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Abstract

This paper offers a synopsis of the current scholarship mapping the social and economic exclusion of women of African descent in Brazil. It highlights the work of and role played by Afro-Brazilian women scholars and activists in redressing the paucity, until recently, of basic data and research on the life conditions of women of African descent. Finally, it provides some initial thoughts on the national and transnational dynamics of knowledge production underlying this state of affairs.

Keywords

Afrodescendant, women, social and economic conditions, knowledge production

Disciplines

Gender and Sexuality | Latin American Studies | Social and Cultural Anthropology

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Keywords: Afrodescendant – women – social and economic conditions – knowledge production

Biographical paragraph

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BEYOND CONFRONTING THE MYTH OF RACIAL DEMOCRACY:
The Role of Afro-Brazilian Women Scholars and Activists

Despite its rank as the ninth largest economy in the world, Brazil holds the unsavory distinction of being a showcase for the socio-economic inequalities that characterize much of Latin America. The divide cuts many ways, European versus African or Native American descent, male versus female, urban versus rural, as well as along class of origin and region of residence. Forty-five percent of Brazilians are of African descent (or, according to census categories 5.39% “preto” (black) and 39.9% “pardo” (brown)). This places Brazil second only to Nigeria in the world in terms of the size of its black population. Women of African descent thus represent nearly a quarter of all Brazilians (Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras (Brazilian Women’s Articulation, hereafter AMB), 2001: 10). Despite this incontrovertible fact, until recently, very little research has been conducted about this segment of the Brazilian population. This paper offers a synopsis of the emerging scholarship mapping the social and economic exclusion of women of African descent in Brazil. The race and gender disaggregated statistics that pioneering scholars and activists, in many cases Afro-Brazilian women, have been painstakingly gathering and/or compiling, are beginning to reveal in concrete ways the depth of the inequalities that shape the lives of women of African descent in the birthplace of the now embattled myth of racial democracy¹.

Prior to outlining a snapshot of the race and gender disaggregated data available at this point, generally in Portuguese language, this paper provides some initial reflections on factors that have hindered the production of such knowledge until recently, as well as on the changes that have allowed for the emergence of this field of research. In particular, the paper outlines the inhibiting role played by manifestations of racial and gender hierarchies, such as the legacy of

the myth of racial democracy in state agencies until the early to mid-90s and a lingering official indifference and scarcity of resources for the study of race relations throughout the 1990s, along with the theoretical weight afforded class-based arguments to explain racial inequalities in academic circles. A now well-established limitation of earlier scholarship has been that many scholars have been relying –in race studies- on black men’s experiences as a yardstick of a generalized Afrodescendant experience, and –in gender studies- on that of white women as a yardstick of a generalized female experience, coupled with the appeal of unconditional “sisterhood” in feminist circles. I also discuss how the complexity of Brazilian racial identity further impinges on efforts to provide an accurate representation of the intersection of race and class. On the enabling side, factors that have promoted the emergence of this body of knowledge include the emergence of a black women’s movement and its impact on both the women’s and the black movement. Afro-Brazilian women scholars and activists’ understanding of the nature of the reproduction of gendered racial oppression, out of their own experiences and analyses, was strengthened by the appropriation of knowledge, notably of the intersectionality-based approach of gender, race, class and sexuality from US women scholars of color². The presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a sociologist with a longstanding interest in race relations, also facilitated the change in official discourse and political strategy around racial issues. Finally, the impact of international institutions and especially of the United Nations conference on racism held in Durban in 2001, on the Brazilian national racial formation, including within progressive social movements, is being considered.

The paper also suggests that, even though this is a challenging proposition when working on large sets of data of an empirical/statistical nature, our understanding of the complexity of the reproduction of racial inequalities is being strengthened when theoretical models incorporate

intersecting axes of inequality and identity among people of African descent, such as gender (our focus here), class and sexuality.

INTERLOCKING RACE AND GENDER HIERARCHIES AND THE DYNAMICS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Understanding the paucity of data on the lived experiences of women of African descent, especially in some areas, demands that we consider both racial and gender ideology and related structural features in the social, political and academic realms. For most of the 20th century, the notion that Brazil was a racial democracy was an essential component of the Brazilian racial formation. Later denounced as myth, this founding narrative of the modern Brazilian nation focused on mestiçagem (racial mixing), claiming since the 1930s, that there is no racism in Brazil due to the fact that most Brazilians are of mixed descent. It is interesting to note that it was equally adopted by elites as by pre-64 black movements³ as an ideal to be reached. While there is much debate as to what extent this myth truly prevailed in the past and to what extent it still is -as sociologist Antonio Guimaraes (2001) argues-, the first roadblock to the dismantling of racial inequalities in Brazil, most would agree that we now need to move beyond simply denouncing it. Yet there is no doubt that some form of denial of racial inequalities has contributed to the erasure of race as a fundamental structuring axis of Brazilian institutions, including the academy, and daily life. In academia, throughout most of the 20th century and until the late 1990s, the majority of scholars of racial difference steered clear of discussions of contemporary racial inequalities to focus on studies of African culture and religions, syncretisms, and regional variation in and resistance to slavery (Reichmann, 1999: 24).

Reichman rightly surmises that this was in part a result of the difficulties of facing white privilege for the majority of academics, and of the insecure position within academia of the first academics of African descent (ibid: 24). One could argue it was even more difficult in a cultural and political context, which extolled racial harmony.

More pointedly, at the hands of the authoritarian State, the myth of racial democracy was used to justify the complete elimination of the gathering of racially disaggregated data from the 1970 census, leading to almost twenty years without information (Berquó, 2001). As late as the 1990s, Brazilian scholars still faced an indifferent census bureau administration, unable “to disseminate timely statistical data on race and to disaggregate socioeconomic indicators by race (or gender)” (Reichmann 1999:26). Due to scarce resources many were unable to pay for the much needed “special tabulations”(ibid: 26) as well as suffered from having to work in isolation.

Nevertheless, by the late 1970s, as the dictatorship was easing its grip on academic life, a few pioneers, such as sociologists Carlos Hasenbalg (1979) and Nelson Silva (1978), following in the footsteps of Florestan Fernandes, set out to demonstrate the fallacy of the myth through statistical data, showing stark inequalities in income and living standards. Less noted was the work of two black women scholars and activists, Sueli Carneiro and Thereza Santos (1985), who focused on the life conditions of women of African descent.

Since the early 1990s, scholars, mostly linked to black studies centers and the black movement, have moved beyond denouncing the myth and have focused instead on examining the mechanisms by which racial exclusion actually takes place in Brazil (Guimarães and Huntley, 2000; Silva, 2001). This work was eased by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s resolve to clear up impediments related to the census administration in the mid-90s (Reichmann 1999: 26).

The visibility brought to the issue of racism in the region by the third World Conference on Racism and Discrimination held in Durban in 2001 and the resources allocated accordingly by government and international institutions, such as the Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (Institute for Applied Economic Research, hereafter IPEA) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), also facilitated large scale research projects aiming for an analytical diagnostic of the life experiences of Brazilians of African descent (Soares S., 2000; Zoninsein, 2001; Henriques, 2001; Safa, 2002). It also provided more visibility and further spurred the work already engaged in at a smaller scale by Brazilian scholars on these issues. It is worth noting that a dramatic shift in Brazilian State policy, since the turn of the millennium, towards the full recognition of racial inequalities and the need for reparation-oriented policies, such as affirmative action, has resulted in part from these international events and push by national activists, as well as the conscious efforts of President Cardoso to challenge the official discourse on race (Htun, 2004). Most recently, Brazil's Department for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPPIR) co-organized the first regional conference of the Americas against Racism held in Brasilia on July 26-28, 2006, in an effort to evaluate the progress made since Durban.

The theoretical model proposed in much of the diagnostic works based on statistics that attempt to map the material manifestations and consequences of racial exclusion⁴ generally, although often implicitly, takes the shape of a “cumulative cycle of disadvantages.” The accumulation takes place over generations, as well as over the life cycle of Afro-Brazilians, resulting from the legacy of slavery but mostly from contemporary forms of discrimination. The term “cumulative cycle of disadvantages” was coined by pioneer sociologists Hasenbalg and Silva (cited in Guimarães, 2000) and the model is maybe best exemplified in most recent studies

by Silva (2001), Lovell (1999a and b), Guimarães (2000), Zoninsein (2001) and Soares S. (2000)⁵. This is the model that I follow and modify here by systematically including the gendered dimension of racial exclusion. By speaking in terms of cumulative cycle, I do not mean to imply that simply “breaking the cycle” by increasing access to quality education for black women, for example, will suffice to turn the situation around. In fact, the most recent work on the topic suggests otherwise (Lovell 2006).

Briefly stated, the cumulative cycle of disadvantages goes as follows: It starts with a familial environment and a region of residence with fewer material and political resources - resulting originally from the aftermath of slavery-, continues with unequal access to quality early education and higher education. Both of these factors contribute to unfavorable timing and mode of insertion into the labor market, which is then aggravated by wage discrimination strictly speaking. Many of the reports attempting to systematize diagnostic data on racial exclusion stop at that point, most likely due to the sheer wealth of data to take into consider.

Other elements contribute to the reproduction of racial discrimination which have been included in these pages: At each of these stages, neglect by the State to provide services provided to better-off populations, such as health care, potable water, sanitation and electricity, constitutes another aspect of exclusion (see Henriques, 2001). Such neglect is made possible, in part, by the limited access of the Afro-Brazilian population to political representation. Lack of access to goods, such as proper housing, labor-saving appliances etc, resulting from restricted access to income and lack of accumulated wealth over generations, also contribute to rendering more difficult the juggling of life responsibilities. Finally, difficulties in maintaining good health under such circumstances are likely to compound an already disadvantaged position with regard to

educational and occupational achievements, which in turn is likely to reduce participation in the political system⁶.

Until recently, this type of model generally did not consider the effects of gender (or other axes of identity and inequality). In part, this is likely a result of the relatively newcomer status of race studies and gender studies to academia and of the division of labor of scholars in either one of them. Indeed, researchers have only recently recognized the importance of gender as constitutive of racial identity and integral to black men and women's experience of discrimination. In the words of black women activists, gender related oppression was (and too often still is) couched in terms of "specificity" –issues that are seen as specific to black women only and not to people of African descent in general (Ribeiro, 1995; Roland, 2000). Such issues are often invisible even to black men since they do not affect them, or rather, they affect them differently – often, but not systematically, in the form of a privilege relative to the women in their midst. This is compounded by the limited number of women, especially black women, found in academia (itself one of the results of gendered racist oppression). As a result, issues related to reproduction, such as the double day and childcare issues have been ignored, as well as issues related to sexuality, domestic violence or reproductive health.

It is worth pondering and further investigating the consequences of what one could consider to be one of the crucial components of racial ideology, namely Brazil's self-representation as a "color-blind erotic democracy," to use Goldstein's words, in which the exoticized sex appeal of the mulatta provides the basis for the birth of a nation of mixed race. To what extent has the assumption implicit in this construction of Afro-Brazilian women's access to white men's assets and possibilities for socio-economic uplift via the exploitation of their sexuality, further masked the discrimination against black women, or at least facilitated lack of

attention to the female experience of racial discrimination. Both Goldstein (2003) and Ferreira da Silva (1998) illustrate this gendered aspect of the myth for Brazilian society in general. Ferreira da Silva argues that consequences of the sexual objectification of the black female related to “the placing of miscegenation at the heart of the national narrative” is that

“On the one hand, the black Brazilian woman has constantly to negotiate the assumption of her faulty morality and powerlessness – her blackness ultimately writes her as solely responsible for her own subordination. On the other hand, as the celebrated instrument of miscegenation, the black female body can also be (positively) used to escape racial subordination. This is more easily seen in the controversial figure of the mulata (a sort of exotic dancer) [...]” (1998: 222).

Goldstein (2003) demonstrates quite vividly how much Afro-descendant women among the working poor hold tight to the hope that one day a “coroa,” or wealthy, most often white man, will make their everyday misery a thing of the past. Further research would be needed to ascertain to what extent such assumption found its way in the work of researchers as well.

For all these ideological and institutional reasons, those very intellectuals and activists who have been working so diligently at highlighting the racism that pervades the mainstream knowledge production apparatus, have generally been slow at unveiling sexist bias. The most recent works on racial exclusion do include gender, usually applied in an additive manner – that is, adding gender constraints to the cumulative cycle of disadvantages outlined above. Often, the focus is limited to the disadvantages encountered by women in the labor market and education, possibly because it is a way in which women’s experience most resembles men’s and hence data is more available, but also because thus such data “talks” to policy makers. Finally, one should

also not underestimate the challenges presented by managing complex sets of data with intersecting variables in a true intersectional manner (McCall, 2005).

If the black movement and the academic production of scholars of racial inequality until recently only partially shed light on black women's experiences of discrimination, this is also true of the work of feminist researchers and activists. Indeed, social movements do not evolve in a vacuum but, like academia, they are to some extent molded by their cultural matrix. As a result, the impact of the myth of racial democracy on feminist movements and academic work, who since the late 60s spearheaded research on sexist oppression in women's lives, has meant that little attention has been paid to ethnic/racial differences among women. Just as in the case of race studies scholars, this trend was likely bolstered by the fact that these academics were then trained most likely to focus principally on gender issues. Moreover, it is essential to remember that the military government from 1964 until the mid-1980s squelched research focusing on racial inequalities. As a result, the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, hereafter IBGE) did not cross-tabulate color-categories with socioeconomic variables until the early 80s (Nobles, 2000).

The origins of Brazilian women's movements in Marxist political sectors and the ideological and political appeal of unconditional "sisterhood" also contributed to this lack of attention to race-related differences. The myth of racial democracy certainly served to bolster Marxist-influenced researchers' original primary focus on class-based inequalities, and aligned perfectly with the basic assumption of the concept of sisterhood that all women, regardless of color, share similar concerns and interests and should struggle together for an end to male domination. In all these cases notions of racial oppression, and certainly its differential impact on women were pushed aside.

This marginalization of the concerns of women of color within the movement does not mean that women of African descent were not present or active early on in the movement, or that their concerns were not shared by some women of European descent. We should take note here of the pioneering work in the 80s of, among a few others, Lélia Gonzalez (1982) around the issue of the often exploitative relationships between women of African and European descent, as exemplified by the empregada/patroã (domestic worker/employer) relationship. Oliveira, Porcaro and Araujo (1983), researchers from the IBGE, presented, as early as 1983, a race and gender disaggregated picture of female heads of households and of their income situation. And in 1985 Thereza Santos and Sueli Carneiro published the first portrait of the socio-economic and political conditions of black women by black women activists. Anthropologist Kia Caldwell (2000a) has noted that this was, until recently the most complete analysis of the situation of Afro-Brazilian women we could rely on⁷.

At the social movement level, this marginalization in feminist movements (and of women's issues within the black movement) led to the establishment of autonomous black women's organizations in the mid-80s (Roland, 2000). It was not just a matter of power within movement articulations that were at issue though. As anthropologist Kia Caldwell (2000a) noted in her illuminating research on these matters, feminist scholars and activists' theoretical framework tended to minimize differences among women, thus leading to an essentializing notion of women as a unitary category, and limiting the space available to examine how race (and other aspects of identity) shapes the construction of gender identity and the experience and representations of gendered hierarchies. On the other hand, black Brazilian feminists, such as Carneiro and Santos, as early as 1985 "argued that attempts to generalize about all Brazilian women's experiences resulted in essentialized views of womanhood which denied the diversity

of women's experiences and led to homogenized notions of a "hypothetical feminine identity" (Caldwell, 2000b: 5). Caldwell's research demonstrates that the existence of work along similar lines by US women of color did not reach Brazilian feminism generally. It seemed, however, to have resonated with black Brazilian scholars who appropriated for their own purposes the works of scholars such as bell hooks (1984) and Patricia Hill Collins (1991) at least as early as 1995 (see for ex. Bairros, 1995). There is, however, given all the reasons mentioned above, nothing unique or unusual about the difficulties Brazilian feminisms or black movements encountered to truly integrate difference. The fact that Caldwell's article was published in 2000 in the leading feminist journal in Brazil, Revista Estudos Feministas, denotes the willingness in feminist academic circles to confront these issues.

As much as Caldwell's work on women's studies in Brazil resonates with my understanding of the situation in academia, as well as with criticisms I heard in activist circles in 1992 about the lack of inclusion of Afro-Brazilian women in the organization of Planeta Femea during the UN conference on the environment in Rio de Janeiro, it also seems that by 1995, when I had the chance to participate in a number of movement-wide activities, including preparation meetings for the UN Conference on Women in Beijing, change had started to happen in feminist activist circles. Without being overly optimistic, participation by women of African descent in these fora, several of them in key leadership roles, facilitated the successful incorporation of their race-based analysis to the discussion (Ribeiro, 1995; Oliveira & Sant'Anna, 2002). Change seems to have started earlier in social movements than in academic circles. This is likely related to the kind of institutions we are dealing with, social movements being more fluid, not requesting the long process of recruitment and training required in academia. Such process makes black women's access particularly difficult, given the material

and psychological hurdles they have to face. By the time the Durban conference rolled around, – certainly as a result of the constant pressure of prominent black feminists in their midst- not only did two major national feminist networks set the Durban conference on Racism squarely on their agenda, assuming as they should, racism as a Brazilian women’s concern, but both, the Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras (AMB) and the Rede Nacional Feminista de Saúde, Direitos Reprodutivos e Sexuais (National Feminist Network for Health, Reproductive Rights and Sexuality, hereafter RedeSaúde) provided support for the publication of demographic data on women of African descent in preparation for the conference. These were respectively the report: Mulheres Negras: Um retrato da discriminação racial no Brasil (Black Women: A Portrait of Racial Discrimination in Brazil) and a special issue of the Jornal da Rede, Journal of the Women’s Health Network, of March 2001, dedicated entirely to black women’s health issues. More recently the Health Network’s Dossiê Assimetrias Raciais no Brasil: alertas para a elaboração de políticas (Dossier on Racial Hierarchies in Brazil: issues to consider for the elaboration of public policy) was presented to the then newly elected Worker’s Party government, and elaborated to provide activists with ammunition in the discussion of the government’s Four-year Plan (Sant’Anna, 2003). These documents, along with the work done by black woman activist, historian, and former Secretary for Human Rights of the State of Rio de Janeiro, Wania Sant’Anna, on disaggregation of the Human Development Index, with Marcelo Paixão (1997), constitute the most updated demographic pictures we have. In fact, they were praised by black activist leaders (Carneiro, 2002). It remains to be seen to what degree this willingness to throw its weight behind the anti-racist struggle will transform into a thorough revisiting of movement’s internal conflicts around issues that matter to women of African descent, as well as of interracial relations among activists (Sant’Anna, personal communication).

RACIAL IDENTITY FORMATION AND QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF RACIAL INEQUALITIES IN BRAZIL

Before exposing the interlocking effects of racism and sexism on women's lives, it is essential to understand the complex reality of racial identity formation in Brazil⁸. Conventional accounts of racial identity argue that most Brazilians think of themselves as citizens coming in different colors, rather than as racially different. However, as Safa (2005) illustrates, the concept of mestizaje (or mestiçagem, i.e. celebration of racial and cultural mixing) at the heart of the nation-building myths of Latin American countries is unequivocally connected to the notion of whitening and of supremacy of European race and civilization. As a result, when asked to self-identify, Brazilians use dozens of different terms, based mostly on phenotypes, but most, 43% to be precise, use the term "Moreno" (brown) shying away from their African ancestry. When asked to reclassify themselves according to census categories⁹, half of these "morenos" choose the "pardo" (brown) category, and half choose either the "white," "black," or "other" category (Silva, 2001:147).

Many argue that in everyday life, cor/raça (color/race) is shaped by context, as well as by other attributes of the persons involved. For these reasons, a number of scholars believe in the necessity to further our understanding of the extent and consequences of what they see as the fluidity and ambiguity of cor/raça identity. They call attention to the risk of reifying and reinforcing "racial categories" which they understand as a creation of social scientists engaged in empirical research on racial inequalities, and of the black movement (Maggie and Rezende, 2002; Ferreira da Silva, 1998).

On the other hand, recent ethnographic research is showing increasingly clearly that Brazilians see past the multitude of color terms they use (cor) and do identify, sometimes somewhat opaquely, a common racial identity for people of color (raça) (Sheriff, 2002, 2003; Pravaz, 2003). This would explain why despite thinking in terms of color, Brazilians are acutely aware of differential racial treatment: a study showed that 90% of interviewees responded “yes” to the question “Are whites prejudiced toward blacks?” (Silva, 2001: 148).

The role gender plays in shaping women’s racial identity has started to be investigated, in particular how women negotiate and manipulate, given their limited economic options, the differing stereotypes that plague “negras” (hardworking but not witty, unattractive “workhorses”) versus “mulatas” (perceived as racially mixed, shrewd, sexually intrepid, the image of Brazilianness) (Bennett, 1999; Gilliam, 1998; Pravaz, 2003; Goldstein, 2003).

The dynamics of this racial formation and its ramifications in terms of research politics affect the quantitative work on which the assessment of racial inequalities in Brazil is based. When this work is based on the bifurcated census categories, we must be aware that income and education impinge on self-identification. Therefore some will choose pardo (brown) over preto (black), despite their darker skin, if they have a higher social status, which itself contributes to differences in cross-tabulations of socioeconomic variables between the pardo and preto categories (Silva, 2001: 147; Lovell and Wood, 1998: 91). The extent to which this drift occurs was examined by sociologist Charles Wood who, using demographic projection techniques, found out that nearly 40% of those who declared themselves black in 1950 no longer did so in 1980 and chose the brown [pardo] category instead (Lovell and Wood, 1998: 93-94). This and other research led the authors to conclude that “the boundary between black and brown is ambiguous and unstable over time, but the boundary between white and nonwhite is relatively

unambiguous and remarkably stable over time” (Lovell and Wood, 1998: 94). For its part, the Brazilian Black movement has pushed for the use of only one inclusive category (negra, in recent years afrodescendente) based on the understanding that keeping the two categories in the census has contributed to the continued idea of racial mixing and hence of racial democracy (see also Nobles, 2000). They see one category as more conducive to political mobilization. Safa notes that the term “Afrodescendant” is particularly useful since it “dismisses the whitening bias inherent in *mestizaje*” (2005: 312). One inclusive category also makes sense given the fact that quantitative assessments of racial discrimination for various social indicators generally show much similarity for “black” and “brown” (Silva, 2001; Lovell and Wood, 1998). Finally, our increasingly refined understanding of racial identity formation in Brazil also stirs us in this direction.

STATISTICAL PICTURE OF GENDERED RACIAL INEQUALITY FOR AFRO-BRAZILIAN WOMEN

The findings of pioneering scholars and activists –many of them women of African descent¹⁰-, described in this section, allow us to start evaluating the extent of the difficulties Afro-Brazilian women face in concrete and specific ways. Using a gendered version of the model of the cumulative cycle of disadvantages, we can begin to identify the mechanisms of racial exclusion for women of African descent and assess its consequences at different stages of their life cycle.

A few vital indicators will reveal the depth of the consequences of racial exclusion for women of African descent in Brazil: life expectancy is 64.8 years for men and 71.2 years for women (Pan American Health Organization 1999) but since the 1940s, people of African descent

(both “browns” and “blacks”) live about 7 years less than people of European descent (Cunha, 2001). This brings Afro-Brazilian women’s life expectancy to 66 years, or three years less than white men, when around the world women generally have a greater life expectancy than men (Sant’Anna, 2001). Worse maybe, despite the remarkable decline in the general infant mortality rate since World War II, racially disaggregated data revealed that, in 1993, 62 mothers of color out of 1,000 saw their newborn baby die versus half as many white mothers (37/1,000) (Cunha, 2001). Unfortunately this differential is not shrinking: while white infant mortality was reduced by 43% between 1977 and 1993, the reduction for Afro-Brazilians was only half that, at 25% (Cunha, 2001). To sum it up, in 1999 black Brazil ranked 108th according to the Human Development Index¹¹ while its white counterpart ranked 43rd 12 (AMB, 2001: 11).

RESIDENCE

According to the model of cumulative cycle of disadvantages discussed earlier, one primary source of inequality for women of African descent is their location of residence due to Brazil’s regional inequalities in terms of wealth and economic development as well as of racial distribution. The Southeast and South which are largely white (64% and 83% respectively) are also the wealthiest, most urbanized and industrialized regions. While the poorer regions, the North and Northeast, are respectively 71% and 70% Afro-Brazilian (pardo and preto) (Henriques, 2001: 6). It is also important to remember that, even though the large majority of the Brazilian population is now urban (75.6% of the population lived in cities in 1991), the population of African descent is more rural, and women of African descent are slightly more rural than men of African descent. They constitute 27% of the rural population but only 23% of the Brazilian population (AMB, 2001: 10).

EDUCATION

Access to education is generally noted as the second element in the model of cumulative cycle disadvantages related to racial exclusion. In the Brazilian case, while the gender gap in years of schooling and illiteracy has been eliminated¹³, racially disaggregated data reveal a striking gap in illiteracy rates: it stands at 19.8% for Afro-Brazilians, which is more than double that of Euro-Brazilians (at 8.3%) (Henriques, 2001). The racial differential among younger generations is marginally narrower: 2.6% whites between the ages of 15-25 are illiterate versus 7.6% among black youth (ibid). In fact the educational differential between blacks and whites has remained virtually unchanged since the 1920s, although in absolute terms both groups are improving (ibid). This is also true among women. Household Survey data for 1997 show that the black women's illiteracy rate was 22% versus 10% for white women (Sant'Anna, 2001: 19). However, it is clear that young boys of color are forced to enter the labor force much earlier than their sisters. At age twelve, when asked "have you worked?" 15.1% of pretas and 14.6% of pardas, as well as 26.6% of pretos and 34.1% of pardos responded yes¹⁴ (compare with 7.3% of white girls and 18.8% of white boys) (Silva, 2001: 154). Peggy Lovell's elaborate analysis of 2000 census data for working men and women in urban São Paulo confirms this trend: 23% of white women and 6% of Afro-Brazilian women had 12 or more years of schooling, while only 18% of white men and 4% of Afro-Brazilian men did so. Note again the much greater racial gap (Lovell 2006:70).

This sad reality is in part due to the regional differences discussed earlier, to class differences, which lead to more precarious educational establishments in their neighborhoods, to parents' lower level of schooling, and to earlier entry into the job market (Sant'Anna, 2001: 18). At the university level, the number of women of color entering university is growing faster than that of white women, which is not a surprise given the low level at which they started. For white

women, 5.9% have 15 or more years of schooling, compared with only 1.1% of black and 1.4% of “brown” women (Sutherland, 2001: 6 with 1996 data).

Successful efforts, in the 1990s at improving universal access to early education, have meant that between 1992 and 1999, the number of young Brazilians between 7 and 13 who do not go to school has dropped by half, this is true for both blacks and whites (Henriques, 2001: 28). Unfortunately, this data was not disaggregated by gender. States with a large population of African descent continue to lag behind in terms of educational quality (such as the teacher/pupil ratio), which has been highlighted as an important variable to improve returns to education (Arias & Yamada, 2001).

Scholars working in this area note that it is not only in the access to quality education that discrimination takes place today, but also in the hidden curriculum, i.e. the shaping of gender and race-based roles, in reinforcing different expectations and opportunities for men and women, for blacks and whites (Soares, 1998: 43). For these reasons as well as for discrimination in the labor market, Afro-Brazilian women, despite their higher education level than black men, are least likely to reap the full economic benefit from their educational achievement, as will become amply clear in the following section on employment and wage gaps.

OCCUPATION AND ECONOMY

Going on to the next stage in the life cycle, the model mapping racial exclusion generally discusses entry and promotion in the labor market. Most studies focusing on the racially based wage gap (non-disaggregated by sex) agree that what is at play is the lack of accumulation of human capital, extending back over several generations (Arias & Yamada, 2001), unequal quality of education (Arias & Yamada, 2001), as well as labor market segmentation, which pushes people of color in lower productivity industries and occupations, and finally pure wage

discrimination (Zoninsein, 2001). Faced with such adversity, motivation to invest in one's human capital is more difficult for people of African descent to sustain (Zoninsein, 2001). Here again we need to provide a gender dimension to this model. Women of African descent enter the job market earlier and remain on the job longer than women of European descent in all the metropolitan regions of the country. This is due to their need either to contribute to the livelihood of their family, since the men in their households generally earn small wages, or to ensure it entirely, given the higher proportion of women of African descent among female heads of household. They, therefore, have higher job market participation rates than nonblack women (includes Asian-Brazilian women). In 1998 the numbers were 55.1% versus 52.8% in Brasilia; 43.9% versus 43.0% in Recife. In comparison, black men's participation rates range from 66.3% in Salvador to 73.4% in São Paulo (Instituto Sindical Interamericano pela Igualdade Racial (InterAmerican Institute for Racial Equality, hereafter INSPIR), 1999: 117).

Despite their greater need for income, women of color are over represented in informal sector activities that offer low wages, no benefits and no stability. In 1991, in urban São Paulo, one of the areas where the formal sector is the most developed, 69% of working white women, 66% of brown and 63% of black women had a work card, while 80% of white women but only 71% of brown and black women benefited from social security (in comparison, 86% of white men had a work card and 90% of them benefited from social security; while the numbers for brown and black men respectively were 87% and 84.7% for work card, and 88.5% and 87.4% for a social security card) (Lovell 2000: 93) See table in annex 1.

Occupational segregation based on racial and gender stereotypes and gender roles, as well as lower levels of human capital (no longer in terms of education), help explain women's greater involvement in the informal sector. So do other discriminatory practices, such as the

common request of “boa aparência” (good appearance) in job announcements, in which all Brazilians know to recognize a call for “well-dressed whites only.” Moreover, women generally are pressed to choose jobs which will allow them to perform their traditional duties as mothers and wives, therefore restricting their options further either in terms of space or time.

As a result, in rural areas, most black women work on family farms -where their labor remains invisible- as sharecroppers or as “boias frias” (literally cold lunch box) i.e. as day-laborers. In the cities, many work as self-employed street vendors, laundresses or seamstresses in sweatshops. They also sew at home, subcontracting from well-known multinational companies or their subcontractors. Stable blue-collar jobs in the formal sector are still a white men’s preserve. Most dramatic is the high percentage of Afro-Brazilians (men and women) working as domestic workers: that percentage in various metropolitan areas is at least double that of nonblacks (INSPIR, 1999: 120).

Since the 1960s, the Brazilian economy has grown and modernized offering new opportunities in white-collar work for women. Afro-Brazilian women registered the largest absolute gain due to their very modest starting point in 1960. By 1980, 34% of urban Afro-Brazilian employed women were working in professional and technical activities. Still they lagged considerably behind white women in this type of employment (63% of them could be found in this type of employment) (Lovell, 1999a: 145). More recently, the 2000 census data showed that, in urban São Paulo, women of African descent are still nearly half as likely to be employed as professionals or as administrators than white women, but they are almost twice as likely to be hired as a domestic worker. A full 62% of black women are employed in either low-paying service occupations or domestic service versus 27% of black men, 39% of white women and 22% of white men. On the other hand, men of each racial group are four to five times as

likely to work in manufacturing than the women within that group (Lovell 2006:71-75). In other words, there is a clear segmentation of the labor market by gender and race.

Women of African descent have much higher levels of unemployment in Brazil's metropolitan areas than other groups. Factors such as "early entry in the labor market, the greater insertion of the black population in less dynamic sectors of the economy, greater participation in more precarious employment positions and in unqualified jobs" are important in explaining this situation (AMB, 2001: 17). Unemployment rates are often not meaningful given the importance of the informal sector in which large numbers of people are underemployed. Still, according to INSPIR (1999: 119) in the best of cases (Belo Horizonte) black women have a 20.5% unemployment rate versus 16.8 for non-black women and 11.5% for non-black men (includes Asian-Brazilians). In the worst situation (Salvador) the numbers are respectively 27.6%, 20.3% and 15.2%. This being said, the gap between black and non-black women is much narrower than between black and non-black men (at worse 36 percentage points in Salvador for women and at best 6.7 points in Brasilia; and for men 57.8 in Salvador and 26.6 in Recife) (INSPIR, 1999: 118).

WAGE GAP

Even though the 1988 Constitution prohibits discrimination in wage levels, hiring and positions on the basis of sex or race, Brazil in 1999 was trailing only Sierra Leone in terms of inequity in income distribution (Sutherland, 2001: 4). In 1998, nationally, black women made only 40% of white men's earnings, under the compounding effects of gender and race discrimination on their paycheck, their insertion differential, and an important qualification differential. In comparison, white women and black men made respectively 79% and 46% of white men's income (Soares S., 2000: 6). Income levels are not sufficient to account for poverty

since asset worth and accumulation over generations provides an essential “safety-net” which is absent for most people of African descent (Conley, 2004). Still, discrimination in terms of income is sadly revealing.

Statistics validate the claim that not only have such strident inequalities persisted over time, but that they do not systematically disappear as the economy urbanizes and modernizes, as many might intuitively think. In fact, while the overall gender wage gap has been shrinking at about 1% per year between 1987-1998, the race-based wage gap has not been budging (Soares S., 2000). Moreover, it remains to be seen whether the gender trend will continue. A look at the gender wage gap in the US shows that we had to wait until 1988 to get back to the 1946 level of women making 66% of men’s wages, after a long downturn (with a low of 56.6% in 1973) (National Committee on Equal Pay, 1998: 236).

Peggy Lovell, focusing on the 1960-1980 period in urban São Paulo, notes that “labor market inequalities between whites and Afro-Brazilians and between women and men have actually increased with economic growth and modernization in Brazil” (1999a: 140). Indeed if the 1960/1980 period saw large numbers of women shift to better paid white collar work, the gap with men’s earnings still remained, and in fact increased: In 1960 Afro-Brazilian women in white collar jobs made 61% of Afro-Brazilian men’s wages versus 57% in 1980. Gains were made only in the lowest categories of unskilled manual labor, mostly because women were starting from such an unfavorable position¹⁵ (Lovell, 1999a: 147). In that same region, women experienced greater gains in the 1990s compared to men: by 2000 Afro-Brazilian women made 71% of Afro-Brazilian men’s wages (Lovell 2006: 75). On the other hand, in terms of race wage gap, the discrepancy between the wages of white and black women workers stubbornly remained

stable between 1980 and 2000, with black women making about 60% of white women's wages (Lovell 2006: 77).

How much of these wage differentials is a result of unequal pay rather than differences in qualifications, insertion in the labor market, number of hours worked etc. is the next important question. In her latest study of São Paulo's urban labor force through 2000 census data, North American sociologist Peggy Lovell found out that "pure" wage discrimination is the single largest element contributing to both the gender and race wage gaps and that it is increasing: Comparing the wages of Afro-Brazilian women to white men, discrimination explained 53% of the difference in 1960, and 63% in 2000 (Lovell 2006:79). Lovell and others have also showed that this pure wage differential is the largest for women and Afro-Brazilians in the highest paying jobs (Lovell 1999b; 2006; Soares S., 2000: 17). Lovell who has focused much of her work on these issues argues that the greater opportunities and upward mobility in an expanded economy have in fact generated greater competition, especially for the highest paying jobs, which in turn has favored the strengthening of the color and gender lines as a means to maintain privileged access by some (1999b: 413-414).

Using an explicitly intersectional model, Lovell also underscores in her 2006 study the need for public policy to consider how different the barriers are which confront Afro-Brazilian women when compared to white women or Afro-Brazilian men (2006). Adding one more dimension to be considered by policy makers, it is interesting to note that, although white women make more money than black men in urban areas, the reverse is true for the less "modernized" rural areas: white men earn on average 2.5 minimum salaries (about \$250 per month), black men 1.4 minimum salaries, and white women 0.9. Black women find themselves again in the harshest situation with only 0.7 minimum salaries on average (1990 data) (Bruschini, 1994: 23).

EXCLUSION WITH A VENGEANCE: AFRO-BRAZILIAN FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

Adding the dimension of marital status seems essential to understanding the gendered nature of racial exclusion. This dimension is generally missing from mainstream accounts of racial inequality.

Anchored in the reality of colonial Brazil, where legal marriage was rare among the racially mixed lower classes and served mostly as a marker of social differentiation (Hahner, 1990: 8), race and class still shape the conjugal status of Brazilian women. Research on the demographics of the black population between 1940 and 1980 identified more unmarried black men and women, lower levels of legally married black and brown women and more mixed couples consisting of black men and white women, rather than the reverse. This internalization in the black community of the aesthetic of whitening constitutes one of the most important grievances of women of African descent with regard to racism within the black community and even within the black movement (Santos, 1999; Winddance Twine, 1997).

These tendencies contribute to the fact that Afro-Brazilian women are overrepresented among female-headed households. Such households have been on the increase in the past decades: from 13% of families in 1970 up to 20.1% in 1989 (Soares, 1998) and to approximately 26% in 1998 (Teles Costa, 2001: 5). In Brazil, as elsewhere in the region, economic difficulties, such as the ones encountered throughout the 80s and 90s, have prevented many men from fulfilling their role of family provider, so far the linchpin of masculine identity. Under the pressure, many have chosen to abandon their households (Giffin and Cavalcanti, 1999). As in other countries in the region, these households are often among the poorest, given their head's

limited job opportunities and remuneration. Yet racial disaggregating reveals that a majority (60%) of the poorest among these (those who earn less than one minimum wage salary), are headed by Afro-Brazilian women, while only 29% of female headed households earning three or more times the minimum salary are headed by Afro-Brazilian women (AMB, 2001: 18).

RACIAL INEQUALITIES IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF GOODS AND SERVICES

Lack of access to goods and services is not only a manifestation and consequence of racial exclusion but also one of the mechanisms by which women of African descent are excluded from full-fledged citizenship and see their life choices constrained, given the ensuing additional difficulties in juggling employment and family.

In particular, lack of access to State services, which in many ways amount to State neglect to respond to the needs of Afro-Brazilian women and their families, including basic sanitation infrastructure and health care, is clearly another mechanism of racial exclusion: An obvious lack of concern for marginalized population and their low political weight leave their neighborhoods devoid of basic sanitation infrastructure: in 1996 32% of households with an Afro-Brazilian head were classified as inadequate (versus 12% for white headed households). Thirty-five percent of them do not have piped water and a full half of them lack access to the sewage system (versus only 26.4% of white households) (1996 data) (AMB, 2001: 20).

Similarly important for the working woman are consumer goods, such as washing machines and fridges, which considerably facilitate her responsibilities for reproductive labor in the private sphere. Here again, differences are still staggering: 90% of Afro-Brazilian households do not have washing machines and 83% do not have refrigerators (compared with 73% and 56% respectively for white households) (Henriques, 2001: 44).

Over time we have seen an improvement in both state services and acquisition of consumer goods for both black and white households between 1992 and 1999. However, the pace at which improvement has taken place has been greater for white households, thus leading to greater levels of inequality (Henriques, 2001: 41-44).

HEALTH

A population's health status is, like its level of access to goods and services, a clear indicator of its marginalization relative to other groups, as various morbidity patterns will show here. However, as in the previous section, the State's lack of concern for a particular section of its citizenry constitutes a clear component of exclusion.

In fact, the very lack of effort by the State to collect gender and race disaggregated data in this area has made it difficult to evaluate the reality of this exclusion. To find health-related data, which is both racially and gender disaggregated, is a challenge. It means relying on the pioneering work of a few scholars and activists (Souzas, 2003). Even PAISM, the Program for Integrated Women's Health, a feminist-inspired holistic program adopted by the federal government since the 80s did not require the race of a woman to be recorded or considered in public policy.

Indeed, only pressure from the black movement led the Health Ministry to begin collecting such data under the Black Population Health Program of 1996. In fact, nothing was done until December 2001¹⁶ when it finally was announced that the mandatory notification system for diseases such as Aids, tuberculosis etc would from now on include the race of the individual involved (Marta de Oliveira interview 10/12/2001).

Yet, it is obvious that the very living conditions of women of African descent do put them at greater risk for a number of health conditions, notably in terms of maternal health

(Oliveira, 2001: 11). Maternal deaths for black women are estimated (for 1997) to reach 110 women per 100 thousand live births, a level similar to the poorest countries in the region. Yet it is acknowledged that large numbers of maternal deaths are not being reported (AMB, 2001: 22). Afro-descendant women are more likely to be affected due to the higher level of hypertension and diabetes among them, to the more difficult conditions in which they live, and to their lack of access to knowledge and supplies of contraceptives. They are more likely to live in those states with the most precarious health care facilities, i.e. the north and northeast, as well as in rural areas more generally, where healthcare facilities are practically non-existent. Moreover, research has shown that women of African descent have reduced access to pre-natal care (half as many white than Afro-Brazilian women (6% versus 12.8%) did not benefit from pre-natal care in 1996) (Perpétuo in AMB 2001: 25). Finally, one 1993 study in Paraná, in the wealthier part of the country, revealed that “pretas” are 7.4 times more likely to die in pregnancy related circumstances than “brancas,” hypertension being one important factor in the causes noted¹⁷ (Martins, 2001: 39). Women of African descent (“pretas”) are more likely than women of European descent to die of hypertensive heart disease and heart attack, as well as of stomach and cervical cancer (Batista, 2003).

In terms of AIDS, the feminization of the epidemic in the country is now common knowledge. Indeed the spread of HIV/AIDS is growing faster among women than men, for biological as well as socio-cultural reasons linked to gender inequalities, sexual violence and sexism in the healthcare system. The greater vulnerability of low-income populations has also been established. Structural violence, in particular that related to the drug trafficking, makes it difficult for prevention programs to take place and drugs themselves are an important mode of transmission. The population of African descent is overrepresented in those marginalized

neighborhoods (Bastos in AMB, 2001: 31). For these and other reasons, black women activists are calling for attention to the plight of Afro-Brazilian women with regard to AIDS¹⁸, as Jurema Werneck, member of the NGO Criola, argues (Werneck, 2001; see also Batista, 2003).

We understand the socio-economic –and in a few cases biological- reasons for Afro-Brazilian women’s greater health risks and mortality. However, much more research is needed to evaluate and redress differential access to the healthcare system and prevention programs, differences in the availability of quality of diagnostic and treatment, and in access to drugs and adherence to drug regimens. Finally, the role of racial discrimination on the part of practitioners will also need to be examined further: Racist bias in health sector practices was exposed by Diva Moreira’s interviews of 120 patients and doctors in the private and public hospitals of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais (Moreira cited in AMB, 2001: 33).

One area where racism has been most obvious is in the abuse of sterilization as a means of contraception. Sterilization has been widely used in Brazil due to misinformation on the consequences of the procedure, to lack of alternatives and to the development of a “culture of sterilization.” Yet, nowhere have the rates of women sterilized been higher than in the mostly Afro-Brazilian Northeast, where women having undergone sterilization represent a whopping 62.9% percent of all women using some contraceptive method versus 23.0% using the pill (Berquó, 1995: 9). In comparison, in 1986 the same figure was 47.2%, while the use of the pill was then at 32.1%. The increase in sterilization is even more striking among young women: in 1986 5% of women had been sterilized by age 25, in 1991, i.e. only 5 years later, the figure jumped to 19 percent (Roland, 1999: 201). Studies focusing on the racial identity of the women sterilized have shown no difference in rates of sterilization¹⁹ but “black activists have questioned the methodologies of those researchers and argued that regional differences point to a policy directed

at the Northeast” (Roland, 1999: 202). Most curious is the fact that the white Brazilian population grew by one percent between the censuses of 1980 and 1990 while the black population dropped by 1% during the same period. The sterilization issue, of course, has been an important struggle for Afro-Brazilian women's groups (Roland and Carneiro, 1990; Roland, 1999). As a result of pressures from activists, in 1996 “a federal law was passed which requires a minimum age of 25 for both women and men, the presence of 2 living children, informed and written consent by the interested party and a minimum period of 60 days between the request and the performance of the surgery, during which time other contraceptive methods and counseling must be offered to discourage precocious sterilization” (Roland, 1999: 205 note 5). Measures were also taken in 1995 to prevent caesarean sections to be used as cover for sterilizations (Roland, 1999: 202). Finally, hoping to broaden the contraceptive options of women, public health services launched an initiative in 1999 to ensure greater availability of reversible contraception methods, including condoms, in the public health system and in private clinics (Cadernos do Observatório, 2000: 22).

Sickle cell anemia is another area where state neglect of the needs of its population of African descent becomes clear. Despite estimates that as many as 10% of the black and brown population carry the sickle cell trait, the national Sickle Cell Program proposed in 1996 had still not been implemented by the turn of the millennium (Roland, 2001).

To end on a positive note, changes have been in the works since the coming to power of the Workers’ Party government due to the serious consideration given to racial issues by the new Coordinator in charge of Women’s Health programs and their close working ties with the new agency for the promotion of racial equality discussed in the next section.

INEQUALITIES IN POSITIONS OF POWER AND LEADERSHIP

There is a dearth of information and understanding of the role of peoples of African descent in Latin American political arenas, as Michael Hanchard reminds us (1999). According to him, this is a result of the division of labor between scholars focusing on race and those focusing on purportedly larger issues. Positive developments in terms of the participation of Afro-Brazilian in politics started with President Cardoso's appointing of militants from the Movimento Negro to government positions, and calling a conference on affirmative action in 1996 (Hanchard, 1999: 14-15). The Workers' Party government, coming to power in 2003, is continuing this pro-affirmative action policy, notably in the area of education, and established a Special Secretariat for Politics for the Promotion of Racial Equality, headed by respected Black woman activist, Matilde Ribeiro, who has the status of Ministra. The participation of the Brazilian delegation in Durban in September 2001 was also notable according to observers. Yet, even after the pull provided by the III World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related forms of Intolerance, Afro-Brazilian women activists find the Legislature to act only slowly on bills presented to Congress (Carneiro, 2002). Nevertheless, the healthy national discussion around affirmative action, especially in the realm of education, has meant greater awareness of racial inequalities in the population at large and can only be positive.

As for women of African descent, as is to be expected from the low numbers of both women²⁰ and people of African descent in politics, they are almost entirely absent from formal politics. When the military loosened its grip on the political system in the late 70s/early 80s, eight women were elected among the 479 members of the Chamber of Deputies and one woman to the Senate in 1982. 26 women made it to the Constituent Assembly in 1986. Among them was a remarkable woman, Benedita da Silva, a black resident of Rio's slums, member of the newly

formed left-wing Workers' Party, the only black woman elected to this Assembly and the first black woman ever to be elected to Congress. In 1994, she also became the first black woman Senator (Benjamin & Mendonça, 1997). She became one of three black women ministers appointed by Luis Inácio Lula da Silva to his government in 2003, heading the Social Affairs ministry.

Problems in the political arena for Afro-Brazilian women start with the difficulties they face in political parties. These difficulties are linked to the stereotypes of women and Afro-Brazilians as “passive, irrational, dependent, and lacking in leadership and entrepreneurial ability,” which transform into a lack of symbolic capital (Oliveira, 1999: 168). Leftist parties have also resisted the understanding of racial and gender inequalities (which women and Afro-Brazilians bring to the table to gain access to the political apparatus) because of their purportedly divisive nature (Hanchard, 1999). Women and people of African descent also lack political experience and do not come from the occupations among which Brazilian politicians have been recruited traditionally, namely professionals and business owners (Oliveira *ibid*). As a result, people of African descent do not get the kind of support they need as candidates, the situation being even worse for women of color (Interview of Olivia Santana of U Negro in Salvador 12/15/01²¹). Finally, women party militants also find it difficult to balance their public life with their responsibilities, in particular as mothers in the absence of childcare options, which limits the time they are available for political activities (Interview - Olivia Santana).

In order to address some of these inequities, a quota policy has been instituted, stating that no gender should have a representation inferior to 30% and superior to 70% of candidates in each political party. Despite this new legislation, few parties in 1998 met the required quota, given the long-term nature of the process of sensitization of the electorate and of party structures

required by this policy. In fact, fewer women were elected to the House of Representatives in 1998 than in 1994 (Miguel, 2000: 166). There was not a single black woman among them (Network of Organizations of Black Brazilian Women, 2001:32).

Afro-Brazilian women's lack of participation in formal politics stands in sharp contrast with their active role in community institutions, be it in Afro-Brazilian religious and cultural communities or in social movements. Indeed "Samba schools, churches, terreiros de Candomblé (Afro-Brazilian religious houses of worship), and other religious and cultural sites [should be considered] as centers for political mobilization" (Hanchard, 1999: 8). They provide tools for mobilization and are important for self-esteem and identity. Such recognition of their political impact has led to the emergence of a network of such cultural organizations: The Coordenação Nacional de Entidades Negras in 1991 (CONEN). It is worth noting the leadership role of women in such organizations, especially in Afro-Brazilian spiritist houses of worship. The Mother of the Saint or priestess has considerable spiritual and worldly influence on her congregation and on its few, often wealthy, mostly white patrons. Afro-Brazilian deities also provide a number of role models for girls and women, including strong, defiant women, far from the Virgin Mary's selfless and sacrificing ideal (Landes, 1994 [1947]; Abdon Cury & Carneiro, 1984). This is particularly so in Bahia, and to a lesser extent in the rest of the country.

Women of color in Brazil also have created their own organizations. The Black women's movement has held several national meetings at this point. They have had to struggle for a space both in the Black movement and in the women's movement (Santos, 1999). And indeed they have managed to get respect and get their voices heard in the women's movement. For example, when the São Paulo State Council on Women's Condition was created in 1982, four seats were requested by black women (out of 32) and were at first refused by the feminist movement. This

decision was later reversed mostly for reasons related to party politics (Santos, 1999). From there emerged its Commission on Black Women. Later, Edna Roland and Sueli Carneiro participated in the São Paulo City Women's Coordenadoria of the then recently elected mayor and Worker's Party militant, Luiza Erundina. After this experience with policy-making, they founded powerful advocacy organizations, which are now internationally recognized: Gelédes-Black Women's Institute, and later Fala Preta! In Rio, other non-governmental organizations, such as Criola, were established.

In 2001 black women represented one third of the National Council for Women's Rights (6 out of 19 national representatives). However, none had been nominated by the Black Women's Movement, as activists would have preferred, since it would ensure a more democratic representative system (Network of Organizations of Black Brazilian Women, 2001). The Special Secretariat for Policies Towards Women (SPM) established by the Workers' Party in 2003 did not have any recognizable black women in its upper echelon as of Summer 2003. One positive development has been that the new Ministra has previously overseen the establishment of race-based affirmative action in her capacity of President of the state university of Rio de Janeiro. Respected black women leaders are also found in what would be considered by many in the movement as the national-level coordination of the Brazilian women's movement, the Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras - AMB. Nevertheless, parity has not been achieved yet and problems remain with regard to public policy, notably in the fact that women's movement organization and advocacy tend to focus on ensuring women's rights, while there is a clearer conception among many black women's groups that larger socio-economic conditions, in particular those affecting the reproductive labor resting on women's shoulders need to be addressed with equal urgency (Interview CEBRAP 12/12/01).

It seems fitting to bring to a close our overview of the available data on the gendered dimension of racial inequality in Brazil with a discussion of participation in the political arena, given its importance for social change. One could argue that this is where the accumulation of disadvantages in education, occupation, time lost to lack of access to good health care and nutrition, and overburdened reproductive and productive labor, crystallizes to hinder black women's participation in the formal realm of politics and compounds the combined racist and sexist stereotypes which prevent them from being put on an electoral slate or winning an election.

CONCLUSIONS

We now have a strong basis of data in some areas, such as employment and education, but a lack in a number of others, notably health, including reproductive health, and violence against women. The production of knowledge around the gendered dimensions of racial exclusion was clearly impacted by state policy, which made race disaggregated data difficult to come by and repressed any inquiry on racial issues before the early 80s. Similarly, institutional practices within academia slowed down incorporations of new theoretical perspectives due to the division of labor among scholars of race studies and gender studies, as well as the extremely limited number of women of African descent found in higher education. From the point of view of ideology, it is interesting to note that the myth of racial democracy—whatever may be left of it now-- interlocked perfectly with the ideological frameworks present in early race and gender studies, notably with the ideal of sisterhood present in feminist circles, and with the primary focus on class of the Marxist frameworks, which originally influenced many feminist scholars,

and scholars of race relations. One aspect of the myth, namely Brazil's self-representation as a "color-blind erotic democracy," to use Goldstein's words, in which the exoticized sex appeal of the mulatta provides the basis for the birth of a nation of mixed race, could possibly also have originally facilitated a lack of attention to the female experience of racial discrimination. I believe that if this was indeed the case, it was certainly secondary to and served to reinforce a now well-established pattern of masculinist bias in research prior to the push for change by women. It thus took the establishment of, and push for change by, the Afro-Brazilian women's movement and the rise of Afro-Brazilian women scholars in academic ranks, supported by a few visionary senior scholars, to see more substantial work (including by non Afro-Brazilians) which disaggregates data both by gender and race. For its part, the international invitation provided by the Durban conference to consider "related oppressions" to racism and xenophobia, and the funds provided by international organizations for its preparation served as a catalyst.

Even though the various research reports which do include gender and race mentioned in this article tend themselves to be descriptive rather than analytical in terms of how race and gender interact, an approach which focuses on the intersection -at times conflicting- of gender, race, class and other axes of identity and inequality - is clearly gaining ground in the black women's movement and academic work, as evidenced by writings on the Durban Dossier published in Revista Estudos Feministas (2002) and in the feminist academic production more generally (for ex. Soares V., 2000). The type of intersectionality approach developed by US women of color, which seem to resonate with Afro-Brazilian women scholars,²² is a more inclusive framework which recognizes that it is impossible to separate the various facets of a person's identity in every day experience, in their interactions with others, in how they are treated by institutions, as well as in representations. Although an intersectionality approach in

itself does not necessarily preclude essentialism, as indeed some incarnations of the approach were born out of identity politics, most generally share a focus on the socially constructed nature of the categories they are working with. Such an approach also recognizes that sexism, racism and other forms of oppression all function on the same principle: that of a socially constructed norm and exclusion of those who differ from that norm. This framework points to the inadequacy of the additive model mentioned earlier in explaining how race and gender interlock and shape each other, rather than just add to each other, both in terms of oppression as well as in terms of self-identity. For example, Bairros (1995) shows that an additive model cannot account for how the privilege that black men are supposed to derive from their gender is deeply undermined by their racial identity. It also cannot explain how girls now have in Brazil higher levels of education than boys in their racial/ethnic groups (See also Lovell (2006) on complex interactions of gender and race in labor market positioning).

A fully intersectional approach would do more to achieve a truly inclusive framework, by integrating other dimensions such as class and sexuality. In this sense, this paper is limited in its efforts, especially with regards to sexuality.

An intersectional approach is generally less amenable to the sort of models quantitative research usually favors because it is difficult to streamline these complex processes into reasonably linear models. It is however feasible and can yield an extremely fine grain analysis of intercategorical complexity, as Leslie McCall's work on the new inequality in the United States has demonstrated (taking into consideration gender, race, class and place of residence) (2005).

As a final note, I would like to add that statistical data is certainly crucial, especially when convincing policy makers of the reality of discrimination and it has been invaluable in tackling the myth of racial democracy. I believe that our understanding of the nature of the

reproduction of racial inequalities also greatly benefits from the work of scholars who look beyond the material and economic dimensions of people's lives to incorporate the intertwined process of construction of otherness. They can help us further understand how otherness or difference is used, in the Brazilian context, to build hierarchical systems which condition access to resources, symbolic and material. Because, ultimately, it is this construction of otherness that leads to exclusion.

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ANNEX 1

SELECTED INDICATORS FOR EMPLOYED WOMEN AND MEN

18-64 YEARS OF AGE, URBAN SÃO PAULO, 1991

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>White</i>		<i>Pardo</i>		<i>Preto</i>	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
Mean years of completed schooling	8.7	7.9	5.8	5.5	5.8	5.7
Mean hours worked per week	40.0	44.3	41.8	45.4	41.5	44.8
% with work card	69.6	86.3	66.1	87.0	63.8	84.7
% with social security	80.0	90.3	71.2	88.5	70.9	87.4
% married	45.3	66.2	41.3	65.7	35.6	63.1

Source: Lovell, Peggy 2000 table 2 Page 93

1991 Brazilian Demographic Census Public-Use Sample

NOTES

¹ This review includes all the works which presented the most recent quantitative data on the material manifestations and consequences of racial exclusion I was able to locate after substantial library research and a search for unpublished work, coupled with interviews of key individuals engaged in this field of study in 2001. This research was originally conducted as part of a larger project commandeered by the Inter-American Development Bank, which invited Dr. Safa to provide an overview of the conditions of exclusion of women of African descent throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

² This is not to suggest that the racial formations of the US and Brazil are identical.

³ See Guimarães 2002 p.166

⁴ We cannot underestimate the material consequences of the ideological dimensions of racial exclusion, such as stereotypical representations in, or erasure from, religious, scholarly and literary texts, national identity narratives, educational materials, the media, etc., as well as their enactment in every day institutional and individual interactions. However, this paper focuses on the data currently available to diagnose the extent of racial inequalities in Brazil.

⁵ Many of the studies which use or draw on the model of cumulative cycle of disadvantages are comprehensive studies compiling and analyzing census and other national level statistical data with large data sets, which were conducted within the framework of international and national institutions (such as IPEA, UNDP, IADB) or at least published by such institutions (The World Bank in particular), but also of nongovernmental organizations (such as FASE), as well as individual academic work (Lovell for example). They are not necessarily produced by women of African descent, although some have (Bairros 1991; Sant'Anna 2001). Women of African descent have contributed a wealth of smaller-scale studies focusing on a particular aspect of gendered racial oppression (see for example Oliveira 2001; Roland 1999; Werneck 2001).

⁶ We are only starting to scrape the surface of understanding the price paid by Afrodescendant men and women for the frustration resulting from a culture, institutions, and in particular State agencies, permeated by racism, notably in terms of mental health (Batista, 2003; Souzas, 2003). We are also starting to

understand in concrete ways the extent to which state institutions, such as the police and the justice system, associate darker skin color with criminality (Mitchell and Wood, 1999).

⁷ Also of note is a seminar organized in the late 1980s at the Federal University of Minas Gerais by Peggy Lovell and funded by the Ford foundation, entitled *Racial Inequalities in Contemporary Brazil*. A third of the book, which resulted from the seminar, deals with various aspects of the gendered dimensions of racial oppression (Lovell 1991). Another volume of works by Brazilian scholars, edited by Rebecca Reichman (1999), who served as program officer with the Ford Foundation in Rio de Janeiro, devote close to half of its chapters to Afro-Brazilian women's issues.

⁸ For an excellent discussion of racial identity in Brazil, see Hanchard (1999)

⁹ "Preta" (black) and "parda" (brown) besides the other options "branca" (white), "amarela" (yellow) and since 1991 "indígena" (indigenous). The Comitê Consultivo of the 2000 Census tested new categories and language, referring to people's "origin" and to "ascendance" but these terms turned out too confusing for the majority of the population in pilot tests (Berquó 2001:8-9). I will use the terms "preto" and "pardo" when information is available on both categories to allow readers to use their own judgement.

¹⁰ Two remarkable exceptions are Peggy Lovell, a US sociologist and Elza Berquó, a Brazilian demographer.

¹¹ The HDI is a composite of three basic components of human development: longevity, knowledge and standard of living. Longevity is measured by life expectancy. knowledge is measured by a combination of adult literacy (two thirds weight) and mean years of schooling (one third weight). Standard of living is measured by purchasing power, based on real GDP per capita adjusted for the local cost of living (purchasing power parity)." (UNDP, Human Development Report 1994, p.91).

¹² Focusing on women, Brazil ranks 27 places worse on the Gender-adjusted Development Index for women of African descent than for human development issues generally, while it is doing much better on gender development issues for white women than for general human development issues (ranked 16 points better) (ABM 2001:12).

¹³ Currently the literacy rate between men and women is similar for the population at large. In fact, young women (age 15 to 25) show a considerably lower illiteracy rate (5.7%) than young men (9.2%) (UNESCO 1999), and the number of years of schooling of women is now slightly greater than that of men.

¹⁴ The fact that non-remunerated tasks within the home for which girls are generally responsible is not considered “work” might explain some of this gap.

¹⁵ In the same period, black women’s wages in unskilled occupations went from 36% to 54 % of that of Afro-Brazilian men (Lovell 1999a: 147)

¹⁶ Except in the State of São Paulo where race identified death certificate collection started with modest results in 1996. By 2000 only 7% of the certificates registered were missing racial information (Batista, 2003)

¹⁷ One important caveat to this data is that 27.4% of the cases of maternal deaths included had no specification as to the color of the mother. This might help explain why “pardas” ended up with a risk factor lower than that of whites (0.8 versus 1.0).

¹⁸ At least one study, in São Paulo state, has now shown that mortality as a result of HIV/AIDS is greater among black women and men (“pretas/pretos” according to the census) (Batista, 2003).

¹⁹ For example, Chacham (2001) Berquó (1999).

²⁰ with a mere 7% of the legislative in 1997, only 5.5% of mayorships (Miguel, 2000:166). In the judiciary and the executive, the situation is no better.

²¹ This interview and the ones that follow were conducted by Dr. Helen Safa for the IADB project (note 1).

²² Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks are two authors mentioned by Bairros (1995) and figure prominently on the webpage “Mulheres Negras do Umbigo para o Mundo.” <http://www.mulheresnegras.org/publica.html> accessed 01/11/2002). A more fine grain analysis of this body of work would be necessary to identify to what extent and what are the modalities by which Brazilian scholars have indeed translated the intersectionality approach developed by US women of color to reflect the realities of their socio-political and economic world.