e. class, gender, religious, etc) but to pre-empt the strategic and normative considerations which inform a potential group member's decision of whether to assert a "gay" or "black" identity, especially on the terms prescribed by the movements. That is, there is the presumption that both "coming out" and "being black" on its face signifies greater "consciousness" and commitment to political activism, and allegiance to the group.

From the viewpoint of group "leadership", then, part of their ability to provide compelling enough reason rests on their ability to issue and make good on demands made on the group's behalf. If "blacks" and "gays" are politically weak and disorganized, leaders are weakened in their attempts to devalue the benefits which the "closet" and "passing into white" provide. "Outing" and "pleading", in this regard, make sense. However, what appear as political and, some would say, moral imperatives to "out" come at a cost. That cost is twofold: first, presumed members are driven further underground as they are either unwilling to abandon their gains or to accept the terms presented by the leadership. Second, that the leadership presumes

membership - a presumption based on a naturalized identity - there is little room left for taking the desires and decisions of purported members into account.

"Outing " first came to the U.S. public's attention in 1990 when Malcolm Forbes was reported to have been a homosexual by **Outweek**, a gay/lesbian weekly magazine.[25] The story was picked up by mainstream media and thus began a furor over the purpose and ethics of outing. While the tactic of "exposure" of homosexuality had in the past been frequently used by heterosexuals as a form of "blackmail", the U.S. Gay and Lesbian movement had now begun to use it as a tactic in advancing a gay/lesbian political agenda. "Outing" refers to the disclosure of a public or famous person as homosexual without the consent or knowledge of that person. The famous people targeted can be placed into two groups. The first group are those persons who in their public and "false" lives as heterosexuals support anti-gay political positions. Persons in this group, then, tend to be politicians and other politically influential public figures. The second group includes famous entertainers and athletes whose celebrity warrants exposure as homosexuals. For the first group, outing is primarily punitive in that it raises the costs of both staying in the closet and advancing anti-gay politics. What it means to be "anti-gay" if one is really homosexual has been broadly defined. Some, for instance, would

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25 Michelangelo Signorile, "The Other Side of Malcolm", **Outweek**, 18 March, 1990, pp.40-45, reprinted in Larry Gross, Contested Closets: The Politics and Ethics of Outing, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

argue that simply being in the closet is anti-gay because it deprives the movement of claimable members. For the second group, outing may be but is not intended primarily to be punitive; rather, it is intended to show how many homosexuals there really are thus challenging the notion of heterosexuality's ubiquity. If, the reasoning goes, Americans (of all sexual orientations) learn that a number of their favorite athletes and entertainers are homosexual, they will be more accepting of homosexuality.

The presumption of and value assigned to heterosexuality versus the aversion to and intolerance of homosexuality renders, in part, "outing" intelligible. Homosexuality, like "blackness" in Brazil, bears profoundly negative meanings, which accounts partly for why they are identities not readily asserted. "Outing", then, constituted a radical break with a heretofore closely observed rule among "homosexuals" or "gays". The rule was one which protected privacy and held individual choice paramount by leaving the decision of whether to come out (or not) to each individual. "Outers" rob certain individuals of that decision by arguing for political and moral imperatives, and by maintaining that the greater evil is homophobia. That is, outers argue that they have the right "to out" for the greater good of the community, and further, that they are only revealing information which is taken as public knowledge among heterosexuals. With whom a heterosexual celebrity lives or is dating routinely fills newspaper and magazine gossip columns. In fact, most such "private" information about heterosexuals

appears mostly as throwaway lines in articles. An American politician cannot hope to get very far in his or her political career without sufficient homage paid to the virtues of a "family" life. The problem, then, according to outers, is not "outing" but the larger environment which refuses to tolerate homosexuality and respect homosexual relationships.

However compelling the justifications, "outing" still rests on shifting ground as it is not always clear who homosexuals are and whether they are all "gay." Finding a satisfactory answer to the second question appears much easier than finding one to the first. "Gay" is a political identity as much as a sexual identity.. Proclaiming oneself as "gay", then, extends far beyond identifying one's sexual preference. It signals adherence to a political and cultural agenda which closely resembles those of other "minority" groups: equal treatment under the law and the perpetuation/ legitimation of a distinct "gay" culture. For proponents of outing, the terms "gay" and "homosexual" are routinely conflated. Gay people are, by definition, "those who engage in frequent, voluntary homosexual conduct, whatever their state of political awareness."[26]

Not all people who identify as homosexuals, consider themselves gay, however. A group of homosexual Republicans, for example, take issue with the term "gay" and the gay movement precisely because of its monopolistic claims to homosexual identity. This group's existence suggests then that the

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[26] Ibid., p.108.

issue is not simply one of "political awareness" but of political orientation. Seeing that gay and homosexual are not synonymous terms still leaves unresolved, however, what being homosexual means. There is, on one level, some consensus among activists, scientists, medical practitioners, and religious persons on a definition of homosexuality. It is sexual relations with a person of the same sex. Beyond that, the consensus ends. How often does one have to engage in such acts to be considered homosexual? Can one, in a lifetime, be both heterosexual and homosexual? Is human sexuality much more fluid than the poles of heterosexuality and homosexuality would lead us to believe? Is homosexuality normal or abnormal? Is it the result of genetic predisposition or is it a matter of choice? These are all questions which repeatedly appear in contemporary discussions about homosexuality.

We return then to the expansive definition offered by gay activists to compare how it is constructed with the black identity offered by Brazilian black activists. Because of one's sexual activities, one is gay, whether one identifies as such or not. Nature, if not science, provides the basis of this claim because one is connected politically to others who engage in similar activities in ways that both extend beyond stigmatization and that seemingly do not require explanation.[27] A gay person awakens into a gay

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[27] Gay activists diverge on whether all of their political capital should be invested in the idea that homosexuality is genetically encoded. Recently, two researchers claimed to have discovered a homosexual gene. For those activists who want to further the claim that homosexuality is just like other purportedly ascribed characteristics such as race and gender, science's

consciousness. "Outing" simply hurries the process along so that the "true" numbers can be revealed. Numbers, in turn, underscore the legitimacy and announce the arrival of a new political force. What precisely constitutes a gay agenda is somehow bound up in the identity itself.

Likewise, an identity based on African origins is intended to be just as expansive and natural as "gay" because such origins are cast as the most salient of all "origins" from which one, in turn, asserts a "black" identity. The campaign too was an effort to speed up identification in a way which attempted to bypass the "political awareness" of its purported constituency. This is not to suggest, however, that activists are unaware of the internal tensions (both individual and collective) which outing and the campaign reveal. On the contrary, "outing"and the campaign seek to address these very tensions by offering "master" identities, and in so doing, building potent political forces.

It follows that if African origins are the basis for identifying a person as black in Brazil, the vast majority of people could be so categorized. Whether they identify as black and what that means are attendant and for black activists, uncomfortable questions. What does it mean to define and count

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validation would be quite useful. For two divergent views about the homosexual gene, see Ruth Hubbard, "False Genetic Markers" and Chandler Burr, "Genes vs. Hormones", *New York Times* , 2 August 1993, Op-Ed page.

people as part of a black constituency when they do not identify as such?[28] As we have seen, science has not helped but rather has been instrumental in obscuring race as an ideological construct, especially within science.

In contrast, science has been recently marshalled to determine definitively whether homosexuality is a matter of nature or nurture. At stake is the political efficacy of claims to equal protection as granted to other minority groups. If homosexuality is found to be genetically encoded, it would appear that these claims to equal protection would be greatly strengthened. Homosexuality, then, like other ascribed characteristics such as "race" and "gender" could be granted civil rights protections. It might also lower the voices of those who rant that homosexuality is simply an immoral personal choice, for which persons eventually pay dearly. The rush to embrace science, however, has not been unanimously endorsed. For one, it was only very recently that medical and psychiatric associations uncategorized homosexuality as a mental disorder which could be "cured".[29] Further,

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[28] An analogous problem presents itself in the practice of outing people posthumously. What does it mean to say that a dead person was gay? Did he/she live openly and would they recognize him or herself in present-day accounts? As Larry Gross asks, "Are historians the outers of the past or are outers the historians of the present?." I think the latter. Gross, p.126.

[29] "AMA alters its policy on gays, lesbians", *Boston Globe*, 22 December 1994, p.3. This article reports that the AMA (American Medical Association) has decided to reverse its 13 year policy of recommending that "efforts be made to turn unhappy gay men and lesbians into heterosexuals." The article goes on to report that such efforts included "aversion therapy" in which a gay man was shown pictures of nude men and was then electrically shocked or made to vomit.

receiving scientific sanction has hardly been a deterrent against discrimination. In fact, discrimination, oppression and genocide have all been justified by scientific proof of biological inferiority. Biology is not a very safe place and claims to racial difference grounded in biology have more often led to extermination than integration.

Counting or having bodies counted for the purposes of claiming and enlisting them in political battles is neither an uncomplicated nor self-evident process. Determining how successful "outing" and the campaign have been is also not a simple task. A useful place to start however is with the immediate institutional and temporal contexts of these tactics. As mentioned, "outing" first became an issue recognized by the mainstream media in 1991. In fact, the term "outing" was first coined by a Time magazine reporter. While gay and lesbian activists often "outed" supposedly heterosexual public figures, this revealing was the privileged knowledge of other gay people. Heterosexuals, in turn, either used "exposure" of homosexuality as a threat or kept quiet as a courtesy to the person(s) concerned. Outing then signaled a radical departure from past practices. It also made sense within the broader and increasingly confrontational strategies of the gay/lesbian movement. One author has suggested that AIDS and public backlash to AIDS research and by extension to homosexuality itself were perceived as literally deadly threats which required drastic responses.[30]

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[30] L. Gross, Contested Closets.

The gay movement needed bodies - to replace those who were dying and to enlist those who are living. Outing provided the means.

Yet identifying and claiming these bodies hinged upon the willingness of the mainstream press to go along. Outing was only as powerful as its ability to reach the mass public, which in turn, depended upon whether or not mass media perceived it as newsworthy and, if so, for how long. In this sense, outing appeared as fleeting in importance as other events which dominate newspaper headlines and then suddenly disappear. But whereas it is true that headlines often incompletely capture the importance and endurance of a particular issue - issues remain salient far longer than their stay in headlines; outing was an exception. That is, its power rested in revelation which in turn, required both a medium --newspapers/t.v.— and their audiences. The tactic of outing itself needed exposure in order to expose.

The institutional context in which the census campaign operated was one which, we have seen, was especially resistant to meeting the demands of campaign organizers. The Brazilian Statistics Institute neither took seriously the suggestions to change the question and/or the categories nor to sensitize census enumerators through training to the "race issue" in Brazil. Instead, the Statistics Institute welcomed the campaign's efforts in generating interest in the census without conceding to any demands. However, that the black movement commandeered the campaign and viewed it as a proactive tactic in its strategy to nudge its perceived constituency along towards greater self-

realization points up a more permissive political environment. The black movement is one of many social actors within civil society taking advantage of the political liberties which democratization has engendered. Thus, whereas U.S. gay activists perceived an external threat (AIDS and societal indifference and intolerance), Brazilian black activists perceived opportunity. This is not to suggest, however, that a perception of threat was entirely missing from black movement calculations. The need to urge Brazilians to self-select a darker color was driven in part by fear of an ever-diminishing number of "blacks".

Yet while the campaign's place in a larger political strategy of consciousness-raising extended beyond the 1991 census; the census still mattered. The final census results still had to show greater numbers of browns but especially blacks. How accurately the census was or was perceived to have been conducted bears greatly on the numbers produced and on confidence in them. In this regard, the campaign's effectiveness was somewhat undermined. As we know, the 1991 census has inspired little confidence. The irony then may well be that black activists will be able to point to greater numbers of "blacks" but that this claim will carry less weight because of the perceived unreliability of the census.

It is clear then that the efficacy of both "outing" and the campaign were greatly dependent upon the institutional channels through which they were launched: outing, the media and the census campaign, the census. It is also

clear, however, that these sites cannot entirely account for either the effectiveness of these tactics or strength of the movements. Part of their effectiveness and strength rests in the larger political and discursive contexts where the identities are constituted. And these contexts are not quite as timebound to the particular political and social developments in early 1990s American and Brazilian societies. In the U.S., "gay" identity is not as plastic as racial identity in Brazil nor are material and political benefits of collective action as hard to identify. That is, boundaries of group membership are more sharply delineated and the potential benefits of claiming minority group status are identifiable if not compelling incentives under U.S. civil rights legislation. The gay movement then can, through outing, increase the penalty of staying in the closet by contrasting it to the potential benefits of an open life; the achievement of which is dependent upon people coming out. Even still, the closet retains its powerful pull.

In contrast, the discursive construction of racial identity in Brazil is one of an all encompassing national identity which not only questions the propriety of racial identities other than "Brazilian" but which supersedes their existence. Further, within this national identity are different colors which are clearly ranked yet neither rigidly nor arbitrarily applied and assumed. Passing into "white", then, like "passing into black" is, on one level, a matter of choice. And most Brazilians choose "light" rather than "dark". The census campaign's attempt to constrain these choices manifests itself in appeals, not

penalties. Black activists, unlike gay activists, cannot exact penalties whatever for non-compliance with or betrayal of group interests since there is even less understanding of what precisely the group is. And even if blacks, as defined by black activists, were to unify, what would the benefits be? The Brazilian state has not and does not recognize racial claims because it does not recognize distinct racial identities. The absence of de jure racial discrimination and segregation has largely displaced the Brazilian state as a channel for racial demands. The demands for compensatory action for past discrimination are usually met with the twin claims that racial discrimination, if it exists, is not as salient as class subordination, and that, in any event, who would constitute the protected class? Brazilians, after all, are simply Brazilians. Black activists then are left, to borrow an old adage, all dressed up with nowhere to go.

Conclusion

There is a place, however, where black activists might go. And as suggested at the outset, it is not towards claims reinvesting "race", in this case the "black race", with authority but towards organizing around the claim of subordination. In other words, many Brazilians are discriminated against and demeaned because of how they look. While part of this discriminatory treatment is clearly rooted in how ancestries have been constructed and valued; effectively challenging subordination lies in constructing a more inclusive Brazilian identity. An identity which neither privileges or equates

"Brazilianness" with "whiteness" or which degrades and devalues physical human differences. In short, Brazil's racialized national identity must be dismantled.

For Brazilian black activists, organizing strategies have focused on recuperating a disparaged African identity in hopes that if Brazilians feel more positively about their "ethnic"(African) origins, they will assume a black identity. While it makes sense to me to correct long-standing racist views and to attempt to appreciate the complexity of African experiences (something black activists are less successful at), it is still unclear to me how "race" is confronted. That is, even if Brazilians tomorrow came to love Africa or all things African (as many already profess to do), what would change in Brazil for those categorized as black and brown? Would they be discriminated against less? Would darker skinned Brazilians be any more willing to assert "black" identities? I think not. Being "African", or of African descent and being black in Brazil (or America, for that matter) are discrete, although not entirely disconnected, identities and experiences. The issue, then, is not Africa; it is rather the ideological construct of race and how it functions in Brazil.

Joel Rufino dos Santos, author and activist, has observed that historically "race, in the biological sense, has not been a catalyst of Brazil's black

movement", instead it has relied upon a notion of black cultures.[31] How these cultures are constituted is never explicitly stated. The census campaign suggests a rupture with this past practice in that "ethnic origins" and the more frequent use of the term black race (*raca negra*) both point to a notion of blood, of biology. Rufino himself, however, offers a multi-dimensional definition of black which focuses on social condition and social perceptions. Black in Brazil is associated with poverty and misery; being perceived as a black person in Brazil is a stigmatizing and stigmatized existence. Rufino's observations resonate with those of W.E.B. Dubois who wrote in Dusk of Dawn (1940), ". . .the black man is a person who must ride 'Jim Crow' in Georgia".[32] Returning to the U.S., by way of this quotation, raises again the question of the utility of comparing U.S. and Brazilian racial politics. In the following and concluding chapter, I will show, through an analysis of the brewing controversy over a "multi-ethnic" category for the year 2000 U.S. census, that Brazil and the U.S. appear each to be a reflection of the other.

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31 Joel Rufino dos Santos, "O Movimento Negro e A Crise Brasileira," unpublished paper, January 1985.

32 W.E.B. Dubois: Writings: The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade; The Souls of Black Folk, Dusk of Dawn, Essays and Articles, (New York:The Library of America, 1986), p.666

Chapter 6: (Mis)-Measuring a Racial and Ethnic World

Censuses are today hot political targets. They are vigorously contested because of the political claims that are staked upon them. They are targets because they are considered indispensable instruments of effective governance. From the former Soviet Union to Macedonia, Canada, India, Nigeria, Lebanon, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Brazil, and the United States, censuses serve as lightening rods for debates about (or over) national identity and group identities: who's who, how many are there, and what methods are employed to determine. This is not to suggest that censuses are only now a source of contention; given the intrinsically political nature of census-taking, they have historically occupied a central, if often overlooked, role in political battles. However, the explosion of ethnic conflict worldwide only portends more of such contention, not less as groups seek to garner the power and legitimacy which census statistics lend to their claims. This chapter begins with an analysis of the current attempts to include a "multi-racial" category on the U.S. census. It contrasts such attempts with the Brazilian census campaign. It concludes with a general discussion of the future of the politics of race and of censuses.

Towards a "Multi-Racial" U.S.?, Towards a "Blacker" Brazil?

In a recent article, Thomas Skidmore asked whether the contrast between

"bi-racial" America and "multi-racial" Brazil is still valid.[1] Even earlier, Carl Degler predicted that the nature of "race relations" in the two countries would converge wherein the U.S. would become less racially divided and Brazil more so.[2] My point in this work has been to advance both a reconceptualization of race and to offer a way of reinterpreting much of the comparative (esp. U.S. - Brazil) race relations literature. From my perspective, then, the validity of the "bi-racial" - "multi-racial" dichotomy is not clear, premised as it is on the idea of natural races and race mixture. While it is true that in the U.S. and Brazil, racial identifications were and are assigned differently, with different political consequences, race itself as an ideological category lies at the core of discursive and institutional practices in both countries.

Nonetheless, the current debates in the U.S. over the inclusion of the "multi-racial" category and the Brazilian census campaign appears to bear both Skidmore and Degler out. My purpose in contrasting the U.S. census debates with those of Brazil and the census campaign, however, is to make another point. My point is that the issues of census race categories, both in the U.S. and Brazil, make plain the enduring power of race in defining human differences and informing attendant political claims. The census debates

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1 Thomas E. Skidmore, "Bi-racial U.S.A. / Multi-racial Brazil: Is the Contrast Still Valid,?" Journal of Latin American Studies, 25 (1993), pp.373-386.

2 Carl N. Degler, Neither Black nor White, (New York: MacMillan, 1971).

point up the increasingly visible role of census bureaus both in reinscribing race and in advancing or undermining political agendas.

Testifying in 1993 before the U.S. Subcommittee on Census, Statistics and Postal Personnel in its review of federal measurements of race and ethnicity, proponents for a "multi-racial" census category argued that it will capture and more accurately reflect America's racial and ethnic reality than categories do presently. According to Carlos Fernandez, President of the Association of Multi-Ethnic Americans (AMEA), filling out census schedules is a painful task because of the lack of appropriate categories. Proper official categorization, then, is his "community's" most pressing issue. In his words:

> The issue of racial ethnic classifications on government-regulated forms is the most immediate tangible concern of most members of our community. Each and every time we confront one of these forms, we are faced yet again with the awkward, irrational and for many of us offensive task of selecting a race or ethnicity which does not truthfully identify us and thus has the further result of failing to count our community.[3]

This "community" is made up of people who have various ethnic origins and/or racial mixtures and yet must choose one. (The distinctions between race and ethnicity are not clearly identified). It is also a growing community, according to proponents, in need of greater voice and official recognition.

Failure, then, to recognize the ways in which persons of multi-ethnic

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[3] U.S. House Subcommittee on Census, Statistics and Postal Personnel, Review of Federal Measurements of Race and Ethnicity, 103 Cong., 1st sess.,1993, 125.

and/or multi-racial origins do not fit within existing boxes will result in discrimination against such persons. "Omission" according to Susan Graham, Executive Director of Project RACE, "is a form of discrimination".[4] Specifically, what needs to be changed is Federal Directive #15 of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) which since 1977 has defined ethnic and racial classifications for all government agencies. Added to the list of races and ethnic categories, should Project RACE and AMEA get their way, would be "multi-racial". Multi-racial is defined as "a person whose parents have origins in two or more of the [existing] racial and ethnic categories." The existing racial categories are American Indian or Alaskan native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, and White; the existing ethnic category is Hispanic. Hispanic is an ethnic category because, according to the Federal Government, there are both "white" and "black" hispanics.

In response to congressional concerns that "multi-racial" is too broad a category and that for the purposes of social policy formulation greater specific knowledge about the "origins" is needed, Project RACE proposes that multi-racial people identify their multi origins from the pre-existing categories. However, this scrutiny beyond "multi-racial" should be required only if the Federal agency requesting such information " . . .can demonstrate a reasonable necessity for civil rights compliance reporting, general program

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4 Ibid., p.107.

administrative and grant reporting or statistical reporting."[5]

The census, then, is the channel by which official recognition is achieved and the social but especially biological "fact" of multi-origins is legitimated and registered. As in the Brazilian census campaign, the census is identified not simply as a register of social (and biological) identifications, but as a producer of them. Presumably, if the multi-racial category was added, a new constituency would be in place to advance claims and press demands as an oppressed minority. As Susan Graham concluded her testimony, "In 1963 Martin Luther King said, 'Now is the time to make justice a reality for all God's children.' I believe Dr. King was speaking 30 years ago for Multi-racial children, too. With your help, their time has finally come."[6]

These overtures to oppressed minority status as well as the apparent refusal to take seriously the political ramifications of this category for civil rights enforcement have met resistance.[7] Unsurprisingly, Civil Rights Organizations - i.e. the Urban League, National Coalition for an Accurate Count of Asians and Pacific Islanders, National Council of La Raza, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund - have all urged caution in the adoption of the multi-racial category. Their chief objection to such a category

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[5] Ibid., p.114.

[6] Ibid., p.110.

[7] Lawrence Wright, "One Drop of Blood," *The New Yorker*, 25 July 1994, pp. 46-55.

is its expansiveness and thus its ability to siphon off persons who now are forced to check existing categories. At stake, of course, is not only the efficacy but conceptual coherence of a whole body of social legislation-- civil rights protections, affirmative action policies, and social welfare policies and initiatives as well. All of it rests on a consensus as to who constitutes a protected class and on the size of such a class. "Asians", "Latinos", but especially it is argued, "blacks" stand to be big losers. As Professor Ibrahim K. Sundiata of Brandeis University stated on a weekly public affairs program on Black Entertainment Television, the multi-racial category may be understood as an effort to "disaggregate" blacks and by extension, dilute their political power. [8]

Of course, an element of organizational self-preservation motivates these objections. Yet there are substantive problems with the multi-racial position; problems which stem first from the presumption of race "as blood", and second from its attendant ahistoricism. For multi-racial proponents, there are people who have mixed "blood" and "origins". Yet apparently, according to Susan Graham, these people have only been around since the late 1970s: "Congress", she testified, "was not thinking in 1964 [year of the Civil Rights Act] about multiracial persons, but now we are thinking about them, and yet today they are still being omitted. Even in 1978 when OMB Directive 15 was

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8 Ibrahim K. Sundiata. Interview by Beverly Smith. Our Voices. Black Entertainment Television (BET), 4 December 1994.

put into place, the multi-racial numbers were small. The multiracial population is growing and its needs must be met."[9] Apparently, the AMEA considers most Americans to be members of "pure racial" groups as the AMEA has identified their target membership and potential multi-racial respondents to be of a "first" generation beginning now.[10] Multi-racial proponents do not mention the employment of the "mulatto" category on earlier U.S. censuses.

The temporal limits on to whom this new category would apply reveals, according to opponents, the real motivation behind this movement: an "escape from blackness".[11] This movement, opponents charge, is neither a benign attempt to simply register "multiple origins" nor unmindful of its political ramifications. Whether explicitly identified with anti- Civil Rights or more precisely anti-black causes, this movement both bolsters that position and actively seeks to distance itself from "black" causes.

From my viewpoint, however, the principal problem with the multi-racial position is that it reifies race. What in the end constitutes a multi-racial

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[9] House Sub-Committee, Review of Federal Measurements, p. 107.

[10] Edwin Darden, Vice-President of Association of Multi-Ethnic Americans. Interview by Beverly Smith. Our Voices. Black Entertainment Television, 4 December 1994.

[11] This phrase is borrowed from the title of a recent newspaper article which discussed the politics of "Creole America." See Joe Wood, "Escape from Blackness: Once upon a time in Creole America," *The Village Voice*, 6 December 1994, p.25.

identity? At bottom, lurks the assumption that there are "pure origins" which not only exist in the world but which have been accurately captured on census forms. They do not simply argue, for example, that within the U.S.'s constructed racial and/or ethnic categories, a "new" constructed category has emerged that is in need of recognition. They argue instead that there are "new people" who are united by their "mixture" and their shared experience of being "mixed", of being outsiders in a pure racial America.

The temporal limits on who is a "new" person belie, in my view, the apolitical posture assumed by multi-racial proponents. That is, the "new" people seek to explode the "one drop rule of blackness", not by confronting race, but reinscribing it as they attempt to escape from the rule. Yet, it is a reinscription on a political terrain which appears more flexible in how racial identities are constructed, on the one hand while remaining anchored in America's racial hierarchy, on the other.

How this racial hierarchy structures these efforts is most sharply revealed in to whom "multi-ethnic" and "multi-racial" appeals are directed. There is no entertaining of the thought that those persons with "white"-and "non-white" parentage or origins declare themselves "white". White, after all, is a "pure" category. Nor is there an attempt to enlist the support of "multi-ethnic" whites. Such "whites", in turn, do not appear concerned. No such group has testified before the Sub-committee, for example. Presumably, those "whites" who are interested in registering their multi-origins may do so by

answering the "ancestry" question on census forms. This question was designed to better discern the ethnic origins of American whites. Nor do "multi" proponents reach out to "Hispanics", many of whom consider themselves "multi-racial". Within the current U.S. racial hierarchy "Hispanics" form a new "third" race; "multi-" proponents apparently view "Hispanics" as such. In the end, the multi-racial landscape is peopled by "non-whites".

The main (although not only) proponents are persons of "white" and "non-white" "heritages" who think it unfair that they cannot accept both but must choose their "non-white" heritage. However, the solution offered is not a radical departure from or questioning of race, but rather a new formula. That is, the "one drop" rule can make one "multi-racial" and not only "black". Moreover, "oppression" is rooted not in categorization itself but is perpetuated by those persons who identify as "black" and won't let multi-racial people go. Submitted as part of the Congressional Sub-committee's written record were letters from persons who stated explicitly that the calls for this new category should not be read as an attempt to deny "black" roots. In an odd twist, then, "blacks", and not "the purity of whiteness" or "race" itself, are identified as the source of the problem.

Project RACE's and AMEA's insistence that a multi-racial category be included on census forms in order to both legitimate the "multi-racial" identity and grant it political, if not social, purchase is analogous to the

Brazilian census campaign. The campaign wanted the census to reflect accurately the existence of blacks, and to identify the census as the channel through which racial identities are clearly delimited. Yet, whereas in Brazil, campaign organizers admitted openly the campaign's political purpose, multi-racial proponents feign political disengagement and ignorance of political consequences. This difference leads also to the contrasting consequences of these two efforts: in the U.S., the (further) dismantling of race-targeted social policies and in Brazil, the development of them. That is, if the multi-racial category were adopted, it would be (arguably) a decisive step in the dismantling of civil rights legislation, most notably, affirmative action. Not only would the notion of a "protected" class be further thrown into doubt, but the ability of black civil rights organizations to advocate effectively on behalf of a potentially dwindling constituency would further undermine such policies.

This type of problem— the indeterminacy of group identity — is what the campaign sought to address. As we know, the campaign's point was to create and then strengthen group boundaries in order to press political claims, claims which would include specific race/color based positive remedies for past and current discrimination. For example, a small group of black movement activists along with Brazilian trade unionists, lawyers and feminist activists are working to bring international measures of non-

discrimination and affirmative action policies to bear in Brazil.[12] In 1996, the President of one of Brazil's two largest labor organizations (CUT), Vincente de Souza, and the Center for the Study of Labor Relations and Inequality (CEERT) in Sao Paulo convened a meeting with representatives from the AFL-CIO, and the A. Phillip Randolph Foundation.[13] The purpose of this meeting was to discuss ways in which Brazilian trade unions especially could confront racial discrimination more effectively in the workplace and advocate for society-wide anti-discrimination policies. The next and related step, no doubt, will be the development of compensatory and redistributive policies. Knowing who will be members of a new protected class is fundamental. Brazilian censuses will figure prominently in these upcoming, if currently tentative, debates.

As stated earlier, the larger political terrain in the U.S. appears seemingly more accommodating of "new" racial identities. Yet it is also a landscape where "blackness" continues to bear profoundly negative meanings and consequences (the Civil Rights movement notwithstanding). Consider the current political equation of crime, welfare dependency, drug abuse, declining educational standards, the erosion of moral and family values with "blacks". Given a context in which much that is wrong with America is

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[12] Rebecca Reichmann, "Equal Opportunity and Identity Politics: Race, Gender and Denial in Brazil," forthcoming in NACLA: Report on the Americas, p.16.

[13] Ibid., p. 16.

associated with blacks and in which a consensus crumbles on what constitutes "racial" identity, it is no wonder that a "multi-racial" category has emerged. [14] This new category then should be read as a distinctly post-Civil Rights phenomenon. Why anyone would want to be "black" is a question just as appropriately posed in the 1990's United States as it is in Brazil. And, as in Brazil, when given a choice, persons often exit. To borrow from Carl Degler, an "escape hatch" may be opening in the U.S. as Brazil's seems to close.

The closing of an "escape hatch" in Brazil should not overstated, however. In fact, it is not really closing an "escape hatch" but constructing a new national identity which is at stake in Brazil. This new identity, following from the census campaign's and black movement's rhetoric, would be a "black" one. Embracing this identity would mean not being trapped in "blackness" but entering "majority" status. Needless to say, replacing Brazil's "whiter" and now "browner" national identity with a black one is easier said than done. The census campaign identified the Brazilian census bureau as a crucial site to begin such reconstruction. Yet, as we know, the IBGE has been mostly, although not wholly, resistant to these attempts. The 1991 census question asked about "color" and not "race" for Brazilians; Indigenous people (presumably those who live on territorial lands and thus outside of the

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[14] Tom Morganthau, "What Color is Black?," *Newsweek* , 13 February 1995, pp. 63- 72.; Irene Sege, "Not black enough? Law Professor Heads to BU after furor at Northwestern over her racial identity," *Boston Globe* , 9 February 1995, p.63.

Brazilian race) were the "race" to which term "race" referred.[15] Further, the color options offered on the census have been the same since 1950. Finally, the IBGE did not make any attempts to have census enumerators or supervisors sensitized to dealing with ambiguities and complexities of race and color in Brazil. At the very least, the changing of the question and of the options would be an important step in advancing the black movement's attempts to construct a new national identity.

On the other hand, the black movement has made noteworthy inroads. Statisticians and technicians within the IBGE's department of social and economic statistics now employ the term *negra* (black) instead of the separate terms of black and brown. Some social scientists (mostly academics) outside of the IBGE have taken to this new convention as well. Yet because certain statisticians and academics use an encompassing black term does not mean that they endorse the idea of a black majority, with its full political implications. That is, while their aggregation of the numbers of "blacks" and "browns" under "black" leads to a numerical "black" majority on paper, what that means in realpolitik is another, although not disconnected, matter. It remains to be seen, then, how they will interpret the numbers and in which direction(s) they will throw their political weight. It is reasonable to predict, however, that their interpretations will be far more restricted in their political

[15] Again, the question asked: What is your color or race? The options were white, black, brown, yellow and indigenous.

implications than those of the black movement. Finally, campaign organizers viewed the campaign as the first step in an ongoing project to have the color question and/or options changed. Ironically, then, even with the Brazilian state's efficacy in shutting down discussion about racial identity, the state census bureau, with its guarantee of a decennial census, emerges as an identifiable site of contestation. Thus, whether or not the color question on the year 2001 census is unaltered, modified or eliminated, the state census bureau will be both an arena and referent of political contestation.

Numbers with a Vengeance

Censuses derive their power from both their knowledge claims: statistics access truth and political imperatives: numbers must be produced. The task becomes finding ways of conducting censuses in spite of the obstacles that politics present. In regards to race and ethnic enumerations especially, the politics that census bureaus confront is generally understood as the negotiating or ignoring of the demands which various racial and ethnic groups press. Substantive issues of what precisely is being measured are frequently left aside. The politics of human identity, especially of race are to be gotten around. They are not seen as built-in to the process itself.

This commitment to truth-seeking appears steadfast even as one of the pillars upon which racial enumeration stakes its method crumbles beneath it. Scientific conceptions of race have once again disclosed profound fissures and

have emerged significantly in popular discussions, in the U.S. at least.[16] This distancing of scientists from "race", however, has been a protracted process. Since World War II, for example, the UN has periodically convened international scientists to urge abandonment of its use. And anthropologists (i.e. Ashley Montagu), historians and historians of science especially have carefully traced race's genealogy and incarnations. Unfortunately, their works have hardly made a dint in either popular, academic or (social) scientific discussion.

There is some reason to suspect, however, that these latest lurches towards abandonment might go further. This reason is found in race's social and political constitution in lived experiences. Thus, a perhaps cynical but not implausible explanation for the current rush to dismantle "race" (in the U.S.) might be to rein in "racial minorities" effective use of it. However, whatever nefarious motivations undergird certain exits from race does not make race anymore defensible. Moreover, one would not want to make too strongly the case that race is on its last legs within (social) scientific communities and/or consequently, has less political purchase. Witness the furor over yet serious engagement of Charles Murray's The Bell Curve. In the case of the U.S. census bureau, it is unclear what type of impact (if any) these current debates

16 "Race: What is it good for?," *Discover Magazine* , November 1994. Special Issue on Race.; David L. Wheeler, "A growing number of Scientists reject the concept of race," *The Chroncile of Higher Education* , 17 February 1995, pp.A8-9, 15.

will have on racial/ethnic enumeration. On the one hand, current debates about racial/ethnic categorization have explicitly focused on policy and political implications. Yet, on the other hand, there has been and continues to be commitment to the idea that "race" or "races" as "biology" exist. This existence is independent of and imperfectly captured by or reflected in census categories. Recall the Organization of Management and Budget's (1977) description of its classifications for statistical (including census) purposes: "they should not be interpreted as being scientific or anthropological in nature. . ." Science "knows" race, even if the OMB does not.

In Brazil, it also remains to be seen whether these most recent scientific debates will influence intellectual elites and IBGE policies as in the past. In certain ways, the IBGE has already discounted science's sway by maintaining that extensive racial mixture in Brazil has rendered scientifically valid measurements impossible. Science itself does not yet have the tools to deal with Brazil. That "race" then might be losing its scientific stamp of approval could provide IBGE technicians and officials several policy options. One option would be the elimination of the color question altogether. Another might be the maintenance of the same question with the insistence that "color" and not "race" would continue to be the measure. In contrast, while the black movement has rarely (if ever) made explicit appeals to science and has spoke in terms of "race" as "culture" and "origins", these new intellectual currents might be harmful to the black movement's rhetorical use of "race".

inasmuch as the term "race" itself is discredited."

In this work, my intention has not been to reject or dismiss census data as useless. In my view, they are useful precisely because they are political products and artifacts. Neither census methods nor census data hover above the context about which they purportedly report. Thus, the politics of censuses and race will remain as long as human beings see themselves as and are treated as members of races or ethnic groups, with interests to protect and advance, and/or benefits to garner.

Accompanying then the ever-strident assertions of racial, ethnic or nationalist identities are the battles over numbers. Claims to majority and minority status; claims of being a "whiter" or "blacker" people; of being a nation of "Serbs" or "Croats" or whomever (fill in the blank), all rely upon, in more or less significant ways, census or some type of statistical data. The political purchase of censuses, I predict, will increase. This will be true even (or especially) when census methods and numbers are called into question, as they frequently are. Social actors use them and prefer that the numbers (however flawed) substantiate their group's claims rather than some other groups'. There is a built-in incentive to take numbers seriously. Finally, scholars and policy - makers have been puzzled and horrified by waves of democratization on one side and virulent ethnic nationalism on the other. My prediction of increased contention over censuses, however, is compatible with these two developments. Censuses, Donald Horowitz observes, often

become "elections" that must be won. To whom majority or minority status will be conferred is "settled" as much by census schedules as by election ballots. As Horowitz pithily states: "So the election is a census, and the census is an election."[17]

As the twentieth century closes, humanity remains self-destructively divided. And Brazil, a country which at this century's beginning offered the world a "solution" to the "race" problem and declared itself a racial democracy ends the century like most of the world's states and peoples mired in the politics of race and censuses.

17 Horowitz, Ethnic Groups in Conflict, p.196

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