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# Unmixing for Race Making in Brazil<sup>1</sup>

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This article analyzes race-targeted policy in Brazil as both a political stake and a powerful instrument in an unfolding classificatory struggle over the definition of racial boundaries. The Brazilian state traditionally embraced mixed-race classification, but is adopting racial quotas employing a black/white scheme. To explore potential consequences of that turn for beneficiary identification and boundary formation, the author analyzes attitudinal survey data on race-targeted policy and racial classification in multiple formats, including classification in comparison to photographs. The results show that almost half of the mixed-race sample, when constrained to dichotomous classification, opts for whiteness, a majority rejects mixed-race individuals for quotas, and the mention of quotas for blacks in a split-ballot experiment nearly doubles the percentage choosing that racial category. Theories of how states make race emphasize the use of official categories to legislate exclusion. In contrast, analysis of the Brazilian case illuminates how states may also make race through policies of official inclusion.

At the federal university in Brazil's capital city, Brasília, a special committee was constituted in 2004 to evaluate the application file photographs of self-classified *negros* (read "blacks" or "Afro-Brazilians") applying to the university via a new racial quota system. An anthropologist, a sociologist, a student representative, and three *negro* movement actors make up that committee, and their identities are kept *sub secreto* (Maio and Santos 2005). If the committee does not consider a candidate to be a *negro* or *negra*, then he or she is disqualified. The applicant can, however, appeal the decision and appear in person before the committee to contest his or her racial classification (Universidade de Brasília 2004). The State University of Mato Grosso do Sul has also adopted the use of photographs

<sup>1</sup> For their insightful comments, I thank Mara Loveman, David S. Meyer, and the *AJS* reviewers. Direct correspondence to Stanley Bailey, University of California, Department of Sociology, 3151 Social Science Plaza, Irvine, California 92697-5100. E-mail: bailey@uci.edu

and a verification committee for a racial quota system (UEMS 2004). At that institution, the committee is made up of two university representatives and three *negro* movement actors (Corrêa 2003).

This unusual *modus operandi* highlights a period of instability in racial categories, associated with a novel phase in the political struggle for identity and inclusion by the Brazilian *negro* movement.<sup>2</sup> Through a multifaceted process, but without disruptive protest or mass mobilizations, the movement has successfully pressured state actors to mandate *negro* inclusion in higher education and to encode that legislation with language emic to the movement. The label *negro* is not an official census term; the Brazilian state has for well over a century used a ternary, or three-category, format to represent the black-white color continuum that includes an intermediate or mixed-race category. In contrast, *negro* is part of a dichotomous racial scheme, counterposed to white, whose novelty in official contexts leads to the thorny issue of defining its boundaries. Nonetheless, some 30 Brazilian public universities have already adopted race-targeted policies (Ribeiro 2007). Moreover, legislation is now before the national congress mandating that all federal universities adopt racial quotas.<sup>3</sup>

Some may frame a move toward dichotomous categorization for race-targeted policy as an administrative approach to unwieldy mixed-race classifications (Ford 1994; Golub 2005). In the United States, when the 2000 census was to adopt a multiracial scheme, a similar issue emerged. In that context, the potential problem stemmed from institutionalizing multiracial identification in a society where race-targeted legislation relies on single-race language and in which the racial common sense has long been colored in black and white (Hochschild 2002; Prewitt 2002). In contrast, Brazil is thoroughly steeped in the language of mixed racial origins and racial ambiguity, and race-based legislation is new. What are the possible consequences of encoding public policy with single-race categorization in a society where, according to the 2000 Brazilian census, fully 39% self-classify as mixed-race? I examine these potential consequences, intended and otherwise, on both material and symbolic planes.

Regarding the material consequences, will dichotomous classification prove efficient for identifying the disadvantaged population, or might some quota candidates meriting inclusion be excluded (Ford 1994; Rosenberg 2004; Fry et al. 2007)? If faced with a constrained choice between

<sup>2</sup> I conceptualize the “*negro* movement” as that multiplicity of organizations dedicated to “struggling against racism and building a positive black identity” (Burdick 1998, p. 137).

<sup>3</sup> The legislation, “Projeto de lei do senado no. 6264/2005 [PLS 213/2003]—estatuto da igualdade racial,” was proposed in 2005 and is sponsored by Senator Paulo Paim. The text can be found at <http://www.camara.gov.br/sileg/integras/359794.pdf> (all URLs in this article lead to pages or documents in Portuguese).

only black and white, in which category will mixed-race individuals self-classify or be classified by a third party, and what factors might influence those choices? Are mixed-race individuals even considered by themselves or others to be legitimate candidates for *negro* racial quotas?

In terms of the symbolic consequences, or boundary-making effects (Lamont and Molnár 2002), states hold considerable power “to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and, thereby, to *make and unmake groups*” (Bourdieu 1991, p. 221; italics in original). States carry out this “world making” (Goodman 1978), including “race making” (Marx 1998, p. xii; Wacquant 2002, p. 54), by institutionalizing social cleavages (Boltanski 1984; Petersen 1987; Bourdieu 1989; Goldberg 2003). A state’s decision to codify public policy with particularist social categories for the distribution of resources is a good example of this (Cornell and Hartmann 1998; Tilly 2004). The *negro* movement in Brazil has historically struggled, with only limited success, to build a *negro* constituency, a failure attributed in part to a low salience of “racial consciousness” (Hanchard 1994; Twine 1998). Sociological theories of how states may contribute to race making suggest that the new racial quota laws in Brazil could help broaden and solidify the *negro* movement’s constituency (Ford 1994; Haney López 1996; Golub 2005). However, there might be unintended consequences as well (Marx 1998; Longman 2001).

To address these potential consequences, I draw on data from a 2002 national probability survey of public opinion that includes items on affirmative action and captures self- and other-classification dynamics in the following formats: open-ended, census (ternary categorization), black versus white (dichotomous categorization), classification according to ancestry, and, uniquely, classification by comparison to photographs. In terms of material consequences, I find that encoding distributive policies with a dichotomous racial scheme in Brazil may unintentionally exclude some potential recipients because of an unstable mapping of the *negro* category onto more commonly employed classificatory schemes. In terms of symbolic consequences, I find, among other things, that the mere mention of quotas for *negros* in a split-ballot questionnaire nearly doubles the number of respondents claiming that identity in an open-format question. I argue that in the political struggle between state and *negro* movement actors, the race-targeted legislation not only is a hard-won political stake for the latter but also becomes an “instrument” (Bourdieu 1989, p. 21) or a “weapon” (Goldberg 2003, p. 728) in a classificatory struggle: the racial category encoded in the legislation may aid in constructing the very collective identity that *negro* movement actors have been largely unsuccessful at solidifying (Guimarães 1997; Maggie 2005).

This article, then, centrally seeks to understand the role of the state as a “group maker” (Boltanski 1984; Bourdieu 1989, 1991; Goldberg 2003)

and specifically its role in race making (Marx 1998; Wacquant 2002) through inclusive state policies (Jenkins 1994; Tilly 2004). In addition, I address the influence of social movement actors on policy outcomes (Meyer 2004; Skrentny 2006) and in building putative constituencies (Petersen 1987; Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Perhaps most important, much of the literature on racial dynamics uses the language of constructivism while seemingly taking for granted the existence of races in the world, as Brubaker and Cooper (2000) argue (see also Loveman 1999a, 1999b; Brubaker 2002). In contrast, I focus on the mechanisms that are key for constructing those seemingly primordial classifications and further demonstrate their instability and format-sensitive character in official contexts (Hirschman, Alba, and Farley 2000; Rodríguez 2000; Landale and Oropesa 2002).

## BACKGROUND

The Brazilian census has used the categories *branco* (white), *pardo* (brown or mulatto), *preto* (black), and *amarelo* (yellow or Asian descent) since 1940 and added the *indígena* (indigenous) category in the 1991 census.<sup>4</sup> According to its 2000 census, Brazil's racial or color composition is 54% white, 39% mulatto, 6% black, 0.5% yellow, and 0.4% indigenous. The correspondence of Brazilian census terms with a color continuum is often contrasted with the U.S. use of ancestry for classifying its population (Nogueira 1985). In the United States, ancestry has been historically understood via the rule of hypodescent (Davis 1991). According to that rule's logic, for any person of mixed ancestry that includes some ponderable African extraction, all other ancestries are generally obviated.

In Brazil, the mulatto and black census categories are considered by *negro* movement actors, as well as by many scholars, to comprise persons of some discernible degree of African ancestry, whom they view as members of a *negro* racial group (Guimarães 2001; Ribeiro 2007). Prominent *negro* politician, movement actor, and scholar Abdias do Nascimento clarifies this specific vision of ancestry, color, and race in Brazil:

Official Brazilian census data use two color categories for African descendants: *preto* (literally, "black") for the dark-skinned and *pardo* (roughly, mulatto and mestizo) for others. It is now accepted convention to identify the black population as the sum of the *preto* and *pardo* categories, referred

<sup>4</sup> *Pardo* translates as "gray" or a brownish color (Sansone 2003). Some scholars translate *pardo* into English as "mulatto" (e.g., Degler 1971; Guimarães 2001), which may best distinguish this population for an English-speaking audience. With that aim, I use mulatto henceforward as a translation of *pardo*. In Brazil, *mulato* may best be understood as a subgrouping of *pardo*. *Preto* translates into English as "black." However, it is generally considered a color term as opposed to a race term (Sansone 2003).

to as *negro*, *afro-brasileira*, or *afro-descendente*. In English, “black,” “African Brazilian,” and “people of African descent” refer to this same sum of the two groups. (Nascimento and Nascimento 2001, p. 108)

In contrast to the traditional color classification scheme, this new system approximates the U.S. understanding of racial group membership (Nobles 2000, p. 172; Guimarães 2001, p. 173). That is, the *negro*-versus-white dichotomous classification scheme in Brazil similarly joins together individuals with some discernible degree of African ancestry into one racial group for race-targeted policy administration, in essence representing an attempt to clarify ambiguous boundaries by “unmixing” the population.

Mulattos and blacks in Brazil, however, may not view themselves as common members of a *negro* racial group (Agier 1993; Marx 1998). Winant writes of nonwhites’ tendency in Brazil “not only to deny, but to *avoid* their own [black] racial identity” (Winant 2001, p. 246; emphasis in original). Hanchard, too, calls attention in his work to Brazilian nonwhites’ “negation of their [black] identity” (Hanchard 1994, p. 22). The term *negro*, then, may be more a classification attributed to nonwhites by movement actors than a real social group embraced by the general nonwhite population (Nobles 2000; Telles 2004).

*Negro* movement actors, whose attempts to mobilize a broad constituency for antiracism efforts have been generally unsuccessful, view this lack of robust *negro* racial subjectivity as an obstacle to overcome (Hanchard 1994; Nobles 2000). The *negro* movement has existed in various forms for decades in Brazil; examples include the Frente Negra (Black Front) from the 1930s, the Teatro Experimental do Negro (Black Experimental Theater) from the 1950s, and the Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement) of the 1980s. In each manifestation, the movement primarily comprised a relatively small number of middle-class and intellectual actors (Hanchard 1994; Marx 1998; Andrews 2000) and was unable to mobilize significant disruptive protest (Hanchard 1994; Telles 2004).<sup>5</sup>

Why movement actors have historically been unsuccessful at collective identity formation and mobilization is frequently debated. Explanations range from class divisions between movement actors and their presumed constituency (Andrews 2000), the lack of a clear target against which to mobilize, such as Jim Crow segregation or South African apartheid (Hanchard 1994; Marx 1998), resistance to the label *negro* itself by the presumed

<sup>5</sup> A rare example of a large, but not disruptive, contemporary antiracism event was the 1995 Zumbi March, marking the 300-year anniversary of the death of a slave rebellion leader.

constituency (Burdick 1998), and the *negro* movement's embrace of U.S. rhetorical strategies (Silva 1998).

Nonetheless, there are factors that in theory support the unification of nonwhite individuals into a self-conscious social group. In contrast to the traditional belief in a "mulatto escape hatch" (Degler 1971)—that is, the idea that an intermediate category provides an escape from the stigma of blackness—some contemporary research suggests that, regardless of the color distinction between mulatto and black groupings, they share a common position of relative deprivation in comparison to individuals of the white category.<sup>6</sup> Telles (2004) reports, for example, that in 1999, the mean incomes of mulatto and black men were 46% and 45%, respectively, of that of white men.<sup>7</sup> Many scholars believe, however, that the strength of relative deprivation as a unifying point may have been compromised in Brazil by a widespread denial of racial discrimination on the part of nonwhite (and white) Brazilians (Twine 1998; Winant 2001). The literature often attributes that denial to the resonance of official state narratives of Brazil as a "racial democracy" (Marx 1998).<sup>8</sup>

#### STATE AND MOVEMENT ACTORS COME TOGETHER

Against the backdrop of decades of failed attempts by a committed core of activists to influence state policy, the recent success of the *negro* movement in pressuring state actors to pass race-targeted legislation is remarkable. Not only has it succeeded in its push for state institutions to adopt a historically unprecedented policy response to racial inequality in Brazil, it has done so despite the lack of both disruptive protest and a robust *negro* collective identity.<sup>9</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of this article to address fully why the *negro* movement was successful in this, I believe that a political process perspective provides some insights

<sup>6</sup> The pioneering work of Hasenbalg (1985) and Silva (1985) thus provided a scientific justification for collapsing the mulatto and black categories, buttressing the *negro* movement's perspective on the central cleavage in Brazil. Subsequently, although these demographers labeled that combined statistical category as nonwhite, other social scientists, some directly citing the influence of the *negro* movement (Oliveira, Porcaro, and Costa 1985, pp. 11–12; Hanchard 1994, p. 24), conceptualized that same statistical entity as a *negro* race (Guimarães 2001; Winant 2001). Hence, the *negro* movement's vision and the categories of scientific analysis in Brazil merge to a large extent.

<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, controlling for human capital and labor market characteristics, Telles and Lim document "some support for the mulatto escape hatch theory, thus refuting Silva's (1985) well-known challenge" (Telles and Lim 1998, p. 473; see also Telles 2004).

<sup>8</sup> See Bailey (2002, 2004) for criticisms of this dominant academic stance positing a denial of discrimination by the general population in Brazil.

<sup>9</sup> On the centrality of disruptive protest, see Piven and Cloward (1977) and Skrentny (2006). See Pizzorno (1978) on the importance of preexisting collective identities.

(McAdam 1982; Gamson and Meyer 1996; Meyer 2004). This approach focuses on activists' prospects for advancing particular claims as being dependent on exogenous factors in the political context, thereby bringing together agency and structure.<sup>10</sup> These exogenous factors, such as shifting events and political actors, may be volatile and hence constitute "windows of opportunity" for social movement claims (Gamson and Meyer 1996, p. 277).<sup>11</sup> Two such variables in the Brazilian political structure appear central for understanding the *negro* movement's influence at this historical moment. The first is the "political openness" (Meyer 2004, p. 137) toward antiracism instigated by the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and later continued by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The second is the emergence of political access structures (McAdam 1996) born of the 2001 United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and its numerous preparatory meetings that brought state and movement actors together.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of political openness, Cardoso's assumption of the presidency in 1995 marked a turning point in the legitimation of antiracism politics in Brazil (Reichmann 1999; Htun 2004). Since the founding of the Brazilian republic, political elites had generally ignored the racial component of social inequality (Marx 1998). In contrast, years before becoming president, Cardoso was a prominent sociologist of race relations (see Cardoso and Ianni 1962), and very early in his presidency he threw the weight of his office and intellect toward confronting racial inequality as part of a larger human rights agenda (Pinheiro and Neto 1997). In 1996, his government endorsed the idea of affirmative action in its newly established National Human Rights Program (Ministério da Justiça 1996). Moreover, during Cardoso's tenure, which lasted until January 1, 2003, a few federal agencies adopted on a limited basis varying types of race-targeted initiatives (IPEA 2003). Cardoso's personal effect as president on the state's openness to antiracism strategies, according to some, would be hard to overstate (Reichman 1999; Htun 2004). His secretary of state for human rights, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, stated in 2002 that "affirmative action, the

<sup>10</sup> According to Meyer (2004, pp. 127–28), "The wisdom, creativity, and outcomes of activists' choices—their agency—can only be understood and evaluated by looking at the political context and the rules of the games in which those choices are made—that is, structure."

<sup>11</sup> The political opportunity approach I employ is process oriented and emphasizes dynamic, rather than static, variables. See Meyer (2004) for an overview of the strengths and limitations of this framing.

<sup>12</sup> Several scholars have explored one or both of these variables (Reichmann 1999; IPEA 2003; Htun 2004; Peria 2004; Telles 2004). Htun (2004) also mentions a political opportunity framing.



defense of quotas . . . all of this was a personal presidential decision. He didn't consult anyone, not even the party" (in Htun 2004, p. 80).<sup>13</sup>

Yet Cardoso alone, however decisive, appeared unable or unwilling to adopt widespread race-targeted policies. After what Telles (2004, p. 57) calls a five-year "fizzle" in Cardoso's initial enthusiasm, the antiracism agenda was reignited by state actors' participation in the World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, in August and September 2001, and its numerous preparatory conferences (IPEA 2003). This participation and a subsequent renewal of antiracism fervor, rather than being led by the state, was sparked by the systematic and unrelenting pressure exerted by *negro* movement actors. The conference and the many preparatory meetings served as political access structures bringing state and *negro* movement actors together as never before and advancing the legitimation of *negro* movement grievances.

To the Durban conference itself, the Brazilian government sent its minister of justice and the secretary of state for human rights, along with 67 representatives, a delegation greater than at any UN conference in which Brazil had previously participated (Peria 2004). In addition, there were between 150 and 200 *negro* movement actors (Telles 2004).<sup>14</sup> According to IPEA (2003), the total number of Brazilians at the conference reached 600. This almost exaggerated presence reinforced the legitimacy of the antiracism endeavor, especially for the Brazilian media, which covered the event and surrounding debate assiduously (Peria 2004).<sup>15</sup> The conference provided an international forum that shattered any lingering state discourse denying discrimination. The experience of the Durban conference for state and *negro* movement actors, and for Brazilian society in general, brought new and transformational legitimacy to the struggle against racism.

<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, two elements certainly influenced Cardoso. First, according to Reichmann (1999, p. 18), Cardoso's initial openness to antiracism was influenced by the 1995 Zumbi March, suggesting the effect of movements on political opportunity structures, as opposed to the other way around (Gamson and Meyer 1996). Second, the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA 2003, p. 77) claimed that "many of the governmental actions aimed at the racial question during the government of Cardoso were significantly marked by the desire to placate the international community." Hence, the international context of political opportunities, or international political pressures, is vital to consider (McAdam 1996).

<sup>14</sup> Much of the *negro* movement's participation was enabled by external funding stemming from a phenomenon that Telles (2004, p. 52) calls the "NGOization" of *negro* movements in Brazil. A resource mobilization perspective suggests the importance of such funding for movement success (McCarthy and Zald 1977).

<sup>15</sup> See Gamson and Meyer (1996) on the media as a political opportunity structure facilitating the challenging claims of social movement actors.

## INSTITUTIONALIZING RACE-BASED POLICY

In large part as a result of Cardoso's earlier openness and the decisive antiracism conference, there was a "post-Durban transformation" (Telles 2004, p. 72) of public policy in Brazil, and this resulted in a surprisingly rapid institutionalization of affirmative action on a larger scale. The first cases included the Ministry of Agrarian Development (September 2001), followed by the Ministry of Justice (December 2001) and the Ministry of Culture (August 2002) (IPEA 2003). The first race-targeted legislation in higher education was adopted in October of 2001 at two state universities in Rio de Janeiro, and Peria (2004) documents how the Durban conference decisively influenced that legislation. The following year, the State University of Bahia also adopted racial quotas (Universidade do Estado da Bahia 2002).

In 2003, Lula da Silva (known as Lula) assumed the presidency, and his presence in office assured the continuation of political openness and further solidified access structures uniting state and movement actors. His Workers' Party included a great number of *negro* movement actors, which ensured their access to state actors at all levels of government. This also favored the possibility that many of these actors would fill state administrative positions, giving the *negro* movement an even greater ability to shape policy. One prime example is the influential minister of the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality, Matilde Ribeiro, a member of the *negro* movement and Workers' Party. This cabinet-level secretariat was created in Lula's first year as president for the purpose of establishing state links to social movements and energizing the efforts of diverse state agencies in the fight against inequality (IPEA 2003).

Thus, the historic disconnect between the state and the *negro* movement began to narrow with the government of Cardoso and closed further under Lula. Among the many race-targeted initiatives proposed or adopted in differing realms, perhaps the most important political win was the adoption of racial quotas in universities, given their reach across the country and the media attention they garner.<sup>16</sup> The pioneering legislation in higher education in the state of Rio de Janeiro says, "It is hereby established that there will be a quota of up to 40% for mulatto [*pardo*] and *negro* populations in the filling of openings at the university level at the State University of Rio de Janeiro and the State University of the Norte Flu-

<sup>16</sup> Quotas in higher education may also most clearly reflect the collaboration of state and movement actors; the strategies in federal ministries appear more "intragovernmental" in dynamic (Htun 2004, p. 68). The participation of both state and movement actors on the race committees in Brasília and Mato Grosso do Sul may epitomize that collaboration. It should also be noted that the collaboration of academic actors in the adoption of race-targeted policies in higher education was crucial (see Maio and Santos 2005).

minense" (my translation). However, the legislation's language was subsequently changed from "mulatto and *negro*" in 2001 to only "*negro*" in 2003.<sup>17</sup>

The quota policy at the federal University of Brasília mentioned above says, "To compete for the openings reserved through the quota system for *negros*, a candidate should be of mulatto [*pardo*] or black [*preto*] color, declare him- or herself *negro*, and specifically opt for the quota system for *negros*" (Universidade de Brasília 2004; my translation). As reported, the candidate is then photographed and a committee subsequently verifies his or her *negro* status (Maio and Santos 2005).

Perhaps as important as the policy itself is its language for identifying beneficiaries. It adopts the "black-movement system" of dichotomous race language (Telles 2004, p. 81). With this legislation in force, what might be the potential consequences, both material and symbolic, of categorizing as black or white individuals who have long viewed themselves as "neither black nor white" (Degler 1971)?

## UNDERSTANDING CONSEQUENCES

### Material Consequences: Mapping Disadvantage

Possible problems of dichotomous categorization for targeted intervention in Brazil stem centrally from the slippery mapping of beneficiary categories onto those disadvantaged populations the policies attempt to address (Ford 1994; Skerry 2002). The incongruity between the map and the reality can result from the application of "hard" concepts onto "soft" phenomena (Ford 1994) and from a disconnect between policy and popular classification schemes (Prewitt 2002; De Zwart 2005; Golub 2005). The potential consequences, then, include inadequate coverage of the targeted population.

Regarding the former, Ford (1994, p. 1241) argues that group-keyed preferences must make hard the boundaries of soft or "muddy" variables in order to determine the exact dimensions of the targeted group. When the group is determined by race, as opposed to sex, it may be especially difficult to delimit. In the United States, for example, official race terms struggle to capture the racially ambiguous populations of Latin American origin (Petersen 1987; Hirschman et al. 2000; Rodríguez 2000; Landale and Oropesa 2002). Similarly, Golub (2005, p. 503) researched "judicial

<sup>17</sup> The original legislation is *Lei estadual* (state law) 3708/2001, passed by the Assembleia Legislativa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro in 2001. The revised legislation was passed in 2003 (*Lei estadual* 4151/2003). The text of both laws is available online at <http://www.alerj.rj.gov.br/processo2.htm>.

responses to ambiguously raced bodies,” focusing on Creole Louisiana in the 19th and earlier 20th centuries. He detailed the state’s “attempts to convert racial ambiguity into orderly legal categories” (Golub 2005, p. 565) to enforce segregation.

Debates in the United States leading up to the 2000 census addressed the disjuncture between the language of antiracism legislation and the growing popularity of multiracial classification schemes. When multiracial social movements argued for the right to self-identify as being of mixed racial heritage and sought to alter the official single-race classification scheme, black movement actors were strongly opposed. The latter argued that the resulting disconnect between official census classification and race-targeted legislation could “undercut existing civil rights safeguards” (Williams 2006, p. 5; see also Prewitt 2002). Cautioning against this potential schism between a multiracial classification scheme and the existing policies, Skerry (2002, p. 338) claims that “multiracialism may well be the silver bullet that finishes off the affirmative action regime.”

In large part because of black movement opposition in the United States, the multiracial category option was defeated. Instead, a compromise was reached allowing citizens to “mark one or more” races. This format was judged preferable for protecting race-targeted legislation, as it could be partnered with a system of “reallocation” (Daniel 2006; Williams 2006). According to that system, anyone self-classifying in more than one race in the U.S. census can be bureaucratically reclassified back into a single-race category, thereby masking the gap between official and popular classification schemes.

#### Symbolic Consequences: Boundary Construction

How might dichotomous policy language in Brazil influence racial boundary dynamics? Racial and ethnic boundaries are practical accomplishments, as opposed to static forms, and both internal and external processes combine to produce, maintain, or weaken those accomplishments (Barth 1969; Omi and Winant 1986; Nagel 1994). Internal definition occurs when “actors signal to in- or out-group members a self-definition of their nature or identity” (Jenkins 1994, pp. 198–99), using, for example, language, religion, or culture to create a sense of group belonging (Nagel 1994). External definition refers to “other-directed processes during which one person or set of persons defines the other(s)” (Jenkins 1994, p. 199). External definition defines category membership, but the categorized may not necessarily view themselves as belonging together. A social group, however, necessarily involves internal definition or the experience of membership or belonging (Petersen 1987; Loveman 1999a).

Can external factors stimulate enough internal definition that the cat-

egorized evolve into a social group? This question essentially asks about social spaces or practices that can structure interaction along categorical lines, thereby possibly inducing internal definition. Jenkins calls these spaces “contexts of categorization,” similar to Cornell and Hartmann’s (1998) “construction sites,” Tilly’s (2004) “social sites” of boundary change, and Bourdieu’s (1991) sites of “objectification.” Of course, the internalization of categorization, or the formation of social groups, is always contingent; one cannot clearly predict when a category of individuals may assimilate, in whole or part, the terms by which it is defined by an “other” (Bourdieu 1991; Jenkins 1994). Several scenarios are possible, based on factors such as the authority of the categorizer, the benefits of identification, and whether force is used (Jenkins 1994; Tilly 2004).

Regarding the authority of the categorizer, scholars have long pointed to the role of states as world makers (Goodman 1978; Goldberg 2003). Bourdieu (1989), for example, argues that states wield “symbolic power,” constituted through social capital acquired in previous struggles, to make their visions and divisions of the social world “stick.” Symbolic power, however, is not exclusive to the state. Science, religion, and social movements, for example, all possess the ability to challenge the way the social world is conceptualized. In many cases, political struggle pits symbolic powers against one another, each trying to define the legitimate vision of the social world. These contests may be conceptualized as “classificatory struggles” (Bourdieu 1991, p. 241) or struggles “for the monopoly over legitimate naming” (Bourdieu 1989, p. 21).<sup>18</sup>

According to Bourdieu, the ability of symbolic power to make groups is not absolute: groups cannot be constructed *ex nihilo*. The efficacy of symbolic power depends in part on what he calls the “theory effect” (Bourdieu 1989, p. 17), or the degree to which the proposed vision is founded upon “objective affinities” among the named. Differences and similarities, of course, can be variously conceived, grouped, or imagined; hence, they remain contingent and in some sense arbitrary. However, if there is some internal homogeneity and agreement of conditions that appear to buttress an external ascription, the likelihood of group formation increases (Bourdieu 1991).

States can stimulate the dynamic of group making along racial lines, whether intentionally or not, by categorizing populations in national censuses (Petersen 1987; Nobles 2000), through identity documents (Longman

<sup>18</sup> As mentioned, much of the struggle of *negro* movement actors in favor of a vision of Brazil in black and white is supported by academic actors (see Maio and Santos 2005); moreover, these categories of actors sometimes overlap. Hence, although I focus on the coming together of state and *negro* movement actors, an important third party in this classificatory struggle is science.

2001), immigration policies (López Haney 1996), and differential treatment in the criminal justice system (Wacquant 2002), and by way of de jure discrimination (Marx 1998; Golub 2005). Regarding this last mechanism, Golub (2005) offers the telling example of the imposition of Jim Crow segregation in Creole New Orleans. According to Golub, a Spanish- and French-influenced ternary racial hierarchy characterized Louisiana throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries, as opposed to the two-tiered American system, and the imposition of segregation after Reconstruction set up a conflict between the two systems. Golub (2005, pp. 568–69) posits that the law forced a racial “Americanization” of New Orleans: “Jim Crow segregation laws sought to create the very racial groups that they purported simply to keep apart,” submerging Creole New Orleans into “stark racial dualism.”

Along similar lines, Marx (1998) examines the state’s power for race making in his influential book *Making Race and Nation*. Comparing the United States, South Africa, and Brazil, he questions why this last country lacks the robust racial identification and racial protests that so clearly characterize the former two societies. He posits that the state was responsible for race making in the United States and in South Africa through de jure discrimination. Those policies were actually designed to quell intrawhite conflicts, but they ultimately influenced the creation of non-white racial identification robust enough to mobilize in protest. Marx writes:

States then play a central role in imposing the terms of official domination, with unintended consequences. Official exclusion, as by race, legitimates these categories as a form of social identity. . . . In the short run, such exclusion benefits those included and hurts others. But in the longer run, institutional exclusion may further reconsolidate subordinate identity and encourages self-interested mobilization and protest. (Marx 1998, p. 6)

In Brazil, he claims that intrawhite conflict was absent, and hence the state was less pressured to reconcile whites through official racial domination. Consequently, the lack of de jure discrimination precluded a strong identity for nonwhites.

From a very different optic but using similar logic, I argue that in addition to creating identities by legislating exclusion, states also have the power to impose the terms of *official inclusion* (Petersen 1987; Ford 1994; De Zwart 2005). Official inclusion through institutionalizing racial categories in social policy may legitimate race as form of social identity. The short-run material benefits may rest in resources allocated to some and not to others. But in the longer run, institutional inclusion may act to create the identities named in the policy.

## DATA

The empirical section that follows addresses the consequences of institutionalizing official inclusion on both material and symbolic planes. My analysis is based on data from a national probabilistic attitudinal survey in Brazil (the Pesquisa Nacional Brasileira, or PESB) conducted in 2002 at the Federal Fluminense University with funding from the Ford Foundation. The PESB was modeled after the U.S. General Social Survey (GSS) and the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey and benefited from collaboration with these surveys' research scientists. The PESB included a module on racial attitudes, with the stated goal, among others, of speaking to the topic of race-targeted policy. The frame was defined using census tract data gathered in 1996. The sampling method was a stratified, multi-stage technique that drew a sample of 2,362 adults (18 and older). The country was first divided into two strata: region and municipality. The region stratum sorted 27 states and the Federal District into five regions (Midwest, North, Northeast, South, and Southeast). The municipality stratum was based on 5,507 municipalities. Of these, 102 were chosen for the sample. Capital municipalities were automatically selected. To reduce costs, municipalities with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants in the vast North and Midwest regions were excluded (approximately 3.1% of the total population). The other 75 municipalities were chosen through a stratified method according to number of domiciles as well as urbanization and literacy indexes. After municipalities had been selected, successive random samples were taken of neighborhoods, households, and individuals. The survey utilized a split-ballot method. Weights were included to correct for oversampling by region and by questionnaire version, as well as by sex, age, education, working and nonworking populations, and are used for all the analyses included in this article. The response rate was 77%.

## METHODS AND FINDINGS

### Classification Schemes

In this exploration of the potential consequences of new race-targeted policies in Brazil, I first draw on survey items that capture self- and other-classification dynamics in the following formats: open-ended, census (ternary categorization), black versus white (dichotomous categorization), according to ancestry, and, uniquely, by comparison to photographs. (Question wording for all items is listed in table 1 in order of appearance in the survey).

*Self-classification in census format.*—I begin with self-classification in the census format (table 1, item 2) to establish a baseline measurement for comparison. The results listed in the first column of table 2 reveal

TABLE 1  
PESB SURVEY ITEMS ON RACIAL CLASSIFICATION AND RACE-TARGETED POLICY

Survey Item	Format	Original Portuguese
1. What is your color or race?	Open	Qual é a sua cor ou raça?
2. Which of these terms best describes your color or race?	Census	Qual desses termos descreve melhor a sua cor ou raça?
3. Between the colors black and white, which best describes your color or race? (Restricted to census mulattos)	Dichotomous	Entre os cores preto e branco, qual delas descreve melhor a sua cor ou raça?
4. From which country or continent do you believe your ancestors came?	Multiple	De qual país ou continente o(a) Sr(a) acha que os seus antepassados vieram?
5. What is the color or race of each one of the photographed individuals?	Census	Gostaria que o(a) Sr(a) dissesse qual a cor ou raça de cada uma dessas pessoas.
6. What is the color of each individual, using only black and white?	Dichotomous	Eu gostaria que o(a) Sr(a) dissesse qual a cor dessas pessoas. Só que agora eu gostaria que o(a) Sr(a) usasse APENAS as cores preto e branco.
7. Which photo has the color or race most similar to yours?	Choice from eight photos	Olhando as fotos dessas pessoas, qual delas tem a cor ou raça mais parecida com a do(a) Sr(a)?
8. Which person or persons deserve to get a good public-sector job through quotas?	Choice from eight photos	Qual, ou quais, dessas pessoas merece conseguir um bom emprego público por intermédio da reserva de vagas?



TABLE 2  
PESB: DISTRIBUTION OF SELF-CLASSIFICATION ACROSS  
FORMATS

COLOR/RACE	CENSUS (1)	OPEN- ENDED (2)	DICHOTOMOUS	
			Mulattos (3)	All (4)
White .....	49.1	42.7	44.1	66.7
<i>Moreno</i> .....		24.0		
Mulatto ( <i>pardo</i> ) ...	38.6	15.4		
<i>Negro</i> .....		6.8		
Black ( <i>preto</i> ) .....	12.4	2.9	55.9	33.3
<i>Moreno claro</i> .....		2.8		
<i>Amarelo</i> .....		1.7		
Mixed .....		.8		
<i>Claro</i> .....		.8		
<i>Mulato</i> .....		.6		
Indian .....		.4		
<i>Mestiço</i> .....		.2		
Other .....		.8		
<i>N</i> .....	2,225	2,306	830	2,203

NOTE.—Data are percentages except for *N*. All columns sum to approximately 100%.

that approximately 49% of the sample self-classifies as white, almost 39% as mulatto, and about 12% as black.

*Self-classification in open format.*—Research reveals that many Brazilians prefer noncensus categories to describe their color or race (Sansone 2003). To capture that dynamic, the first question of the survey's race relations module was actually an open-ended item asking respondents to state their color or race (table 1, item 1). From the multitude of responses received, the PESB team recoded the answers into the 12 most common self-classification terms and an "other" category.<sup>19</sup> The percentage choosing to self-classify as white in the open format differs by about six percentage points from that in the census format (43% and 49%, respectively; see table 2). The differences between the two formats for the mulatto and black categories are more dramatic. The mulatto category in the open format decreases by 23 percentage points, or about 60%, and the black category loses over 75% of its members, registering at only 3% of the sample in the open format.

If not white, mulatto, or black, what other terms do respondents prefer?

<sup>19</sup> Because I focus on the black-white continuum, and because of the small percentages of respondents who classified themselves as being of indigenous or Asian ancestry, the sample I use in all subsequent analyses excludes individuals that self-classified in either of those two categories in this format.

Column 2 of table 2 reveals that a large portion (24%) chooses *moreno*. *Moreno* is an especially ambiguous brownish color term capable of covering just about any skin tone (Sansone 2003). In addition, about 7% choose the term *negro*. The remaining 8% opt for various extraofficial categories popular in everyday talk.<sup>20</sup>

These results support findings on the variable and inconsistent nature of color and race classification in Brazil (Sansone 2003). Importantly, the results strongly suggest that the term *negro*, which is employed in much of the race-targeted legislation as an umbrella nonwhite term, is not used in that way, at least in the survey context, by the vast majority of nonwhite respondents. In the open-ended question, 57% of the sample self-classifies using nonwhite terms, but only 7% of the sample chooses the term *negro*, revealing significant incongruity between the classification scheme of the general population and that of quota legislation.

*Self-classification by ancestry.*—In terms of ancestry, *negro* movement and state actors view individuals in the census mulatto and black categories as Afro-Brazilians (Ministério da Justiça 1996; Nascimento and Nascimento 2001). In order to capture sentiments of having common ancestry and how these may fall along the lines posited by those actors, I turn to a survey item that asked respondents to answer yes or no as to whether their ancestors came from various countries or continents (table 1, item 4). Cross-tabulating self-classification in the census categories by selected perceived ancestry categories, it becomes obvious that the general public does not share the dichotomous racialized vision of ancestry. The results in table 3, column 2 reveal that only 16% of census mulattos say that their ancestors came from Africa. In addition, only 41% of individuals at the darkest end of the color continuum, blacks, claim African ancestry. Separating blacks from *negros* using the open-format question, even a slight majority of self-classified *negros* do not explicitly recognize that their ancestors came from Africa in the survey context (table 3, col. 4).

From which countries or continents do most Brazilians say their ancestors came? Strong majorities of the mulatto and black categories (63% and 58%, respectively), joined by 44% of census whites, claim that their ancestors came from Brazil. Hence, it is clear that Brazilians' perception of the relationship among color, ancestry, and race is actually quite different from the assumptions of the *negro* movement and many state actors. This may be especially problematic for the affirmative action policies that

<sup>20</sup> *Claro* translates as "light" and is close in meaning to "white." When paired with *moreno*, it references the lighter end of a brown continuum. *Mestiço* translates as "mixed heritage."

TABLE 3  
PESB: DISTRIBUTION OF AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES ON  
ANCESTRY BY SELF-CLASSIFIED RACE IN CENSUS AND OPEN  
FORMATS (%)

ANCESTRY	CENSUS FORMAT			OPEN FORMAT	
	White (1)	Mulatto (2)	Black (3)	<i>Negro</i> (4)	Black (5)
African .....	4.7	16.2	40.9	48.9	32.1
Portuguese ...	25.7	17.0	13.6	13.0	16.1
Indian .....	9.5	18.6	17.3	23.7	28.6
European ....	13.9	5.5	2.3	.8	7.1
Brazilian .....	43.5	62.6	58.2	51.0	64.3
<i>N</i> .....	908	671	220	131	56

establish “Afro-descendents” as the targeted population (see the legislation discussed in n. 3 above).

*Other classification in census format.*—Turning to other classification, a format that may be very important given the screening methods in place at some universities in Brazil, I draw on the PESB’s novel use of photographic categorization. The survey team chose to photograph eight Brazilian men whose phenotypes varied along the black-white color continuum (for black-and-white versions of these photographs, see fig. 1).<sup>21</sup> Respondents were asked to classify each photographed individual according to the census terms white, mulatto, and black (table 1, item 5). Results presented in table 4 show that in the census format, close to 90% or more of the respondents were able to classify seven of the eight photographs similarly. Specifically, 96%, 88%, and 86%, respectively, of all respondents described the individuals in photographs 1, 2, and 3 as white, 87% and 89% categorized the individuals in photographs 5 and 6 as mulatto, and 96% of all the respondents categorized those in photographs 7 and 8 as black. Photograph 4 is the only one that divides opinions more significantly: 25% say the photographed person is white, while 73% claim he is mulatto.

*Other classification in dichotomous format.*—The verification board at the University of Brasília is called upon to establish a quota candidate’s race according to a dichotomous black-versus-white scheme. The PESB

<sup>21</sup> The photographs are not representative of the full range of phenotypes in Brazil, which would be impossible; rather, they attempt to mark salient points along that continuum (Almeida et al. 2002). Clothing, lighting, background, etc., were held constant. I changed the numbering of the photographs to facilitate subsequent data presentation. To view the original numbering and also the original color photographs, see [https://webfiles.uci.edu/xythoswfs/webui/\\_xy-5837890\\_1](https://webfiles.uci.edu/xythoswfs/webui/_xy-5837890_1) (or request directly from the author).

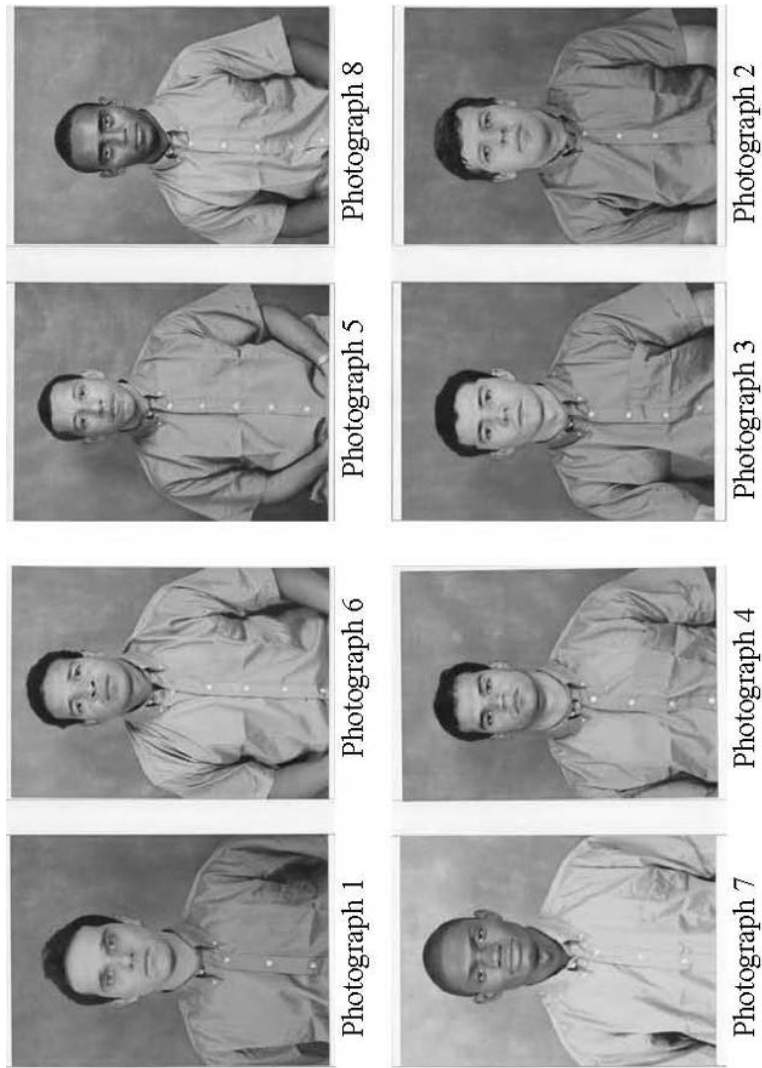


FIG. 1.—Photographs of Brazilian men of varied skin tones, from the PESB

TABLE 4  
PESB: DISTRIBUTION OF OTHER CLASSIFICATION OF  
PHOTOGRAPHS IN CENSUS AND DICHOTOMOUS FORMATS (%)

PHOTO	CENSUS FORMAT			DICHOTOMOUS FORMAT	
	White	Mulatto	Black	White	Black
1 .....	95.6	3.9	.2	99.3	.7
2 .....	87.8	11.5	.8	98.0	2.0
3 .....	85.9	13.1	1.0	96.8	3.2
4 .....	25.2	73.0	1.8	73.5	26.5
5 .....	4.7	86.8	8.5	37.5	62.5
6 .....	3.8	88.7	7.5	37.4	62.7
7 .....	.9	3.1	96.1	1.2	98.8
8 .....	1.0	2.6	96.4	1.0	99.0

NOTE.—Data are row percentages; rows sum to approximately 100% within each model.

mimicked this dynamic by asking respondents to reclassify the photographs according to a binary scheme (table 1, item 6). The format of item 6 (as well as of item 3, discussed below) used the dichotomous terms *white* and *preto* (black) rather than *white* and *negro*, as found in some race-targeted legislation. The use of the white-versus-*negro* format would have been preferable. Nonetheless, studies reveal that although the terms *preto* and *negro* may be differentiated by affirmative action administrators, who suggest that *negro* subsumes both the mulatto (*pardo*) and black (*preto*) census categories, this distinction may be somewhat context specific. According to Telles (2004, pp. 86–87), “*Negro* in the popular system, like *preto*, refers only to those at the darkest end of the color continuum. Thus, while the black movement has succeeded in giving *negro* wide currency in the government and the media, the popular use of the term continues to be limited.” In support of that perspective, I present a cross-tabulation of those that self-classify as *negro* and those that self-classify as black in the open-ended question with a skin tone measure that I will discuss later. The results I present below confirm the lack of differentiation between these two categories in terms of location along the color continuum in the survey context (Bailey and Telles 2006). In addition, I will present results from a localized 2003 survey involving affirmative action (Rosemberg 2004) that reveals that when mulattos were asked to self-classify as *negro* for beneficiary inclusion, they reacted very similarly to the way mulattos reacted to the black term in the PESB survey. Hence, available evidence suggests that the use of the term black (*preto*) in a *constrained* white-versus-black survey format in 2002 should have invoked fundamentally similar racial understandings as a white-versus-*negro* format would have,

although the popular connotations of these terms may be currently shifting.<sup>22</sup>

Following the logic of the *negro* movement and race-targeted policy administrators, moving from a ternary to a dichotomous classification format should reorganize census whites on one side and census mulattos and blacks on the other. Does the Brazilian population actually divide in this way? The results in table 4 show that there is less consistency in how respondents categorized the photographs of individuals with intermediate skin tones in a dichotomous format than in the census format discussed above. Photographs 1, 2, and 3 are judged as white and photographs 7 and 8 as black by almost all respondents. However, photographs 4, 5 and 6 are problematic. Well over one-third of the respondents now define the individuals in photographs 5 and 6 as white, whereas close to 90% placed them in the mulatto category in the census format. Moreover, about three-quarters of the respondents now claim that the individual in photograph 4 is white, whereas three-quarters had considered him to be mulatto in the census format.

These disagreements highlight a significant potential problem: some of the same people that would be eligible for race-targeted benefits (i.e., judged to be mulatto or black) under the ternary system might be denied assistance under a dichotomous system. Brazilians clearly disagree with one another about where to draw the line in a white-versus-black division of the population.

*Self-classification in dichotomous format.*—Does *self*-classification into a constrained white-versus-black scheme facilitate the inclusion of mulattos in race-targeted quotas? The PESB also tests such a dynamic. Those self-classifying as mulattos in the ternary format are asked to self-classify again, but this time in the white-versus-black format (table 1, item 3). The results in table 2, column 3, reveal that fully 44% opt for the white category, while 56% reclassify as black. To consider the validity and reliability of this finding, compare those percentages to the results from the above-mentioned 2003 survey of students applying for affirmative action scholarships (Rosemberg 2004). Upon being asked to self-classify as *negro* to gain beneficiary status (as opposed to black [*preto*], as in the PESB survey), approximately half of 304 self-classified mulattos did so, while the other half excluded themselves from beneficiary status. (Of the 290 self-classified black candidates, 97% chose to reclassify as *negros* for inclusion.) The percentage of mulattos who opted to reclassify as *negro* in

<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, and as noted, administrators in Rio de Janeiro chose the combination of mulattos and *negros* as beneficiary categories in 2001. *Negro* was clearly a substitute for black (*preto*) in that formulation.

the 2003 survey, then, is similar to the percentage of mulattos in the PESB sample that opts for black.

What is it that leads almost half of the mulatto population to opt for whiteness when presented with a white-versus-black format? In order to explore that question, I turn to binary logistic regression. The dependent variable is based on item 3 in table 1, in which self-classified mulattos are asked to reclassify themselves as either black or white (1 = black, 0 = white). Independent variables include education (continuous, with 14 categories), age (continuous), sex (dummy variable: female = 1, male = 0), region (five categories), and a skin tone variable. To operationalize skin tone, I first employ item 5 in table 1, which asks respondents to classify the photographs as white, mulatto, or black. Using respondents' combined opinions, I position the photographs along a continuum from lightest to darkest. Because some of the photographs occupy similar positions along the continuum, I collapse categories to form a five-point spectrum. The skin tone categories are as follows: very light (photograph 1), light (photographs 2 and 3), light medium (photograph 4), medium (photographs 5 and 6), and dark (photographs 7 and 8). Then, using another classification question (table 1, item 7) that asks respondents to indicate which photographed individual has the color or race most similar to their own, I arrange their responses along that color continuum for use in the regression model.

Table 5 presents the results of the regression analysis of the choice of black over white by mulatto respondents. The dominant factor is skin tone. The darker the mulatto respondent's skin tone, the more likely he or she is to opt for black over white. That is, with a one-unit darkening movement on the five-category skin tone scale, the odds that a mixed-race individual chooses black over white more than double. This finding, although seemingly commonsensical, is very important for mapping racial understandings in Brazil. The dichotomous format is based on the logic that discernible African appearance results in classification in a nonwhite category. In contrast, these results show that among self-classified mulattos, a color continuum, rather than notions of white racial exclusivity, sorts them into whiteness or blackness.<sup>23</sup>

However, are the mulattos who opt to reclassify themselves as white in a dichotomous format so different in terms of skin tone from those who opt for the black category that the general population would likely not consider them eligible candidates for racial quotas structured by di-

<sup>23</sup> The only other significant relationship in the model is age, which is negatively associated with the choice of black over white for mulattos. These results support Sansone's (2003) and Bailey and Telles's (2006) finding that younger individuals are especially likely to embrace blackness.

TABLE 5  
PESB: BINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION  
PREDICTING CHOICE OF BLACK OVER WHITE BY  
MULATTOS

	Logit	Odds Ratio
Education .....	-.012 (.018)	.989
Age .....	-.014* (.006)	.986
Female .....	.232 (.174)	1.260
Skin tone .....	.827*** (.120)	2.287
Region: <sup>a</sup>		
North .....	.149 (.297)	1.160
Central West ...	-.031 (.331)	.969
Northeast .....	.079 (.205)	1.083
South .....	-.203 (.289)	.816
Constant .....	-2.057** (.605)	

NOTE.— $N = 814$ . Numbers in parentheses are SEs.

<sup>a</sup> Reference category is Southeast.

\*  $P < .05$ .

\*\*  $P < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $P < .001$ .

TABLE 6  
PESB: DISTRIBUTION OF MULATTOS SELF-  
RECLASSIFIED IN WHITE AND BLACK  
CATEGORIES, BY SKIN TONE

Skin Tone	White	Black
Very light .....	3.2	1.0
Light .....	20.7	5.7
Light medium ...	41.9	30.3
Medium .....	31.6	51.2
Dark .....	2.7	11.8
$N$ .....	361	456

NOTE.—Data are percentages except for  $N$ ; each column sums to approximately 100%.

chotomous categorization? I can address this question by cross-tabulating mulatto respondents's choice of black or white by the skin tone variable (table 6). As confirmed by the logit model, the mulatto-to-white individuals have lighter skin tones on average than the mulatto-to-black individuals. For example, whereas 21% of mulattos who reclassify as white have a light skin tone, only 6% of mulattos that reclassify as black share that color. At the same time, however, fully one-third of the mulatto-to-white respondents claim to look like the individuals in photographs 5, 6, 7, or 8, who have medium or dark skin tones. These individuals challenge any notion of white category exclusivity. Another 42% of the mulatto-to-white



population self-classifies as having a particularly ambiguous light medium skin tone, like the individual in photograph 4. However, that same light medium tone also characterizes 30% of the mulatto-to-black population. Hence, neither the exclusivity of the white category nor the clearly darker tone of the black category is maintained.

#### Who Deserves to Benefit from Quotas?

Next, I examine an item that explores attitudes toward race-targeted policy (table 1, item 8), which a random half of the sample respondents answered using a split-ballot method. In order to situate or familiarize the respondents with the racial quota concept, version 2 of the questionnaire began the race relations module with the following text (my translation):

The subject of color and race is very important in Brazil. The government is now creating job quotas in the public sector for *negros* because they have had fewer opportunities than whites to obtain good public-sector jobs. Before this change, to get those public-sector jobs individuals took the same qualifying exams and those scoring best got the job. Now *negros* are guaranteed some good public-sector jobs even though their exam scores may not be the best.

Later in the survey, respondents were asked to look at the photographs and decide whether or not each individual deserved to be a beneficiary of public-sector employment quotas. I present the percentage distribution of affirmative responses on each photograph. Not only does this item allow an examination of the effect of a potential recipient's skin color on those opinions (and the effect of the sample respondent's skin color), but it also enables an exploration of levels of support for race-targeted policy.

Table 7 presents the percentages that deem each photographed individual worthy of benefiting from a quota.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, only about a third of respondents say the two individuals with medium skin tone (photographs 5 and 6) deserve quotas. Again, these are the same individuals that nearly 90% of all respondents classify as mulatto in the census format. Thus, a full two-thirds of the sample believes these nonwhite Brazilians do not deserve quotas, including 60% of respondents claiming to be mulattos themselves.<sup>25</sup> The only two individuals that a significant majority

<sup>24</sup> Five percent of the sample consistently said that they could not answer the question solely by viewing a photograph.

<sup>25</sup> Respondents' color was not associated with opinions on mulatto's deservingness of quotas.

TABLE 7  
 PESB: DISTRIBUTION OF OPINIONS ON WHICH  
 PHOTOGRAPHED INDIVIDUALS DESERVE A PUBLIC-SECTOR  
 JOB THROUGH A QUOTA SYSTEM

Photo	Skin Tone	Deserves Quota (%)
1 ....	Very light	26.6
2 ....	Light	24.6
3 ....	Light	26.8
4 ....	Light medium	26.7
5 ....	Medium	34.2
6 ....	Medium	30.1
7 ....	Dark	61.1
8 ....	Dark	64.9

of the sample (over 60% in each case) deems deserving of quotas are those with the darkest skin tones (photographs 7 and 8).<sup>26</sup>

Again, these results present serious problems for quotas that define mulattos as *negros* (Ribeiro 2007) and *negros* as the target beneficiaries (Universidade de Brasília 2004). My results suggest that many mulattos might be excluded because of third-party judgments; others may even self-exclude, not viewing themselves as *negros* (Burdick 1998; Rosenberg 2004).

In some sense, however, these results are not surprising, since the statement preceding the second version of the questionnaire employed the term *negro* to identify the designated recipients of quotas, as does much of the affirmative action legislation. However, table 8 presents a cross-tabulation of the skin tone variable with individuals' racial self-classification in the open-ended question. It reveals that in terms of their location on the color continuum, the *negro* and black categories are essentially indistinguishable. For example, 51% of *negros* and 52% of blacks claim to look like the photographed individuals with dark skin tone (photos 7 and 8). In comparison, only 6% of self-classified mulattos claim to look like the darkest photographed individuals. Individuals self-classifying as mulatto, then, are generally located differently along the color continuum than *negros* and blacks (Bailey and Telles 2006). Hence, because Brazilian society appears keyed toward *negro* more as a dark color than as a collective nonwhite racial group (Telles 2004), the very language of the quota legislation may prejudice the possible inclusion of mulattos.

<sup>26</sup> See Bailey (2004) for an exploration of public opinion on race-targeted policy in Brazil.

TABLE 8  
PESB: DISTRIBUTION OF SELECTED CATEGORIES OF  
COLOR OR RACE IN OPEN FORMAT, BY RESPONDENT'S  
SKIN TONE

Skin Tone	<i>Negro</i>	Black	Mulatto	White
Very light .....	1.0	1.0	.8	40.2
Light .....	2.8	.0	11.6	42.1
Light medium ...	11.6	10.2	43.8	14.7
Medium .....	33.7	36.9	38.1	2.9
Dark .....	50.9	51.9	5.7	.3
<i>N</i> .....	160	67	351	969

NOTE.—Data are percentages except for *N*; all columns sum to approximately 100%.

### Classification Trajectories and Dichotomous Categorization

How might the institutionalization of a dichotomous system affect classification tendencies? I approach this question in two central ways. First, I gauge the specific effect that mentioning race-targeted policy has on self-classification dynamics. Recall that only version 2 of the split-ballot questionnaire began the race module of the survey with a statement regarding racial quotas for *negros* and that the initial question of the module in both versions asked respondents to identify their own race or color in the open format. The goal of the split-ballot method in this case was to capture variation between the two halves due to the presence or absence of the statement on racial quotas. Hence, a cross-tabulation of questionnaire version by self-classification in the open format captures the effect. That operation, not shown, reveals that whereas in version 1, 4.8% self-classify as *negro*, in version 2 that number rises to 8.8% of the split sample. Hence, in this survey context, the mere mention of racial quotas for *negros* appears to nearly double the *negro* population.<sup>27</sup>

Second, in terms of discerning possible symbolic consequences, *negro* movement actors generally claim that their putative *negro* constituency makes up about half of the general population (Santos 1999). Some even claim that the percentage is much higher: "While official statistics put the sum of *pretos* and *pardos* at 48 percent, estimates that take into account their distortion by the whitening ideal are closer to 70 or 80 percent" (Nascimento and Nascimento 2001, p. 125). They arrive, then, at the 48%

<sup>27</sup> In addition, on the third question of the race module (table 1, item 3), which asks mulattos to reclassify themselves as either white or black, the percentage that opts for black over white is higher in version 2 than in version 1 (47% and 42%, respectively), further suggesting an effect in the direction revealed in item 1.

number by collapsing the two nonwhite categories of the census to form a *negro* race classification juxtaposed with the white category.

But do nonwhite Brazilians themselves divide that way when self-classifying in a binary format? The PESB survey uniquely allows a tentative answer to that question. Results presented in table 2, column 1, indeed show that collapsing the census-format mulatto and black categories creates a combined statistical category that includes about 51% of the overall sample population. However, column 4 of table 2 presents the full sample's color or race composition according to constrained self-classification in a dichotomous format. In that format, the black category represents only 33% of the sample population, giving whites a strong majority, at 67%. While nonwhites (census mulattos and blacks) are actually a slight majority in the official format, in the dichotomous format they become a minority population (Guimarães 2001). This result supports Nobles's (2000, p. 127) view that Brazil's *negro* majority is a "paper creation." Importantly, though, regarding symbolic consequences, it also suggests that forcing Brazilians into a white-versus-black format, as race-targeted administrators do, could result in the creation of a much whiter Brazil.

From a *negro* movement perspective, these results, taken together, suggest potential positive intended and negative unintended consequences of institutionalizing a dichotomous scheme in Brazil. While constrained dichotomous classification for the administration of affirmative action may actually increase the salience of *negro* identification among nonwhites, as suggested by the split-ballot experiment, it may at the same time actually decrease the overall size of that group by expanding the boundaries of whiteness.

## DISCUSSION

I began this article with one central question: What are the potential consequences of institutionalizing white-versus-black categorization for the administration of race-targeted policy in a traditionally mixed-race society? Addressing those consequences on both material and symbolic levels, I first asked if the adoption of dichotomous categorization would achieve the legislative intent of identifying the disadvantaged nonwhite population. Second, I asked how a move toward a dichotomous scheme might affect classification dynamics.

Material Consequences: Identifying Beneficiaries

Results indicate that, although the black category constructed by dichotomous classification is understood clearly by *negro* movement and state actors to be the sum of mulattos and blacks (Santos 1999; Ribeiro 2007), it may be experienced very differently by the general public, potentially making beneficiary identification problematic. Consider the following:

1. In an open-format question, 57% of the sample self-classified in non-white categories, but only 7% chose the *negro* category.
2. When individuals who self-classified as mulattos in the census format were constrained to self-classification in a dichotomous format, fully 44% opted for the white category.
3. One-third of mulattos that reclassified as white had medium and dark skin tones, and a third of the mulattos that reclassified as black had light medium skin tones.
4. Only 16% of mulattos recognized African ancestry in the survey context, together with just 40% of census blacks.
5. Opinions on who deserves to benefit from racial quotas did not favor the inclusion of most mulattos, but only individuals of the darkest skin tone.

These results suggest that a significant portion of the mulatto population could suffer exclusion from racial quotas in Brazil through either self-elimination or elimination by others. The former would be the case when a mulatto does not view himself as a *negro* and hence a member of the beneficiary category. Burdick has examined this dynamic closely, and he conceptualizes it as "color-identity alienation" or, in the view of *negro* movement actors, "the refusal of the majority of Afro-Brazilians to acknowledge their blackness" (Burdick 1998, p. 149). According to Burdick, the *negro* movement's insistence that all nonwhites call themselves *negros* hampers the antiracism agenda. As one of his subjects reported, "I could call myself *negra*, . . . but I just don't feel it" (Burdick 1998, p. 151). Would a mulatto continue to view herself as a non-*negra* when material benefits are at stake? The data cited from Rosenberg's (2004) study revealed that only 50% of students that had self-classified as mulatto in the census format later opted to self-classify as *negro* in the dichotomous format to qualify for benefits. It appears, then, that self-elimination of potential beneficiaries is a significant possibility.

As regards elimination by others, well over a third of sample respondents labeled the individuals with medium skin tone in photographs 5 and 6 as white when using the dichotomous format. Two-thirds did not view these individuals as deserving quotas, including 60% of respondents who claimed to have that same skin tone. The actual criteria used to

evaluate *negro* status by the verification commissions at the Universities of Brasília and Mato Grosso do Sul are not totally known (Corrêa 2003; Resende 2007; Weber 2007), but my data suggest that the rejection of some mulattos may be a real possibility. Testifying to the tenuous character of the verification process, the national media in Brazil reported in 2007 that two *identical* twin brothers declared themselves *negros* for quotas at the University of Brasília, and only one was admitted. The rejected sibling appealed his case to the special commission that had previously ruled against him, and upon further deliberation the committee certified both as *negros* (Weber 2007).

I argue that these self- and other-elimination dynamics result in part from a slippery mapping of policies that speak of *negros* in a dichotomous scheme onto a racially ambiguous common sense. *Negro* movement and state actors have opted for targeting a population as a race. That option conceives of distant, diffuse, and multiple ancestries as singular and enduring, African or European. It then equates those distilled ancestries with races in the categories *negro* and white. Finally, that racial division verifies race membership through a color scheme using a white/nonwhite palette. However, ordinary Brazilians, who continually invoke multiple color differences, do not equate these differences either with singular ancestral divisions or with dichotomous understandings of race or color.

The possible exclusion of mulattos may seem unproblematic for those who would argue that the darker population (represented by photographs 7 and 8) experiences the most disadvantage and thus is more deserving of racial quotas (Corrêa 2003). However, as mentioned earlier, some studies dispute the idea of a mulatto escape hatch and show that mulattos in Brazil are not significantly better off than census blacks in terms of many socioeconomic indicators (Hasenbalg 1985; Silva 1985). Moreover, the stated intention of the policies is to include mulattos and blacks (Ribeiro 2007). Hence, mulatto exclusion is clearly problematic.

#### Symbolic Consequences: Redrawing Boundaries

In addition to the issue of sorting beneficiaries from nonbeneficiaries, how might the institutionalization of dichotomous categories affect classification dynamics in Brazil? Two findings are particularly relevant to this question: (1) In the version of the questionnaire that planted the policy strategy of quotas for *negros*, the percentage of individuals choosing to self-classify as *negro* nearly doubled in comparison to the version that did not mention that policy, and (2) self-classification in the constrained dichotomous format decreased the sample distribution of nonwhites from 51% (in the census format) to only 33%.

Although estimating shifting classification trajectories is, by definition,

speculative, the framings offered by Jenkins (1994), Tilly (2004), and Bourdieu (1989, 1991) on the power of categorization and the conditions under which it can lead to the internalization of group subjectivity are instructive. In his typology of the contexts of categorization, Jenkins (1994) includes “administrative allocation,” in which rewards and penalties are distributed within and from public- and private-sector organizations along categorical lines. Tilly (2004, p. 220) addresses this same boundary dynamic, conceptualized as “incentive shift.” Race-targeted policy in Brazil, when viewed as a formal context of categorization or an incentive shift, might have no effect, a backlash effect, or a race-making effect on classification tendencies.

*No effect.*—What factors might lead to Tilly’s (2004, p. 216) “non-boundary effect”? One answer can be derived from a “simple self-interest” framing (Bobo and Kluegel 1993). If to receive benefits necessitates self-classification as *negro*, then mulattos may indeed choose to self-classify as *negro* in that bureaucratic context, but they may not internalize the category. In essence, self-interest could trump the development of group-based interests.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, Jenkins (1994, p. 216) posits that “categorization may be less likely to ‘stick’ where it is markedly at odds with existing boundaries.” Similarly, Bourdieu (1989) claims that states cannot create identities ex nihilo, but rather rely on objective affinities between the category and the categorized. While *negro* movement actors view all nonwhites as having common color, race, and ancestry, my data reveal that mulattos do not readily view themselves as belonging to a collective black category, and fewer than one-fifth of mulattos expressly claim to have African ancestry in the survey context. Hence, on the level of perceived common color, race, and ancestry, these objective affinities are not so obvious to the sample respondents; their ambiguous character may thus negatively condition the *negro* category’s internalization.

*Backlash effect.*—A second scenario is that the categorized may vigorously reject imposed boundaries (Jenkins 1994; Tilly 2004). In contrast to the no-effect scenario, rejection may involve strong reactive sentiments that could lead to alternative identity formation (Nagel 1994). De Zwart (2005) explores a similar dynamic in his study of affirmative action policies and their effect on identity formation in India and Nigeria. He shows

<sup>28</sup> In another case at the University of Brasília, in 2004 a brother and sister who were mulatto applied for quotas, and one was rejected (Resende 2007). The rejected sibling sued the university, and a federal judge ruled in her favor. The university commission’s rejection, according to one of its members who was called to testify, was based on the fact that although the rejected sibling may be mulatto, in her interview before the commission she contradicted her previous signed declaration that she was a *negra*. See the judicial decision at <http://conjur.estadao.com.br/static/text/56134,1>.

that, rather than having a unifying effect, disfavored official umbrella categories create competing splinter groups among the targeted population, thereby strengthening alternative classification schemes. In India, these alternative schemes were caste distinctions, and in the Nigerian case, they were ethnic boundaries.

In Brazil, one could imagine the mobilization of mulattos for inclusion under a mixed-race banner, or perhaps as *morenos* or *mestiços*. In fact, there is an organization that has formed under the name Movimento Pardo-Mestiço Brasileiro—Nação Mestiça (Brazilian Brown-Mestizo Movement—Mestizo Nation) that claims to fight for the rights of mestizos in Brazil and rejects the *negro* label.<sup>29</sup> The seriousness or reach of this organization is hard to gauge at present, but the popularity of the term *moreno* is certainly undeniable. While at this juncture a significant multiracial movement influencing a backlash effect in Brazil is hard to imagine, the example of the United States is instructive. In this country, a small multiracial movement waged an intense classificatory struggle and influenced a very significant change (the format allowing respondents to mark one or more races) in the 2000 census (Williams 2006). A mixed-race backlash against the imposition of the *negro* label in Brazil could permanently establish multiracial identification as wholly separate from the *negro* label, a serious negative unintended consequence from the *negro* movement perspective.<sup>30</sup>

*Race-making effect.*—The final possible result would be a race-making effect. Several scholars have offered evidence of race making through policies of exclusion (Marx 1998; Wacquant 2002; Golub 2005), but inclusive policies may also stimulate boundary formation (Tilly 2004; Skrentny 2006). Conditioning quota beneficiary status on *negro* identification may fit this scenario.

Bourdieu's theory effect that rests on objective affinities could shed some light here. Although they are not necessarily connected by clear notions of racial group membership, research suggests that mulattos and blacks do share a meaningful position of relative disadvantage (Lovell 1999). This particular objective affinity could be powerful. Researchers believe that nonwhite Brazilians historically denied that disadvantage and believed instead in a paradisiacal racial democracy, thereby hampering nonwhite identity formation (Marx 1998; Twine 1998). However, studies now herald the death of the myth of racial democracy (Guimarães 2001; Htun 2004). Hence, as discourses emphasizing racial discrimination be-

<sup>29</sup> See their website at <http://www.nacaomestica.org/>.

<sup>30</sup> Although I focus here on the effects of these policies on the targeted population (*negros* or nonwhites), a parallel backlash effect surely could be an increase of racial group subjectivity among whites.



come more salient, so may their power to unite mulattos and blacks. As Agier wrote, as opposed to an act of inventing something new, many activists view strategies for strengthening *negro* racial subjectivity among mulattos and blacks as “nothing more than a re-working of the substance of a group whose boundaries and identity have already been delimited by the system of racial domination” (Agier 1993, p. 104).<sup>31</sup>

The group-making effect resulting from race-targeted policy is indeed recognized in Brazil (Maggie 2005; Fry et al. 2007) and is seen by some as an appropriate tool (Guimarães 1997). In fact, Guimarães, a prominent University of São Paulo sociologist, names identity construction as “one of the goals of affirmative action policies” (Guimarães 1999, p. 192). He writes that as Brazil establishes race-targeted policies, “the legislator will be helping to create, through legislation, the community [of *negros*] over which it seeks to legislate” (Guimarães 1999, p. 191). Some may justify this goal with the understanding that past official classification in Brazil was specifically designed to diffuse racial identification (Santos 1999). In this framing, affirmative action legislation is part of a larger classification struggle to unite a divided population and may be vital for legitimating the use of the *negro* classification in other spheres as well.

There is no doubt that this is a period in Brazilian history during which dichotomous understandings are beginning to restructure formal and possibly informal contexts of categorization. For example, in the realm of science, much of the dominant scholarship on racial dynamics in Brazil embraces dichotomous racial classification (Hanchard 1994; Guimarães 2001; Winant 2001). Diverse media outlets write and report using the terms *negro* and *white*, and the culture industry invests heavily in that dichotomous vision of race (Sansone 2003). Brazil’s small (but growing and well-funded; Telles 2004) *negro* movement has clearly opted for the term *negro* (Nascimento and Nascimento 2001), and government agencies also engage Brazil’s population using dichotomous racial language (IPEA 2003; Ribeiro 2007). Finally, there are those that propose the census adoption of the *negro* category as a substitute for both the mulatto and black classifications (Ministério da Justiça 1996; Bertulio 1997; Nascimento and Nascimento 2001).<sup>32</sup>

Will these developing contexts of categorization, combined with affir-

<sup>31</sup> In addition, in terms of race making, Brazil’s race-targeted policies structure a zero-sum competition between groupings of individuals, and scholars argue that resource competition is a strong incentive for group making (Nagel 1994). As Banton (1995, p. 486) remarks, “When people compete as individuals, this tends to dissolve the boundaries that may define groups; when they compete as groups, this reinforces group boundaries.”

<sup>32</sup> See Bailey and Telles (2006) for a discussion of the census classification debates in Brazil.

mative action in black and white, reach into the lives of everyday Brazilians in such consequential ways as to modify their racial worldviews? Longitudinal data will be necessary to track the effects of recent state policies on classification dynamics. However, what is clear from this discussion is that although dichotomous classification may be understood by many bureaucrats, intellectuals, and movement actors, everyday Brazilians continue to self-classify and classify others in ways that defy its logic.

From the perspective of comparison with the United States, a very interesting irony is beginning to play itself out. As Lovell states (1999, p. 413), "It may be the case that racial identity in the United States is becoming more Brazilian in character [i.e., mixed-race] while Brazil appears to be more like North America [i.e., dichotomous]" (see also Nobles 2000; Daniel 2006). According to Hochschild (2002, p. 349), "Two-thirds of Americans now think that it would be 'good for the country' if more people 'think of themselves as multiracial rather than as belonging to a single race.'" Hochschild expresses metaphorically the uncertainty of future consequences of the new institutionalization of multiracialism in the United States: "It is not possible to put the [race] genie back in the bottle" (Hochschild 2002, p. 350). Multiracialism, in other words, is irreversible, and social policies based on dichotomous black-versus-white identification in the United States may be in jeopardy (Prewitt 2002; Skerry 2002). At the same time, however, Brazil is beginning to bet on that very formulation (Bailey 2004; Htun 2004). The ways in which Brazil tackles the problem of race-targeted legislation amid expansive mixed-race identification are sure to become comparatively more interesting to students of race-targeted approaches to inequality in the United States. Using Hochschild's metaphor, the Brazilian state is attempting to put the genie back in the bottle—to unmix its mixed-race population for targeted intervention.

## CONCLUSION

I have argued that the decision of the state in Brazil to enact race-targeted policies and to do so using the language of the *negro* movement may have important material and symbolic consequences. I identified the material consequences as the unstable mapping of policy categories onto the actual distribution of racial disadvantage, perhaps excluding some mulattos from beneficiary status (Ford 1994; Golub 2005). In terms of symbolic consequences, I posited that a state's inclusive policies, as opposed to the exclusionary ones (Marx 1998; Golub 2005), may actually aid in forging the identities addressed in the legislation. In addition, I proposed that to understand how *negro* movement actors were successful in pressuring the policy outcome, we should focus on the opportunity structures in the

political context (McAdam 1982; Gamson and Meyer 1996): the political openness constituted through Cardoso's assumption of the presidency and through the emergence of political access structures in the events surrounding the 2001 World Conference against Racism. Hence, my argument brings together structure and agency in the possible consolidation of racial identification in Brazil as black or white.

Importantly, Bourdieu (1989, p. 23) claims that "to change the world, one has to change the ways of world-making, that is, . . . the practical operations by which groups are produced and reproduced." The story in Brazil appears to be the adoption of such a practical operation, one perhaps capable of producing a group *out of* a statistical category (Petersen 1987, pp. 206–7; Jenkins 1994; Loveman 1999a). Drawing on Marxist theoretical language, the effect could be framed as a push to move a "race-in-itself" toward becoming a "race-for-itself." *Negro* movement actors identify the objective affinity of common relative deprivation among mulattos and blacks and opt for investing in that categorical affinity for group making. There is no doubt that this political struggle is aimed at challenging chronic social inequality. It may, however, be well to keep in mind Bourdieu's criticism of this Marxian conceptualization. He writes that the move from a category to a group is "always celebrated as a real ontological advance. . . . It is presented as the effect of an 'awakening of consciousness'" under "enlightened leadership" (Bourdieu 1991, p. 233). When that move to constitute the group is joined by the state (and even by science), the created group may become "as if it had been there for all eternity" (Boltanski 1984, p. 488). Hence, it is undeniably crucial to analyze mechanisms of its construction.

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