From Ambiguity to Affirmation:

Challenging Census Race Categories in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

The examination of racial classification in Brazil reveals the popularity of the ambiguous *moreno* and the affirmative *negro* terms, both non-census terms. Using national survey data, we examine propensities to classify under either of these terms and how educational level, age, sex and local racial composition structure their choice. We find, for example, that low education is positively correlated with the choice of *moreno*, while the opposite is true for the *negro* term. This effect challenges the traditional "whitening thesis" that predicts a positive relationship between high status and lighter categories. Furthermore, age is negatively correlated with the choice of *negro*. Overall, our findings reveal the importance of these non-official categories and the possibility of changing racial dynamics in Brazil, from racial ambiguity to racial affirmation.

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Recent scholarship emphasizes the importance of the census in determining the categories used in racial classification. These scholars claim that official census categories not only reflect national understandings of race (Lee 1993; Nobles 2000; Peterson 1969) but also mold racial and ethnic identities (Dominguez 1998; Starr 1987). However, the Brazilian case belies such a relationship because Brazilians often choose the term *moreno* even though it has never been used in the Brazilian censuses since they began in 1872. Anthropologist Marvin Harris and his colleagues (Byrne et al. 1995; Harris et al. 1993, 1995) argue that *moreno* should be included as a census category, while Telles (1995) replies that this would clearly degrade the census' ability to measure racial inequality. In addition, black movement leaders argue for the inclusion of yet another category. They sustain that a growing affirmation of blackness prescribes the inclusion of *negro* in the census (Bertulio 1996), a position sanctioned by the executive branch of the federal government (Brasil 1996).

These two terms reflect opposing ideologies about race among elites and perhaps by Brazilians in general. Furthermore, they implicate increasing tensions about the nature of Brazilian national identity. *Moreno* is an ambiguous descriptor of race that may be applicable to a large majority of Brazilians and represents a traditional ideology of universalism and non-racialism since the 1930s. *Negro* refers mostly to persons of visible African descent and thus reflects racial particularism. Using national survey data, we examine the propensities to classify

under either of these and other extra-official terms compared to the census categories and how educational level, age, sex and local racial composition structure the choice of these terms. By examining the meaning, saliency, and determinants of extra-official category choices, we seek to add clarity to the debate about the usefulness of these terms as official categories (Harris et al. 1995; Piza & Rosemberg 1999; Telles 1995) and to the complexity of Brazilian racial dynamics in general. Moreover, understanding how certain factors influence the choice of categories allows us to discern future trends in Brazilian racial classification.

BRAZILIAN RACIAL CATEGORIES

The Official Census Categories

The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the governmental agency responsible for the decennial census, designs and collects the population census. Brazil has conducted eleven censuses since its first in 1872 and a race or color question has been asked in eight of them except in 1900, 1920 and 1970. Until the 1991 Census, the IBGE asked census respondents, "What is your color (*cor*)?" For the 1991 Census, the question reads "What is your color or race (*raça*)?" Since 1940, the IBGE has used the categories white (*branco*), brown (*pardo*), black (*preto*), yellow (*amarelo*, i.e., of some Asian descent), and added the Indigenous (*Indígena*) category in the 1991 census.[1]

Unlike the US, color or race in Brazil refers primarily to appearance rather than descent. For example, white persons in Brazil may have black ancestors while in the US, a tradition of hypodescent defines whites as persons with no black precursors (Harris 1964). Color or race in Brazil refers primarily to one's skin tone, hair texture and color, and facial features (Pierson 1942) although it may be influenced by social factors such as one's education, wealth and gender

as well as the social situation (Harris 1964, Pacheco 1987; Sansone 1996; Telles forthcoming). According to the 1991 Brazilian census, the racial or color composition of the population was 52 percent white, 42 percent brown, 5 percent black, 0.4 percent Asian, and 0.2 percent Indigenous.

Since *moreno* and *negro* also translate as brown and black, we will keep the terms in the original Portuguese while we will use the English translations for the census terms in the remainder of this paper. Although we translate it as brown, the Portuguese term *pardo* literally refers to an unflattering, arid grayish brown color that in popular parlance would rarely be used to describe one's self (Sheriff 1997). It originated as a catch-all term for persons who did not appear to fit the black, white, and yellow classifications, and it thus became a category that encompassed all intermediate and mixed categories (Butler 1998; Piza & Rosemberg 1999). Unlike the term black in the United States, which can represent an identity encompassing all Americans of varying degrees of African descent, black in Brazil refers strictly to the darker end of a color continuum (Sansone 1995). In popular parlance, it carries negative connotations when used by third persons (Sansone 1996).

Moreno: Racial Ambiguity

A 1976 national survey revealed that 34.4% of Brazilians chose *moreno* in an open-ended question, the second most common response, only after white (41.9%) (Oliveira et al. 1983; Silva 1986). Harris et al. (1993) found that if the *moreno* category were substituted for the brown term of the census, fully 63% of residents of a small town would be classified as *moreno* compared to 32% using the brown category. Harris and his colleagues argue for an emic approach to the formulation of census categories, i.e, where "racial identity is established by eliciting respondents' categorizations of themselves or of others using terms that respondents

regard as appropriate" (Harris et al., 1993: 453). Based on their findings showing *moreno*'s high saliency in comparison to brown, they recommend *moreno*'s inclusion in the national census. Commenting on Harris and his colleagues 1993 study, Telles (1995) argues against its inclusion among official race categories. He contends that because *moreno* could include persons that are socially classified as white, the use of *moreno* rather than brown would preclude any reasonable assessment of social inequalities by race or color in Brazil.

The term *moreno* is emblematic of the fluidity of the Brazilian system. Field researchers have found the term ambiguous enough to substitute for almost any other color category (Harris 1970; Nogueira 1985; Pacheco 1987; Sansone 1993; Stephens 1989). Its connotations include (1) light skinned persons with dark hair (Hutchinson 1957), (2) a person of mixed race or parentage who generally has brunet hair (Wagley 1963), and (3) a black person (Levine 1979). In her study of a neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro, Pacheco (1987) found that the reported popularity of the term flows from the way it enables residents to downplay "racial differences." "We are all *moreno's* around here" and similar expressions were voiced by several informants as if *moreno* referred to an all-inclusive identity unbounded by rigid racial specificities. Sansone (1993:164) reports, "In fact, the term *moreno* is so popular that even persons whom the interviewer and other respondents would consider whites prefer to call themselves *morenos*." He calls it "the national craze," almost equivalent to Brazilianness (Sansone 1995). This popularity and near universalism of the term is also reflected in the popular culture around soccer, which proclaims *moreno* as the ideal and normative color category (Guimarães 1995; Sheriff 1997).

What lies behind the popularity of the *moreno* classification? For some who favor the use of *moreno*, it may represent the face of "Brazilianness" or its exceptionalism when compared to the United States, as envisioned by Gilberto Freyre (1946), a towering figure in the formation

of Brazilian national ideology. Confronted with scientific racism's belief that "mixed" blood created degeneracy, Freyre proposed instead that "cross-breeding" produced hybrid vigor in humans, thereby enabling a bright future for Brazil with its large proportion of persons with varying degrees of African descent. By emphasizing the special character and uncommon flexibility of Portuguese colonizers that made possible extensive miscegenation among African, European, and Indigenous people, Freyre claimed that Brazilians were becoming a new race, or meta race which he describes as a *moreno* people (Freyre 1979). Indeed, he stated that *moreno* is the only response category necessary when asking Brazilians about race or color (Freyre 1979:3). Like Freyre, social anthropologist Roberto DaMatta emphasizes the importance of race mixture in Brazilian thought and he further elaborates on the popular logic of the *moreno* term. He interprets Brazil as a "relational universe" where oppositions, especially bi-polarization of racial identities like in the United States, are tenuated and where "the virtue is in the middle" (title of a recent DaMatta [1995] article). He states, "We must think of Brazilian society as a process of mediation between poles and not construe our reality as having but a dualistic rationale" (DeMatta 1995:281).

Negro: Racial Affirmation

Unlike the term *moreno*, which seems to describe nearly all of the Brazilian population, the term *negro* is intended for persons of some discernible African origin. Sansone's (1993, 1995, 1996) extensive studies of two areas in Bahia examine the popular understanding of the *negro* and the census black (*preto*) categories in Brazil. Although both terms translate as black, *negro* was, "originally a very offensive term that in the last decades became a term for ethnic affirmation" while black is a "traditional terms that refers primarily to color" (Butler 1998;

Sansone 1995:72; Sheriff 1997). Black movement members have made the distinction between the "common black" or *preto* and the "Africanized black" or *negro* (Barcelos 1999: 163).

Two separate ethnographic studies of Rio de Janeiro, one conducted during the 1980s and the other in the 1990s, attest to a changing popularity of the term *negro.* The 1980s study found that the *negro* category retained a negative quality, and that it was rarely used in face-to-face interaction among the local community, among friends and acquaintances, or in family circles. In those contexts, "relational terms" ranging from light (*claro*) to dark (*escuro*) and sometimes qualified with the adjectives "more" (*mais)*, "very" (*bem)*, and "definitely" (*mesmo)*, are preferred to the oppositional terms *negro* and white. The latter two categories were reserved as third-person descriptors or where there is a distance between the labeler and the person being described (Pacheco 1987:90). The 1990s ethnography shows that *negro* continues to have negative connotations in popular discourse, which the author calls the "indexical discourse of color" (Sheriff 1997). However, Sheriff's (1997) ethnography differs from the earlier study in that she documents an alternative discursive realm ("discourse of race") in which nearly all of the inhabitants of the shantytown she studied in Rio were aware of the logic of a *negro*/white bi-polar racial distinction operating beneath the descriptive and relational color discourse. This alternative realm is revealed in discussions concerning prejudice and discrimination, and may represent a growing salience and semantic revision of the *negro* category.

Indeed, we find that the popular use of the term *negro* has increased six-fold over a recent twenty year period, based on two national surveys. Silva's (1986) analysis of the open-ended choice categories using the 1976 National Household Survey (PNAD) did not register the frequency with which *negro* was used since it was relatively rare. Therefore, we re-examined

those data and found that only 0.5 percent of the population chose *negro* in 1976, which compares to 2.9 percent choosing the term in 1995, as our results will show.

The term *negro* is highly salient in elite discourse. The media, for example, rarely refers to persons as *moreno*, brown, black or mulatto, but mostly to *negro* and white. Also, most academic writing on race in Brazil seems to prefer these two terms. The executive branch of the federal government has gone even further and prescribed who should be categorized as *negro.* Specifically, the National Program for Human Rights establishes that *negro* shall include all black*s* and brown*s* as categorized in the Census (Brazil 1999), apparently in response to the desires of the black movement (Bertulio 1996). The increasing use of *negro*/white in the media, academia and by government officials stems largely from the black movement's historic attempt to gain acceptability for the term (Oliveira et al. 1983)*,* which, like many other non-white and non-*moreno* categories, has long been stigmatized as a reference to individuals.[2] The elite use of the term *negro* rather than *moreno* may also reflect the need for greater precision in a discourse about social inequality and public policies designed for its alleviation.

WHO USES EXTRA-OFFICIAL CATEGORIES?

Given the availability of official categories, why would respondents choose other categories? The reasons may be hard to discern except in theory and through localized ethnographic studies, but understanding *who* chooses these categories is relatively straightforward in survey analysis, thus providing clues about *why*. This analysis can tell us for example who chooses the *moreno* category rather than brown, white or black? While the bulk of previous research suggests that *moreno* is an ambiguous label that extends across the color continuum and *negro* represents ethnic or racial affirmation, this analysis can shed further light

on their usage. Furthermore, we examine the social characteristics of persons that choose to identify in these categories rather than in the official ones. Specifically, how do educational level, age and sex affect the choice of terms? Does the choice of *moreno* or *negro* vary across geographical places with respect to their racial composition? The following sections review how these social characteristics may affect the choice of extra-official categories.

Educational Status

High educational status, perhaps like social status generally, may allow darker individuals to whiten their racial classification (Harris 1964; Nogueira 1985; Wade 1997), although Telles (forthcoming) shows that reclassification in lighter census categories is not as great as previous literature suggests. However, whitening may also be manifested by choosing the *moreno* category. Although it is ambiguous, *moreno* may connote a "positive ambiguity," perhaps implying (but not affirming) a greater proximity to the lighter than to the darker end of the color continuum (Pacheco 1987: 91). Therefore, a whitening hypothesis might suggest that persons with higher educational levels may move from black or even brown to *moreno*, when given the choice and when it is not possible to identify as white. On the other hand, the term's popularity among the poor as indicated by ethnographies (Harris et al. 1993; Pacheco 1987) in contrast to its lack of popularity among leaders of the black movement and university students (Hanchard 1994; Turner 1985) suggest that the term might be more common among the low educated.

Similarly, one could argue that the use of the term *negro* is either positively correlated with education or there is no correlation. On the one hand, the black movement in Brazil has long been characterized as a middle class movement, resonating poorly with the mass of darker-

skinned, presumably less-educated individuals (Bacelar 1999). Similarly, other authors claim that racial affirmation as *negro* is especially strong among black college-educated professionals (Hanchard 1994; Schwartzman 1999; Turner 1985). This may be due to their greater exposure to elite discourse, including that of the black movement, or to a more critical awareness of racial discrimination, which increases with education (Sansone 1995). While it may be clear that highly educated blacks are increasingly using the *negro* term, a continued and perhaps growing use of it among the poor may offset the effects of education.

Age

Sansone's (1995) ethnographic research in Bahia revealed generational differences in the use of the terms *negro* and black. While parents tended to use black, their children ages 15-25 preferred *negro*. He attributes this to the growth of transnational musical styles associated with black diaspora culture—such as reggae, funk, and rap — on urban black youth (Carvalho 1999). An increasing use of the term *negro* might also come at the expense of a decreasing use of *moreno*. On the other hand, the literature suggests a continuous popularity of the term *moreno* among youth (Guimarães 1995; Sheriff 1997).

Sex

Wood (1991) presents evidence on how gender affects racial classification. Employing demographic methods similar to those used to estimate the effects of migration on population totals over time, Wood found that the projected number of black*s* in 1980 (based on the 1950 census figures) was 38 percent less than the actual number registered in the 1980 census. He found that 41 percent of black females reclassified in lighter categories in comparison to 37

percent of black males, indicating that this category may be slightly less desirable for females than males. Telles (forthcoming) addresses a related issue: gendered effects on interviewer classification of respondents. He finds that although women may choose to self-identify as black, interviewers are especially unwilling to categorize women as such, suggesting a societal avoidance of the term that is greater when applied to women. In a study of racial bias and its effects on primary school children, Oliveira (1999) found that the term *negra* (the female version of *negro*) was the most negative of all racial terms in a test of self-esteem for both boys and girls. A study of female domestic workers in Rio de Janeiro (Santos-Stubbe 1998:53,55) chosen for their "typical *negra* phenotype," found that these workers when asked to self-classify, "rebelled against the fact of being *negras*," and chose non-*negra* categories. These studies may reveal a greater stigma to dark skin-color in the case of women, suggesting that women are more likely than men to choose *morena* and reject *negra*.

Local racial composition

We use the percentage white in urban areas, according to the 1991 Census, as a proxy for local racial composition. Depending on one's theory, one could expect that greater percentage white would increase racial affirmation and reduce ambiguity or have an opposite effect, i.e. reduce racial affirmation and increase ambiguity. The first is based on classical sociology's emphasis on social and economic development, which is also known by its various processes including modernization, industrialization and capitalist penetration (e.g., Fernandes 1965; Telles 1994). In the Brazilian case, the distribution of places with higher proportions of whites is correlated with greater social and economic development (Telles 1994). The second way to

interpret this effect is through the extent that racial particularism is positively correlated with European immigration and inversely correlated with miscegenation (Telles forthcoming).

Regarding the first theory, classical sociology holds that in highly competitive areas class may supersede race, reducing the importance of racial distinctions (Fernandes 1965). To understand how extra-official classification may function in such areas, we recall that ethnographic studies reveal how the *moreno* term is used to downplay racial differences between individuals (Nogueira 1985; Sansone 1995; Twine 1998) or to avoid oppositional positions within the color gradient (Reichmann 1999:5). We believe, that classical sociological theory would expect terms like *moreno* to become more popular and racially particularistic terms like *negro* to become less popular in more competitive or modern areas. [3]

Concerning the second theory, recent European immigration and miscegenation might have still other effects. Places that now have large proportions of whites tend to have been the destinations of massive European immigration from 1880 to 1930. The incipient ethnic communities that emerged in these places furthered a particularist ethno-racial mentality (Fernandes 1965; Guimarães 1999). We expect that in this scenario, the African origin population would, like other ethnic groups, be more differentiated and attentive to race and ethnicity, and thus more likely to affirm a particularist identity. Moreover, such places had less racial mixing because of the demographic imbalance of whites and nonwhites (Telles 1993). Thus, places with fewer whites tended to have more racial mixing and relatively little European immigration, reinforcing the traditional order of continuing racial mixing and ambiguity. Based on this hypothesis, we expect a negative association between the percent white and the use of ambiguous terms such as *moreno* and a positive correlation between percent white and the ethnic affirmation term, *negro.*

DATA

We analyze data from a national face-to-face survey collected by the *Data Folha Instituto de Pesquisas*, the survey unit of the *Folha de São Paulo*, one of Brazil's major daily newspapers. The survey was carried out in April of 1995 and is officially called "*300 Anos de Zumbi: Os Brasileiros e o Preconceito de Cor*" (300 Years of Zumbi[4]; Brazilians and Racial Prejudice). Data is based on a stratified national random sample of the urban population that is age sixteen and over. Urban areas accounted for fully 76 percent of the Brazilian population in the 1991 Census (Associação Brasileira de Estudos Populacionais 1996). After selecting municipalities at random from within socioeconomic level, region and size strata, successive random samples are taken of neighborhoods, then streets and then individuals. The complete sample consists of 5014 persons sampled across 121 municipalities and roughly matches data from the 1991 census on several important variables, including race, age and sex, plus or minus the statistical range of error (Telles and Lim 1998).

Data on respondent's color was collected in three different ways. Prior to initiating the interview, interviewers classified respondents according to the census format using the five color categories.[5] Then, towards the beginning of the questionnaire, interviewers asked respondents to self-identify in an open-ended question. Subsequently, interviewers asked respondents to self-identify using the census format.

The entire survey sample, according to self-classification, is 53 percent white, 36 percent brown, 10 percent black, 0.6 percent Asian and 1.1 percent Indian. Thus the sample distribution represents the universe within the statistical range of error. Research on racial classification in Brazil has focused on persons in the black to white continuum, which includes the vast majority

of the Brazilian population. Because the inclusion of the small Asian and Indigenous populations would complicate the analysis, we limited the sample to persons who self-classified *and* were classified by interviewers as white, brown or black.

METHODS

Our analysis begins with a frequency distribution of category choice using the open-ended question and a cross tabulation of self-classification in the open format by self-classification in the census format. Two figures follow, which illustrate how persons choosing *moreno* and *negro* were classified in the census-format questions, using self- and interviewer-classification.

We then employ multinomial logit regression to examine how select characteristics correlated with the use of non-Census compared to Census terms. The dependent variable is derived from the open-ended survey question "What is your color." By choosing the most frequent extra-official categories, we model the outcomes as *moreno*, *moreno claro* (a popular variation on *moreno*, literally light *moreno*), *negro*, and an 'all others' category. The omitted category is comprised of all of those choosing any of the three census terms in the open-ended format. This method allows us to include the entire sample and permits an examination of propensities to classify in the extra-official categories, each compared to classification in the official census categories.

Independent variables include educational status, age, sex, percent white and seven color categories. Education is represented by three dummy variables: persons who have not completed primary school (low/omitted), those who have completed primary but have not completed secondary school (medium) and those who have completed secondary school or more (high).

Age is represented by a continuous linear variable, and sex is a dummy variable denoted by female. For local racial composition, we calculate the percent white of the urban area in which the respondent resides with information from the 1991 Census and link this information to the individual record. Although the sample includes respondents from 122 municipalities, we construct racial composition variables for 90 localities because single urban areas may contain several contiguous municipalities.

Our independent color variable is comprised of seven categories formed by combining the responses to the two additional survey items on racial classification. While one question utilizes interviewer-classification, the other relies on self-classification, and both are based on the closed-ended Census format. The seven categories refer to the combinations of interviewer-/self-classification and are: white/white, white/non-white, brown/white, brown/brown, brown/black, black/non-black, black/black. For example, the white/white category is comprised of those individuals classified by interviewers as white and who also self-classify as white. Alternatively, the black/non-black category represents those individuals who interviewers classified as black but who chose to self-classify in a category other than black.[6] We chose this method that combines classifications as an independent variable because it provides fuller information than that based on either self or interviewer classification alone. For example, Telles and Lim (1998) find that 21 percent of the sample utilized in this analysis was classified inconsistently when comparing interviewers and respondents, i.e., the interviewer's classification of a respondent is often times at odds with that respondent's self-classification. Although this data is not generally available, we believe that interviewer-classification provides important data, because the way a person is classified by a third party may better indicate his or her risk factor for racial discrimination and thus the calculation of racial differences in life chances than self-

classification (Telles and Lim 1998). Additionally, the findings will also show that this method represents a more sensitive estimation of points along the color continuum than either of the two closed-ended formats on their own, as will be suggested graphically below.

PATTERNS IN THE USE OF EXTRA-OFFICIAL CATEGORIES

Bivariate Analysis

Table 1 reveals the frequency of extra-official categorization in Brazil. Interestingly, fully 95 percent of respondents self-classified in only six categories, including the three official categories and three extra-official terms. Fully 31.9 percent of the sample identifies as *moreno*, second only to the white classification at 42.1. The official brown category at 7.1 percent is the third most popular term followed by *moreno claro* (6.4 percent),[7] which is thus the second most common extra-official category. The fifth and sixth most popular categories are black at 4.7 percent and *negro* at 2.9 percent. Finally, 5 percent self-identified in categories that are relatively rare and that include the relational, metaphoric and picturesque categories sometimes used to characterize Brazilian racial or color classification. We treat these as an "all others" category. Including these "other" categories, fully 46.2 percent of our sample chose extra-official categories when given the chance to do so.

[Table 1 about here]

Table 2 demonstrates the re-classification dynamics that take place when respondents are not limited to the official terms for self-classification. For example, only 73.2 percent of persons self-classifying as white in the census-format choose white in the open-format. Thus, almost 27 percent of self-classified whites of the census format re-classify in other categories when given the chance, with a significant number going to the *moreno* (13.4 percent) and *moreno claro* (7.9

percent) classifications. More dramatic, though, is the switching taking place from the brown and black census categories. Only 18.4 percent of self-classified browns of the census format remain in this classification when given the opportunity to choose their color as they please. Most of them (60.5 percent) moved to the *moreno* category. For self-classified blacks in the census format, only 29.5 persons reclassified as black in the open-format while 38.3 percent reclassified as *moreno* and 18.0 percent as *negro*. Interestingly, those identifying as black in the closed-format were most likely to choose "all others" in the open-ended format while whites were the least likely, suggesting that the "all others" categories fit better as one moves toward the darker end of the color continuum.

[Table 2 about here]

Figure 1 illustrates the color spectrum that characterizes the *moreno* and *negro* terms and also reveals how the combined interviewer- and self-classification categories may function to locate distinguishable groupings along the color continuum. The top panel presents the percent classifying as *moreno* by the combined categories. Figure 1 shows that 9 percent of those who were consistently or unambiguously classified as white (by both interviewer and through self-classification in the census format), switches to *moreno* in the open-ended format. The best predictor of *moreno* classification is unambiguous classification in the brown category (fully 64 percent). Finally, 23 percent of those consistently classified as black choose *moreno* in Figure 1. Overall, the bivariate results of the first panel show the fluidity of the *moreno* term, although its choice declines at the ends of the color spectrum, particularly the lighter end.

As with the top panel regarding *moreno*, the bottom panel presents the percent classifying as *negro* by the combined categories. In contrast to the *moreno* distribution, the term *negro* is confined to the darkest end of the spectrum. The best combined color category predictor of

categorization as *negro* is black/black (26 percent). From that point on, the percentage of the other combined categories choosing *negro* falls sharply, to 9 percent of black/brown, 8 percent of brown/black, and only 1 percent of consistently classified browns.

Multivariate Analysis

Table 3 shows the combined effects of education, sex, age, local racial composition, census-format color and the interaction of the latter two sets of variables. It reveals that education is inversely correlated with classifying as *moreno*, *moreno claro* and "all others" and positively correlated with identifying as *negro*. That is, greater education decreases the likelihood of identifying extra-officially in the *moreno*, *moreno claro*, or miscellaneous categories while it increases the likelihood of identifying as *negro*. This suggests that the less educated, which roughly refers to the poorest and largest population segment, prefers the traditional Brazilian system with its ambiguity and plurality of terms while those that favor *negro* tend to be the highly educated.

[Table 3 about here]

Age is statistically significant only in the case of *negro*. The negative correlation demonstrates that younger persons are especially likely to choose *negro*, which is consistent with the growing popularity of the term. By contrast, the other terms are stable with respect to age, suggesting no significant increase or decrease in their use over time or across cohorts. Interestingly, female was significant only in the "all others" category, suggesting that women, more so than men, prefer the less common categories. The fact that the "all others" category was also more likely to be chosen by blacks, suggests that black women are the color-sex segment

most likely to choose these rarely used and often creative categories. We did not find significant gender differences in the use of *moreno* or *negro,* as we had expected.

Both local racial composition and where a person is located on the color continuum also affect whether persons choose extra-official terms. Percent white significantly affects identification as *moreno* or *moreno claro* but not *negro*, and color has significant effects on all the extra-official categories. However, the model we chose reveals an interaction effect between color and percent white, meaning that color affects extra-official category choice differently depending on local racial composition of the population. This interaction substantially increased the fit of the model with only main effects.

To understand the effects of color and percent white and to gauge the strength of the main effects, Table 4 presents relative risks or the comparative propensities to classify as *moreno*, *moreno claro*, *negro* or "all others" categories compared to census classifications for select characteristics. These are calculated as in Hosmer and Lemeshow (2000). They assume that the values of all other variables are held constant.

[Table 4 about here]

Beginning with the main effects, the first column of the first row shows that the odds that respondents with a medium education will choose *moreno* over the official terms is only about 65% as great as those with a low education, when all other variables are held constant. The cell immediately underneath demonstrates that those with a high education are 40 % as likely to choose *moreno* compared to those with a low education. Seen from another perspective, persons with a low education are about 1.5 times (1/.65) more likely than those with a medium education and 2.5 times (1/.40) more likely to choose *moreno* compared to those with a high education. Regarding the choice of *negro,* respondents with a high level of education are almost three times

(2.90) as likely and those with a medium level of education are about twice (2.04) as likely as a person with a low level of education to choose *negro* over the official terms. Interestingly, highly educated persons are less than half (.48) as likely as low educated persons to choose the "all other" categories. These results support the perspective that racial affirmation and the choice of the *negro* term resonate most clearly with persons of higher education (Bacelar 1999; Hanchard 1994; Turner 1985).

The final column of table 4 shows the relative risks of classifying as *negro* compared to *moreno*, the contrast which is the focus of our analysis. The results show that high educated persons are more than eight times (8.26) as likely as low educated persons to identify as *negro* rather than *moreno*. At least in terms of classification as *negro* vs. *moreno*, our results do not indicate a whitening thesis in which persons with higher status positions "lighten" their racial classification (Degler [1971] 1986; Skidmore 1974; Wade 1997), but rather they suggest a new trend: high status in the way of education influences positively the choice of the *negro*, while low status implies greater use *moreno.*

The strongest gender effects are for classification as *negro* and as "all others," in which women are somewhat more likely than men to choose *negro* and "all others" categories. In terms of age, the odds of a 20 year old respondent choosing *negro* compared to the census categories are twice (1.99) as large as the odds that a 60 year old will do so, supporting previous findings that the term has especially gained in popularity among young persons (Sansone 1993; Schwartzman 1999). Similarly, 20 year olds are 72 percent more likely (1.72) than 60 year olds to classify as *negro* as opposed to *moreno.* There are only slight age effects in classification as *moreno*, *moreno claro* or "all others."

Finally, we estimate the strength of our interactions between color and percent white. For the sake of simplicity, we present results for persons consistently classified by interviewers and themselves as white, brown, or black, and we illustrate places of varying racial composition though the examples of three well-known states: Bahia which is roughly 25% white; Rio de Janeiro, which is about 55% white; and São Paulo, which is approximately 70% white. In the first column, the odds that a consistently classified brown person will classify as *moreno* is more than 20 times (20.81) as great as a white person in Bahia, 17.55 times as great in Rio de Janeiro, and 16.10 times in São Paulo. Thus, the *moreno* category is strongly avoided by consistently classified whites, compared to consistently classified browns, but less so as the racial composition grows whiter. Continuing with column one, the gap between the odds of consistently classified blacks compared to consistently classified whites for choosing *moreno* is especially large. The odds of blacks classifying as *moreno* in places with racial compositions like Bahia are fully 9 times greater than the odds of whites doing so. By contrast, the odds of blacks classifying as *moreno* are less than three (2.50) times as great as whites in São Paulo. Thus, white-black differences in the choice of *moreno* are more than three times as great in places like Bahia compared to São Paulo.

Finally, blacks are 45 percent as likely as browns to choose *moreno* in places like Bahia, but this difference drops to 15 percent in places like São Paulo. Like the regression results in Table 3, Table 4 results show that *moreno* is not an umbrella term that covers persons from all over the color continuum equally. Rather, it best fits browns and especially browns in places with large nonwhite racial composition. That is, blacks and especially whites are much less likely to use *moreno,* and in places with racial compositions like Bahia, whites rarely use the term. Column two of Table 4 shows that the pattern for *moreno claro* is distinct from that for the

use of *moreno*. Browns are more than three (3.38) times as likely as whites to use the term in Bahia, but they are less likely (0.73) to use the term than whites in places like São Paulo.

Moving on to the interaction in the third column of Table 4, the results show that blacks are more than 100 times (108.85) as likely as browns to use *negro* in São Paulo and nearly 300 times (292.95) as likely in Bahia. This accentuates the fact that *negro* is a term that is rarely used by mixed race persons, but rather only by those at the darkest end of the color continuum. Similarly, the last column shows that blacks are many more times likely than browns to classify as *negro* compared to *moreno*.

As regards the "all others" category, column 4 of table 4 shows that these categories on the whole increase in popularity as one goes from white to black. For example, the odds that a black person in places like Bahia will choose "all others" is 7.26 times greater than the odds that a white person will do so, while the difference is 3.04 for places like São Paulo. Other categories are particularly popular in places like Bahia for browns and especially blacks, with the exception that browns are slightly more likely than blacks to choose such categories in places like São Paulo.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

We began this study by noting that recent scholarship expects official census categories to mold and/or reflect racial identities (Dominguez 1998; Lee 1993; Peterson 1969; Starr 1987). However, we have shown that that the official white, brown, and black terms used by the Brazilian census do not resonate with many Brazilians. Despite 130 years of using the same census terms, nearly half of the Brazilian population prefers to self-classify using terms that are not in the census. In particular, about one-third of respondents chose the highly ambiguous

moreno (as they did in 1976), another 6 percent chose its variant *moreno claro*, 3 percent chose the black racial affirmation term *negro* and another 5 percent chose to identify among scores of categories with low frequency of usage.

The continuing choice of *moreno* which grows to nearly 40% when combined with its variations, *moreno claro* and *moreno escuro*, suggests persistent support for the Brazilian ideal of *morenidade*, which glorifies the mixed-race type. The choice of *moreno* is remarkable considering that the term was never part of the census. The lack of an age effect implies that younger cohorts continue to use *moreno* and *moreno claro* as did their elders although a negative correlation with education would suggest that its use might decrease as the population's education increases. Our statistical findings also show that non-white persons choosing the two terms *moreno* and *moreno claro* are especially likely to reside in areas in which whites are a numerical minority and which are less developed economically. Thus, the terms' popularity is especially great in the North and Northeast regions. Although *moreno* is often believed to be applicable to nearly the entire color spectrum and therefore to represent a universalist tendency, white persons are much less likely to self-identify using that term. We believe the terms greater popularity among nonwhites is due to its positive connotation. Since it is an ambiguous color referent, it allows nonwhite persons to avoid the less-attractive brown and black categories.

Although used much less than *moreno*, the 3 percent of the population that chose *negro* in 1995 represents a six-fold increase from the 0.5 percent that chose the term in the 1976 national survey. As with the *moreno* category, the choice of *negro* is also notable because it is an extra-official category. Fully 30 percent of self-classified blacks prefer *negro* in the open-ended format compared to only 2 percent of browns. Census classified blacks are infinitely more likely than browns to identify as *negro*. Even though browns rarely choose this category,

contrary to the designs of sectors of the black movement and the government, the choice of *negro* by 5 million people (compared to 0.7 million people 19 years earlier) nevertheless suggests a strongly growing base of support for racial affirmation in Brazil. Brazilians who prefer to self-classify as *negro* tend to be young and educated and phenotypically located at the darkest end of the continuum. Usage of *negro* is thus likely to continue growing, if education continues to improve and if the age effect does not merely signal a passing fad. The growth of the *negro* category mirrors a growing emphasis on its use by the black movement, the media and parts of the government as well as its increased presence in elements of music and youth culture. Perhaps use of *negro* might increase for persons of intermediate color in the future, but this has not yet happened to any appreciable extent.

Compared to *moreno,* the age and education effects reveal that use of *negro* decreases with age and increases with status. These results represent a shift in the nature of Brazilian classification for persons at the darkest end of the color spectrum. Whereas classification under the ambiguous *moreno* category allowed one to downplay one's stigmatized color, classification as *negro* represents an affirmation of blackness. That high status persons are especially likely to choose *negr*o today is an important change from the tradition captured by anthropologists in the 50s and 60s that status or "money whitens."

Increasing use of *negro* or decreasing use of *moreno* would mark a progressive transformation in the dynamics of racial categorization from ambiguity to affirmation, from a perceived universalism to racial or ethnic particularism. For Freye (1946) and DaMatta (1995), it would represent a retreat from the relational logic that has dominated normative Brazilian classification for decades. However, this interpretation is not borne out by the current popular use of racial terms. Despite its growing popularity, the choice of *negro* continues to be almost

entirely limited to the darkest end of the color spectrum. The large majority of the population frequently self-identifies using one of four terms (white, brown*, moreno,* and *moreno claro*) rather than one non-black term, as we would expect if there were a bi-polar division. In other words, while use of *negro* has clearly increased, it has not come at the expense of the traditional use of multiple terms.

ENDNOTES

[1] No censuses were conducted in 1910 and 1930.

[2] Although never incorporated as an official category, *negro* as a term of ethnic or racial affirmation is not new as evidenced by the activity and names used by historic black movement organizations. The *Frente Negra Brasileira* was founded in the 1930s, although the Vargas administration declared it to be illegal (Fiola 1990:38). The *Teatro Experimental do Negro* was founded in 1940 "to raise black (*negro*) consciousness"; the first *Congresso do Negro Brasileiro* was held in 1950; the *Associação Cultural do Negro* was founded in 1954 and the *Movimento Negro Unificado Contra Discriminação Racial* (MNUCDR, later shortened to MNU) was organized in 1978.

[3] Still another possibility is that racial composition, given its relation to development, would have no effect because modern industrial societies continue to benefit from reinforcing the traditional racial order (Blumer 1965).

[4] The title refers to 300 years since the birth in 1695 of Zumbi, the leader of a runaway slave colony (Quilombo de Palmares), which lasted nearly 100 years.

[5] See Telles and Lim (1998) concerning the importance and reliability of the interviewer classification.

[6] Separate white/black and black/white categories were not used because the number of cases in these cells is very small.

[7] *Moreno claro* is treated as a special case of *moreno*, which we assume has a similarly ambiguous connotation.

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Table 1. Frequency of Respondent's Preferred Color Label in Open-Ended Format, Adult Population in Urban Brazil, 1995.

	Frequency	Percentage	Cum. Percentage
White (*Branco*)	1877	42.1	42.1
Moreno	1421	31.9	73.9
Brown (*Pardo*)	316	7.1	81.0
Moreno Claro	286	6.4	87.4
Black (*Preto*)	209	4.7	92.1
Negro	131	2.9	95.0
Claro	77	1.7	96.7
Mulato	35	0.8	97.5
Escuro	32	0.7	98.2
Moreno Escuro	21	0.5	98.7
Canela	7	0.2	98.8
Moreno Brown (*Moreno Pardo*)	5	0.1	99.0
Castanho	4	0.1	99.0
Mestiço	3	0.1	99.1
Others	40	0.9	100.0
Total	4464	100.0	100.0

Table 2. Percent Self-Classifying in Open-Ended Format by Official Closed-Ended Format, Adult Population in Urban Brazil, 1995.

	Census Format		
Open-ended	White	Brown	Black
White	73.2	3.4	0.3
Brown	0.4	18.4	2.3
Black	0.1	2.0	29.5
Moreno Claro	7.9	7.5	2.5
Moreno	13.4	60.5	38.3
Negro	0.0	1.6	18.0
All Others	4.9	6.7	9.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	(2522)	(1454)	(606)

Table 3. Multinomial Logit Regression Coefficients Predicting Self-Identification using Open-Ended Format as *Moreno, Moreno Claro, Negro*, or "All Others" Compared to Census Categories, Adult Population in Urban Brazil, 1995.

Independent Variables:	*Moreno*	*Moreno Claro*	*Negro*	All Others
Education				
Medium Education	-.437***	-.163	.714**	-.231
	(.097)	(.141)	(.225)	(.186)
High Education	-.923***	-1.01***	1.063**	-.743*
	(.171)	(.280)	(.354)	(.341)
Female	.060	.159	.363	.322*
	(.082)	(.126)	(.205)	(.159)
Age	-.003	-.008	-.017*	.005
	(.003)	(.005)	(.008)	(.005)
Percent White	-.012***	-.034***	.014	-.004
	(.003)	(.006)	(.013)	(.007)
Interviewer/Self-Classification with Census Format				
White/White	-3.180***	-2.043***		-.869
	(.278)	(.379)		(.516)
White/Non-White	-.630	-.413		-.586
	(.415)	(.594)		(1.132)
Brown/White	-.458	.866		.187
	(.388)	(.514)		(.920)
Brown/Black	.368		5.224***	1.032
	(.420)		(1.153)	(.813)
Black/Non-Black	.438		4.772***	1.366
	(.499)		(1.408)	(.887)
Black/Black	-.251		6.230***	1.584*
	(.403)		(1.033)	(.663)
White/White* Percent White	.006	.033***		-.007
	(.005)	(.007)		(.009)
White/Non-White* Percent White	.013	.037***		-.001
	(.007)	(.011)		(.020)
Brown/White* Percent White	-.004	.004		-.018
	(.007)	(.011)		(-.018)
Brown/Black* Percent White	-.007		-.015	-.011
	(.008)		(.018)	(.016)
Black/Non-Black* Percent White	-.019*		-.016	-.020
	(.009)		(.021)	(.016)
Black/Black* Percent White	-.022**		-.022	-.026*
	(.008)		(.015)	(.013)
Intercept	1.752***	.014	-6.049***	-1.814***
	(.218)	(.330)	(1.006)	(.470)
N	4360			
Likelihood Ratio Chi^2	2077.36			

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

() indicate standard errors

Note: For the dependent variable the omitted category is self-classification as white, brown or black. For the independent variables, omitted categories are low for education and brown/brown for interviewer/self-classification. Age and percent white are continuous variables.

Table 4: Relative Risk of Self-Identifying in Open-Ended Color Question as *Moreno*, *Moreno Claro*, *Negro* or "all others" compared to Census Categories and *Moreno* compared to *Negro* for Select Comparisons of Characteristics: Adult Population in Urban Brazil, 1995

Characteristics Compared:	Compared to Census Categories**				*Negro* vs. *Moreno****
	Moreno	*Moreno Claro*	*Negro*	All others	
Education:					
Medium vs. Low	.65	.85	2.04	.79	3.29
High vs. Low	.40	.36	2.90	.48	8.26
High vs. Medium	.62	.42	1.45	.61	2.51
Female vs. Male	1.06	1.17	1.44	.73	1.37
Age:					
20 vs. 40 Year Olds	1.06	1.17	1.41	.91	1.31
20 vs. 60 Year Olds	1.13	1.37	1.99	.82	1.72
Color by %White in Locality:					
Brown* vs. White*					
In places like Bahia (25% White)	20.85	3.38	+	2.89	+
In places like Rio de Janeiro (55% White)	17.55	1.26	+	3.51	+
In places like São Paulo (70% White)	16.10	0.77	+	3.88	+
Black* vs. White*					
In places like Bahia (25% White)	9.00	++	+	7.26	+
In places like Rio de Janeiro (55% White)	3.83	++	+	4.03	+
In places like São Paulo (70% White)	2.50	++	+	3.04	+
Black* vs. Brown*					
In places like Bahia (25% White)	.45	++	292.95	2.54	250.48
In places like Rio de Janeiro (55% White)	.23	++	151.41	1.17	161.96
In places like São Paulo (70% White)	.15	++	108.85	.79	130.24

*Refers to those classified as white, brown or black by interviewers and respondents using census format.
**Based on Table 3 Regressions.
***Based on Regressions Not Shown
+ whites never classified as *negro*
++blacks never classified as *moreno claro* in sufficient numbers to calculate probability

Figure 1: Percent Classifying as *Moreno* (Top Panel) and *Negro* (Bottom panel) by Self and Interviewer Classification Using Census Color Categories