

## Introduction

[*Negros* are underrepresented in politics because of] white supremacy. Salvador is a city with a [large] *negro* population in relation to the number of [*negros* in other] cities in Brazil . . . but there is still a sense of supremacy from the white race. They watch and control us. They do not give opportunities to *negro* people to arrive, to get what they have so they try to do the most they can to impede *negro* people from getting more . . .

30-year-old dark-skinned black man in Salvador with a college degree

This book uses an intersectional approach to analyze the impact the experience of race has on Afro-Brazilian political behavior and black and brown Brazilians' race-based vision of the political world in the cities of Salvador, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro. It addresses the importance of focusing on how race-related experiences affect individual and group political behavior among Brazilians. In a country where over half of the population identifies as black (*preto*) or brown (*pardo*), it is crucial to examine Brazilian experiences of race in order to capture and predict Afro-Brazilian political behavior. I use the term Afro-Brazilian in the same way the mainstream Brazilian media uses the racial category *negro*, which includes the census categories "browns" (*pardos*) and "blacks" (*pretos*). The respondent quoted above, explains Afro-Brazilian underrepresentation through a lens of white domination despite living in a majority Afro-Brazilian city. The perspectives of everyday citizens as an explanation of Afro-Brazilian underrepresentation are understudied in scholarship on Brazilian politics. Much contemporary literature on electoral politics ignores the reality that Brazilians do indeed have a racial identification and that individual life experiences are largely influenced, if not determined by, racial identification and/or racial classification. This book relies on a theoretical framework that takes into account the *experience* of race by considering racial-group attachment, or what

Michael Dawson (1994) calls “black-linked fate,” and the experience of racial discrimination. The book seeks to explain Afro-Brazilian political behavior by focusing on support of affirmative action policy, Law 10.639/03 (requiring that African and Afro-Brazilian history be taught in schools), support of the idea that the president should nominate Afro-Brazilians to political positions, and political opinions about black political underrepresentation. Although Brazil is the focus of this book, specifically because of the proliferation of the political and social mobilization of African descendants throughout Latin America in the 1990s, it is an important area of study for scholars, students, and the general public who are interested in the issue of racial politics in Latin America and elsewhere. The mixed-method approach to studying political behavior bridges studies on race and ethnicity across fields. Scholars of identity politics in the fields of sociology, political science, anthropology, and history – and specifically those studying black politics, Latino politics, and Asian politics in the United States – should consider studies on Afro-Brazilians. Brazilian racial politics demonstrate a complex picture of how experiences are shaped based on skin color and physical aesthetics. Some North American political scientists have considered skin color and found that it has an impact on the likeability of political candidates (Hochschild and Weaver 2007; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002). This study’s intersectional approach contributes to growing literature on skin color, politics, and racial group identity.

Brazil is a country stratified by race, class, and gender, among other social categories.<sup>1</sup> One of the goals of the book is to examine how Afro-Brazilians explain political inequality. Although Afro-Brazilians comprise 53 percent of the population (Bianchi and Vilela 2014), they hold less than 10 percent of the seats in the national congress. A study incorporating the experience of race rather than solely considering individual variables of racial or color identification is important because experiences based on race, class, and gender lead people to make certain political choices. It may be argued, however, that choices such as racial identification are rooted in self-interested behavioral decisions. Conversely one may support certain policies that support the group even if one does not individually benefit from such policies.

<sup>1</sup> The 2013 Ethno-Racial Characteristics of the Population Research (*Pesquisa de Características Étnico-Raciais da População*) carried out by the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics finds that 64 percent of Brazilians believe that race or color influences their lives. This study was carried out in São Paulo, Paraíba, Amazonas, Distrito Federal, Rio Grande do Sul, and Mato Grosso. There are differences according to racial identification and location. Nonetheless, this speaks to the significance of race or color in Brazilian society.

A second goal of the book is to consider whether intersectional identities lead to variance in identifying as *negro* and in explaining political inequality. Social categories are not isolated; they intersect. These intersecting identities result in different experiences. Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) notion of "structural intersectionality" is particularly useful when considering the interplay of race, class, and gender in Brazil. Structural intersectionality is concerned with "the ways in which the location of women of color at the intersection of race and gender" make their experiences qualitatively different from those of white women (Crenshaw 1991: 1245). In my analysis I am concerned with how an Afro-Brazilian woman's location at the intersection of race, class, and gender may or may not result in different interpretations of her life experiences and outlook on the political world compared to an Afro-Brazilian man.

Of course, an individual's experience is shaped by the environment in which he or she lives, as well as the structures, institutions, and various discourses of race in any given society. The Brazilian case is unique in that it has experienced authoritarian and democratic political regimes and changing racial discourse. Afro-Brazilians' understanding of their everyday lives and experiences may be interpreted differently because of changes in racial discourse, and those interpretations may be reinterpreted with new changes in discourse.<sup>2</sup> For example an older Afro-Brazilian who lived through a repressive military dictatorship may be more likely to deny racism than a younger Afro-Brazilian born during the 1990s, when black movement discourse of race and racism had more of an influence on public discourse during a democratic era. Scott (1991) believes historians should not simply focus on experience but should historicize experiences and acknowledge that individual experiences exist in relation to others. I believe that throughout Latin America, some Afro-descendants are

<sup>2</sup> Joan Scott's (1991) article, "The Evidence of Experience," is important because she discusses how historians rely too heavily on personal experiences, especially as they relate to difference and may only reify norms if they do not question experience within a historical context. She states, "Making visible the experience of a different group exposes the existence of repressive mechanisms, but not their inner workings or logics; we know that difference exists, but we don't understand it as relationally constituted. For that we need to attend to the historical processes that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences. It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced. To think about experience in this way is to historicize it as well as to historicize the identities it produces" (779–780).

reinterpreting life experiences as racialized subjects who, as marginalized people, are seeking rights based on these identities.

This book is unique because I argue that central to the understanding of Afro-Brazilian political behavior is the consideration of group-based and individual behaviors, along with racial inequality. For example, I can examine if Afro-Brazilians overwhelmingly support certain policies because they believe they are necessary for Afro-Brazilians as a group or if they have individual preferences that will benefit them personally. Another example of individual behavior is one's choice of racial identification. Despite the assumed ambiguity of race, many respondents do not feel like they have options in their choice. To be sure, there is inconsistency in classification depending on classification in a census category, binary format such as white or black, and skin color and physical characteristics (Bailey, Loveman, and Muniz 2013). However, in terms of self-identification there is less ambiguity. In fact, Lamont et al. (2016) find in their study, in answer to the question "What is your race?" that 60 percent of respondents said *negro/negra*. In my research many respondents base their choice on physical features. Afro-Brazilians who have experienced discrimination, those with darker skin and with higher incomes, are more likely to claim a *negro* identification. Afro-Brazilians who identify as *preto* or *negro* demonstrate group-based political behavior (Aguilar et al. 2015; Janusz 2017; and Mitchell 2010). Afro-Brazilians who have experienced discrimination and those who are younger are more likely to demonstrate a sense of *negro* linked fate. Interview and survey questions employed the Portuguese term *negro*, which includes census category *pretos* (blacks) and *pardos* (browns). Analysis reveals that those demonstrating *negro* linked fate are more likely to support racial policies for *negros*. Group attachment is different from self-identification. Lamont et al. (2016: 138) concludes that self-identification as *negro* does not always lead to racial political consciousness. However, this conclusion is based on self-identification and not *negro* linked fate.

The academic relevance of such a book is clear, given the significant increase in scholarship dealing with race in Brazil in recent years (Lamont et al. 2016; Paschel 2016; Smith 2016; Hordge-Freeman 2015; Joseph 2016; Lima 2015; Perry 2013; Williams 2013; Costa 2014; Santos 2014). Since Brazil hosted the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, its racial past and politics have been a hot topic in the media, including the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, National Public Radio, and the *Economist*. In preparation for both of these events, the Brazilian state repressed and inflicted violence on Afro-Brazilian communities as neighborhoods were

supposedly “pacified” and “cleaned” of drug activity and crime. Cases of innocent people dying in these efforts are being discussed in black social networks and media in Brazil and the United States. As such, this book gives voice to Afro-Brazilians who have a voice in the digital world but often are silenced in the social and political worlds, and whose issues are likewise silenced in the academic world. Too often, the issues of race and racism are considered secondary to the issue of class.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this book is an intersectional analysis based on black feminism broadly and as articulated from Brazilian intellectuals. Although many aspects of intersectionality and black feminism are similar in the United States and Brazil, it is important to highlight how Afro-Brazilian women theorists articulate intersectionality. In the Brazilian context, black feminism acknowledges the role that race, class, aesthetics, and gender play in society and how Afro-Brazilian women are particularly marginalized due to racism, classism, and sexism (González 1988; Nascimento 2009; Bairros 1991; Carneiro 2003). Sueli Carneiro challenges feminism that ignores the experiences of black women. She believes that feminism should challenge both racial and gender domination. She proposes a number of initiatives black women should promote, including recognizing that poverty has a racial dimension and that race should be included in analyses of the feminization of poverty. She also advocates for a recognition of the “symbolic violence and oppression that whiteness as the hegemonic and privileged aesthetic standard has over non-white women” (Carneiro 2003: 130). I point out the aesthetic dimension because one’s appearance is particularly valued in Latin America and especially Brazil. Very curly hair has been stigmatized in Brazilian society, and black women’s hair is commonly described as “hard hair” and “bad hair.” An intersectional framework in the Brazilian case has to take into account aesthetics and physical characteristics such as one’s hair texture or hairstyle. My qualitative interviews include information on skin color and hairstyle.

It is important in approaching black feminism to understand that one’s experiences inform identity. Just as Crenshaw argues that intersecting identities shape experience, it is important to note that experiences shape identity. Daniela Ikawa (2014), who writes from an intersectional and critical race perspective, argues that, in Brazil, many public policies have ignored the experiences of Afro-descendant women. She believes policies should be designed for differently situated women

such as black women or poor black women. Their experiences lead to different policy needs as well as how they might articulate these needs. In Cecilia McCallum's (2007) work on black women and white women activists in Brazil, she discusses "the formation of distinct subjectivities" as articulated by Creusa Maria de Oliveira, an Afro-Brazilian woman activist who heads the National Federation of Labor Union for Domestic workers (*Federação Nacional das Empregadas Domésticas*) (2007: 66). Creusa believes there is a difference between the life experiences of poor black women and white women. McCallum emphasizes that these differences are not essentialized identities but are products of specific life histories (2007: 66). Even among Afro-Brazilian women, there are differences based on skin color, self-identification, hair texture, age, and class that lead to *differently situated* women and experiences. I am most interested in whether responses to the question about *negro* underrepresentation is linked to these different subjectivities. All social categories are experienced by individuals, and I contend that these experiences have an impact on political opinion and behavior

I situate my work within studies of race in Brazil and the US. Because of multicultural movements in the US, there has been an expansion of the study of racial politics that go beyond the black/white paradigm to include Latino politics (Zepeda-Millán 2016; Lopez Bunyasi 2015; Affigne 2014; Carey, Branton, and Martinez-Ebers 2014; Garcia and Sanchez 2008; Fraga et al. 2006; Barreto 2007; Leal 1999), Asian politics (Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee, and Junn 2011), studies on biracial Americans (Davenport 2016), and black immigrants (Rogers 2006; C.W. Smith 2014). Today some scholars believe race in Brazil is becoming more dichotomous while race in the US is becoming more Latin American. While I agree that racial discourse and race relations are changing in both countries, I challenge the Latin Americanization thesis, as I believe it assumes that race relations or racial politics are linear. I discuss this later in this chapter.

Before my discussion of my methodology and the outline of the book, I give background about race in Brazil. I first discuss how race was conceptualized historically. I follow with a discussion of Brazilian black movement activism as it shaped changing notions of race. Lastly, I challenge convergence theses that Brazil is becoming like the United States and vice versa. Challenging these theses is important because Brazilian racial politics are not static and are changing in a way particular to Brazil. Mixed-methods studies such as this one are essential to providing a fuller understanding of how Brazilians themselves explain these dynamics.

### Race/Color In Brazil

Historically, many scholars have found that race in Brazil is different than race in the US because race is based on ancestry in the US rather than phenotype, physical features, and class status such as in Brazil (Nogueira 2007; Degler 1986; Telles 2004). Race in the US has been understood as binary (white and black), and the one-drop rule of having any African ancestry determined if a person was black, regardless of phenotype. This concept stands in opposition to Brazil, where race or color is viewed as ambiguous. The word *cor* (color) is more commonly used in Brazil than the word *raça* (race), although black activists increasingly use the term race. Skin color and race are distinct as race is based on parentage and is viewed as something one cannot change. Color is based on skin color and other traits such as social status. However, it is important to acknowledge that both are racialized or certain racial or color categories take on certain meanings. Scholars discuss the fact that color is racialized in Brazil (Caldwell 2007; Nascimento 2009). Color is racialized in the same way as race, in that lighter colors are generally more valued than darker ones and African traits are viewed as less attractive than European traits (Sheriff 2001; Hordge-Freeman 2015). Racialization is an important concept because it implies that race is socially constructed. Furthermore, Christen Smith's (2016) claim that scholars should pay attention to the performative aspects of identity is extremely useful when considering race and color as identities. Bodies perform "race," and agents of the state construct race in their varied treatment of certain bodies. In other words, phenotype, whether light or dark in color, coupled with physical features may determine the interplay of violence against those with curly hair and African features regardless of skin color. In this instance, race is performed and experienced. Many people cite Marvin Harris's (1970) finding that there are over 100 color categories in Brazil. However, Telles (2004) finds that 94 percent of responses about race or color fall into one of six categories. In this way, self-identification is not as ambiguous as it may seem.

There are three important aspects to emphasize in a discussion of color in Brazil. These aspects are social status, physical characteristics such as skin tone or hair type, and gender. All of these aspects play a role in how strangers and friends determine a person's color identification. The historical context of whitening and the belief in racial democracy is also important to this discussion. In Brazil, one can have African ancestry but not be considered black (Telles 2004; Nogueira 2007).

Color and social status in Brazil intersect in profound ways that can also determine how one identifies or is classified.<sup>3</sup> Blackness is associated with negative stereotypes such as unattractiveness, poverty, and less intelligence. Calling a stranger *preto* is still considered offensive, and saying the aphorism *coisa de preto* or “that’s a black thing” when someone makes a mistake demonstrates the pejorative and engrained nature of the word *preto*. The most common identification in everyday language is *moreno* (Baran 2007; Caldwell 2006, Telles 2004). This is especially the case for women. A stranger might believe it impolite to call a woman *preta* or *negra*, and so may use the term *morena*. *Morena* is an ambiguous term that includes a range that spans from very light-skinned people with brunette or dark hair to very dark-skinned people. The same holds for self-identification. If someone is uncomfortable calling themselves *preto* or *negro*, they may refer to themselves as *moreno*. Yet Telles (2004) finds that Brazilians with more income identify as *preto*.

A dark-skinned person can be described as brown if he or she is highly educated or holds a prestigious job. Even when status is not a marker of whether Brazilians will classify others in non-black categories, this act may take place in an effort to show good manners. Robin Sheriff (2001) notes, in her anthropological study of a slum community in Rio de Janeiro, that residents referred to acquaintances as having lighter colors in an effort to be polite. In contrast to how darker-skinned people’s color may be manipulated by acquaintances to “lighten” them, some Afro-Brazilians identify as *preto* or *negro*, and while this is generally associated with having dark skin, it is also associated with higher income or higher education (Mitchell-Walthour and Darity 2014). Younger Afro-Brazilians and higher income Afro-Brazilians are more likely to claim a *negro* racial identification (Telles 2004; Bailey and Telles 2006; Mitchell 2010).

As I explained earlier in the case of Afro-Brazilians, color is racialized but is different from race. This racialization is exemplified in the fact that there are a number of skin color designations for Afro-Brazilians. Curiously, there are not numerous terms for the color white nor for the white census category, but there are multiple societal terms for Afro-Brazilians. The census includes the terms *pardo*,<sup>4</sup> which is designated for

<sup>3</sup> Alberto Carlos Almeida (2007) challenges this idea, as he found in an experimental setting that varying clothing did not have an impact on how one was racially classified.

<sup>4</sup> The census category *pardo* includes African descendants and other racially mixed people including people of indigenous and European ancestry. Theoretically any Brazilian could choose this category, including those of Middle Eastern descent. However, researchers commonly understand the census category *pardo* to denote racially mixed people of African descent.

racially mixed people and *preto* for blacks. As noted earlier, there are numerous terms to denote skin colors for Afro-Brazilians. Yet, social scientists, the media, and black activists often combine the census categories *preto* and *pardo* to describe *negros*, a racial category.

Race is based on parentage, such that someone with one white parent and one black parent may identify as *pardo*, and despite the fact that Brazil is often understood as a country with ambiguous racial categories, many Brazilians view themselves in a binary fashion. Sheriff (2001) finds that respondents view the world, in racial terms, as either black or white. Thus, in determining one's race, people of various colors or shades of brown identify as *negro* or racially black.

Physical attributes such as hair texture and skin tone can also have an impact on how others identify people. Those with coarse hair or more African features may be identified in categories that imply a darker color or that are actually meant to describe someone with light skin but who has African features. An example is the term *sarará* which in Salvador, Bahia describes a light-skinned person with African features. Determining a person's color comes with certain rules and as Hordge-Freeman (2016) explains, there is a certain racial etiquette to determine one's color. She shows how very young children do not know this etiquette but later learn the rules or etiquette to determine one's color. Social status can play a role in how an individual is classified yet for young children who have not learned the rules of classification they may not consider social status but simply a person's skin color.

Gender has an impact on classification as gender can intersect with social status. Gender, alone can also play a role in how one is classified. Kia Caldwell (2007) discusses the idea of the *mulata* which is often a hypersexualized idea of Afro-descendant women. A woman's social status can also determine how she is classified by others. Telles (2004) finds that Brazilians are less likely to classify high-status self-identified *preta* women as *preta*.

In summary, both race and color are racialized. Brazilians often racially identify according to parentage, while they consider skin color and other physical traits to determine their color. When Brazilians are identified by others they may consider perceived parentage to determine another person's race or may rely on a binary notion of black and white. In contrast, when identifying another person's color, social status, demonstrating good manners by showing respect by identifying an acquaintance in a lighter color, and one's gender may all be considered as determinants of a person's color. Oftentimes, this calculus is made according to the rules of racial etiquette Hordge-Freeman identifies (2016). In order to understand why race and color exist as such, I turn to a historical discussion.

### The Historical Making of Race

In this section I discuss the history of race-making, both biologically and through census categories. The Brazilian system of racial stratification has roots in white supremacy which is manifested in the belief that African origins denote inferiority while European origins denote superiority. Although racial mixture is celebrated and characterized as the product of romantic relationships between Portuguese settlers and Indigenous women and African women in the sixteenth century, Anthony Marx (1998) claims this is a remaking of history. According to Marx (1998), history was remade and retold in this way to better align with Brazil's identity as a multiracial non-racist nation. In fact, African and Indigenous women were often raped by Portuguese settlers who left their wives and families in Portugal. As a result, the racial groups acknowledged as contributing to Brazil's racial mixture consist of Africans, the Indigenous, and the Portuguese.

Between four and five million Africans were brought to Brazil as part of the transatlantic slave trade. Brazil had one of the harshest systems of slavery: in some regions of the country, children as young as age seven died enslaved (Marx 1998). With Brazil's proximity to Africa, it was easy for the Portuguese to continue transporting Africans to Brazil when enslaved people ran away or died. Brazil abolished slavery in 1888, making it the last country in the western hemisphere to do so. Not all Africans and African descendants were enslaved. Some were free and others were able to buy their freedom by earning money for their skilled services. The constant influx of enslaved Africans led to large numbers of African descendants in the country. To address the "problem," the political elite actively sought to whiten the population.

The state promoted race-making through racial mixture with the goal of ridding its society of black people and black culture during the early twentieth century (Nascimento 1989; Marx 1998). It later embraced racial miscegenation and racial ambiguity as part of its national identity.

The ideology of whitening Brazil's population has to be understood in the context of racial ideologies. Thomas Skidmore (1974) identifies three main schools of racial ideology that influenced Brazilian thought. By 1860, racial theory was supported by scientific theory in Europe and the United States. These theories subsequently affected racial theories in Brazil.

One theory held that physical differences indicated different species or races. This allowed scientific support for the concept of white superiority. This ideology was first formulated in the US in the 1840s and 1850s (Skidmore 1974: 49). Darwinian theory eventually replaced a strictly biological ideology of race. Many studies were conducted using skull measurements and other