BUILDING FROM AND MOVING BEYOND THE STATE

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THE NATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF AFRO-BRAZILIAN

WOMEN'S INTERSECTIONAL MOBILIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Race and gender categories have rarely operated in isolation in the lives of Afro-Brazilian women, intersecting to shape their historical and social positioning, everyday experiences, and collective activism. Despite opposition from the Brazilian state and some civil society groups, the Afro-Brazilian women's movement has increased awareness of the specificity of black women's identities and oppressions. They have become one of Brazil's most organized proponents of anti-discrimination policy and legislation. In recent years their activism has moved beyond Brazil's borders through participation in United Nations (UN) Conferences. Yet, the dynamism of Afro-Brazilian women's intersectional identities and their strategic use to gain legitimacy in these arenas has remained noticeably understudied.

This dissertation argues that since activist groups do not participate in transnational forums detached from their specific histories and localized experiences, their actions, and strategies must be historically grounded. It draws upon the major arguments of postcolonial feminism, intersectionality, and the political process model to examine how national and transnational processes have shaped the identity articulations and mobilization strategies of Afro-Brazilian women activists. Four distinct processes operating in and outside of Brazil are identified as critical to the identity positions, strategies, and overall trajectory of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement: colonialism, slavery, democratic transition, and preparations for and proceedings of UN Conferences. The outcomes of this mobilization in terms of the influence of Afro-Brazilian women activists in domestic policy domains and internal movement dynamics are also explored. The result is a comprehensive analysis of the intricate workings of race and gender categories in activist spaces and the multiple historical and contextual factors which shape their configuration, intersection, and impact.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ALL ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

AMB	Brazilian Women's Articulation
AMNB	Network for Black Brazilian Women's NGOs
CECF	Sao Paulo's State Council on the Feminine Condition
CFEMEA	Feminist Center for Research and Advisory Studies
CNDM	National Council on the Rights of Women
CNPIR	National Council of Racial Equality Promotion
DFID	Department for International Development
FNB	Black Brazilian Front
GALCI	Global Afro-Latino and Caribbean Initiative
IBGE	Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics
IACHR	Inter-American Commission of Human Rights
IBASE	Brazilian Institute on Social and Economic Analysis
IGO	International Governmental Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	International Relations
ISI	Import Substitution Industrialization
IWY	International Women's Year
MNU	Unified Black Movement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIREMA	Interdisciplinary Center for African Descendant Research and Heritage
NSM	New Social Movements
PAISM	Program of Integral Assistance for Women's Health
PT	Brazilian Workers' Party
SEPPIR	Special Secretariat for Promotion of Policies on Racial Equality
TEN	Black Experimental Theater
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United National Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The adage "a watershed event" is often used to describe the significance of the

2001 United Nations (UN) Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia

and Related Intolerance that took place in Durban, South Africa, for the Afro-Brazilian[1]

women's movement (Flynn and Mikevis 2005; Turner 2002). Afro-Brazilian women

activists were at the helm of national and regional conference preparations and were well

represented among Brazil's Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) delegation. In

addition, long-time movement activist and founder of the Afro-Brazilian women's

organization *Fala Preta!* (Speak Black Woman!), Edna Roland, served as the

Conference's General Rapporteur. It was the first time a Brazilian woman of African

descent had been nominated and selected for the position.

The capacity of this UN Conference and its preparatory processes—the first in the

post-apartheid era to characterize racism as a global dilemma and to incorporate the

concept of intersectionality into policy deliberations and resolutions—to shape and

strengthen a movement that faced tremendous exclusions in the domestic context has not

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[1] The term Afro-Brazilian has recently emerged as a form of individual and collective identification in Brazil. Prior to the 1990s, individuals primarily identified themselves based on their skin colour in Brazil. *Preta* or *mulher negra* (black woman) were common designations for a woman with dark-skin complexion or African descent. The term Afro-Brazilian was primarily associated with African-influenced cultural representations or those who wanted to acknowledge their African ancestry. The Durban Conference helped to popularize and politicize the term through the formal acknowledgement of African descendant communities in Conference proceedings and recommendations. The individuals interviewed and the different types of literature examined for this study utilized the terms both Afro-Brazilian and black to identify and describe Brazilian women of African descent. Throughout this dissertation, both terms will be used to describe this segment of the Brazilian population to ensure adequate consideration of this evolving designation.

been extensively examined in the discipline of International Relations (IR). Peggy

Antrobus (2004) and Charlotte Bunch (2001) are among several feminist IR scholars and

political scientists that have researched similar phenomena, but their work primarily

concentrates on the critical role played by international institutions and UN Conferences

in the composition and proliferation of national and transnational women's movements in

the 1990s. Others, such as Martha Chen (1995) and Elisabeth J. Friedman (2003), draw

attention to the "gendering" of international institutional agendas by women's

organizations and movements through the integration of feminist perspectives and

gender-focused policy recommendations.

Yet, the Durban Conference was not just about the ways in which the UN served

as a vehicle to advance the demands of Afro-Brazilian women activists. It also took place

at the height of a struggle to recognize and affirm a historically marginalized

intersectional identity that spanned decades. In the words of movement figurehead Sueli

Carneiro, it is an identity crafted in "the specific condition of being a woman and being

black" (2001). To fully understand the significance of the Durban Conference for the

articulation and legitimization of Afro-Brazilian women's intersectional identity claims

and the reasons behind their heightened participation in this forum, one must delve into

the multiple sources and sites of their collective mobilization long before August 2001.

This study is based on the belief that race and gender are dynamic and intersecting

social constructions that are subject to constant negotiation by the individuals who

embody them and are mobilized within historical, national, and transnational contexts.

Social movements are the products of these continual negotiations and the grievances that

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arise at the crossroads of everyday life, historical oppressions, and cultural dynamics. Colonial systems, domestic political regimes, and international institutions can have a positive or a detrimental impact on the articulations of identity by social movements and on their actions in state borders and beyond. Since activist groups do not become involved in transnational forums detached from their specific histories and localized experiences, their actions and strategies in these arenas must be historically grounded.

Hence, the primary research question of this dissertation is: **How have national and transnational processes shaped the articulation and mobilization of race and gender categories by Afro-Brazilian women?** It is guided by the following secondary questions: In what ways have systems of colonialism and slavery and their specific characteristics in Brazil influenced the mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women in and outside Brazilian social movement circles? Secondly, in what ways did Brazil's return to democratic rule provide openings and blockages for the mobilization of certain identity categories by Afro-Brazilian women activists? Why have Afro-Brazilian women activists sought out UN Conferences to legitimize intersectional identity claims that have been minimized or overlooked by state and civil society actors? Lastly, what are some of the significant outcomes of Afro-Brazilian women's mobilization in the post-Durban era and how can these be measured?

The subsidiary questions are intended to pinpoint the specific national and transnational processes that have been critical to the mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women. The selection of these processes has occurred through the detailed archival research of Brazil's colonial narratives, national ideologies, and political transitions as

well as the trajectory of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement. Each question is tied to the central argument of this study: the intersectional mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women has been significantly influenced by Brazilian colonial logics, efforts to establish and consolidate democracy in the country's borders, and preparations for and participation in UN Conferences in Beijing and Durban. More than this, the questions help to chart the course of Afro-Brazilian women to Durban and to increase our understanding of their activities in the post-Durban era. Through this examination we gain a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate workings of race and gender categories in activist spaces and the multiple historical and contextual factors which shape their configuration and intersection.

Why Race and Gender?

Before introducing the theoretical components of this study, it is necessary to briefly define two terms that are given primary focus in this work: race and gender. Because of their variability and visibility, both constructs have significant ideological and material implications for the identity formation and social mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women.

Race

Biological reductionist definitions of race predominant in European scholarship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have generally been rejected in favour of social constructivist viewpoints over the course of the twentieth century. Edouard Machery and Luc Faucher outline the constructivist definition of race:

> Social constructionists propose that the concept of race—i.e., the belief that a classification based on skin color and other skin-deep properties like body shape or hair style maps onto meaningful, important biological kinds—is a pseudo-biological concept that has been used to justify and rationalize the unequal treatment of groups of people by others (2005, 1208).

The strength of this interpretation lies in its recognition of the power which is not innate, but is infused in the arbitrary properties of race by dominant groups. It is this indefinite character which enables race to be manipulated and reconfigured over time in national ideology, religious doctrine, and popular movements. As critical IR theorist Roxanne Lynn Doty notes, "One could speculate that the very power, persistence and dynamism of race and racism(s) derive from this lack of essence and specificity" (1993, 453).

Yet, to view race solely as an instrument wielded by society's power holders is inaccurate and extremely limiting. The embodiment and engagement of this identity construct ultimately occurs at the individual level, resulting in a multiplicity of racial representations and distinctions. Racial formation theorists Michael Omi and Howard Winant argue that an "effort must be made to understand race as an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle" (1986, 55). From this perspective, race is a phenomenon that is cultivated and contested throughout social life and that serves as a critical axis of social organization.

Some black feminist scholars caution against the unilateral acceptance of constructivist perspectives. Patricia Hill Collins (2001) and Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) assert that the heavy emphasis of this approach on the fluidity of racial identities downplays the tangible impact of these constructs. Collins reminds us that "individuals cannot simply opt out of racial groups, because race is constructed by assigning bodies

meaningful racial classifications" (2001, 204). Motivations behind racialization processes in colonial Brazil are elaborated upon in Chapter Three of this study. Constructivist interpretations can also be detrimental to processes of identity-based consciousness-raising and social mobilization. Complete adherence to what Crenshaw characterizes as a "vulgarized social construction thesis" drives the problematic assumption that, "since all categories are socially constructed, there is no such things as, say blacks or women, and thus it makes no sense to continue reproducing those categories by organizing around them" (1991, 1296).

The definition of race used in this study draws on both these interpretations. Influenced by the works of Ruth Frankenburg (1993) and Kia Lilly Caldwell (2007), it acknowledges the socially constructed and historically specific character of race and the very real and powerful impact of the construct in the lives and consciousness of individuals. It also recognizes the instrumental character of race and the different ways in which individual subjects strategically engage with and embody the construct. In Brazil, we see that the fluidity and variability of black identities do not diminish their oppression, commodification, and mobilization in local and national spaces.

Gender

Gender has similarly become couched in contextually, culturally, and historically specific terms. Tied to 'innate' biological differences between male and female bodies by Western academia for much of the eighteen and nineteenth centuries, feminist scholars revised the concept in the 1960s to emphasize the "socially created meanings,

relationships, and identities organized around reproductive difference" (Glenn 2000, 5).

This conceptualization sheds light on processes of sexualization—the assignment of

gender and sex roles to individuals and institutions through socialization.

Therefore, gender is not only a category of social identification, but is an

organizing principle for collective action. Sociologist Verta Taylor contends that "gender

is an explanatory factor in the emergence, nature, and outcomes of all social movements"

and that "gender is necessary for a thorough and accurate explanation of collective

action" (1999, 8-9). By drawing on this expansive conceptualization, this study offers

insight into the construction and imposition of dichotomous gendered categorizations in

Brazilian colonial and political projects, and on the use of gender as a means to mobilize

intersectional identity claims by Afro-Brazilian women activists within institutional and

activist arenas.

It should not be assumed that focusing on race and gender ignores other identity

categories such as class, sexuality, nationality, and age. Collins notes that these constructs

"are all present in any given setting even if one appears more visible or salient than

others" (2001, 461). Since "we cannot adequately simultaneously explore all experiences

with the same vigor and intensity" (Dei 2008, 36), this dissertation concentrates on the

categories that have remained paramount in the lives and activism of the Afro-Brazilian

women interviewed and studied. It also seeks to illuminate the complexities of race and

gender intersections which have been understated in favour of class-centered explanations in Brazilian political discourses, race relations, and feminist literatures.[2]

As later chapters detail, through the colonial and ideological orders of the state, race and gender became significant tools in systems of domination in Brazil. They have also become key sources of identity and empowerment in the political engagement of Afro-Brazilian women. This study captures the ways "race and gender fuse to create unique experiences and opportunities" (Browne and Misra 2003, 488) and their distinctive impact on the positioning and mobilization strategies of Afro-Brazilian women at the national and transnational level. In doing so, it strives to provide a point of entry for further analysis on the multiple grounds of identity that come into play in the struggles and mobilization strategies of historically marginalized peoples.

Theoretical Tools and Underpinnings

This dissertation uses what John Kurt Jacobsen has called "a comprehensive explanatory framework" (1996, 94). According to Jacobsen, this framework reflects a much broader "cross-disciplinary enterprise in which scholars explore the intersections of international relations and comparative politics" (1996, 94). Until recently, scholars in these two fields rarely collaborated or entered into extensive dialogue. With the increased analysis of the emergence and distinguishing features of transnational social movements, scholars from both fields have found themselves "grappling with each other's empirical

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[2] In political discourse and scholarly literature, the historically weak socioeconomic and political positioning of Afro-Brazilians is often characterized as a consequence of a deeply engrained class hierarchy in Brazil. Examples are found in Fry (2000); Pierson (1967); Wagley (1963). Some feminist scholars have also opted to examine the dynamics between gender and class constructs in their analyses of feminist activism in Brazil. See Alvarez (1990) and Thayer (2009).

frames of reference" (Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002, 5). This dissertation will contribute to this rapidly growing conversation by linking approaches from IR and comparative politics with a black feminist approach now gaining currency in political science. While the specific linkages of the explanatory framework are explored in greater depth in Chapter Two, it is important to briefly introduce the theoretical tools that will be used to explore the actions and strategies of Afro Brazilian women activists in relation to broader national and transnational processes. These are postcolonial feminism, intersectionality, and the political process model.

Postcolonial Feminism

Postcolonial feminist literature acknowledges the complex ways in which colonial relations of domination simultaneously drive and stifle the contemporary mobilization of marginalized peoples. This critical approach pushes studies of feminist and anti-racist activism in IR further by linking the emergence of local and national feminist mobilizations to larger transnational systems of patriarchy, racism, and colonialism. As stated by postcolonial feminist Cheryl McEwan, "Grounding analyses in particular, local feminist praxis is necessary, but understanding the local in relation to larger crossnational processes is also important" (2006, 106). This theme of situating knowledge and activism permeates the works of other postcolonial feminist scholars like Anna M. Agathangelou and Heather M. Turcotte (2010), M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1997), and Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (1994). Each examines how individual movements have confronted gendered, classed, and racialized colonial logics at the local level and the consequences for the development of transnational feminist solidarities.

In this work, postcolonial feminism is central to providing a historically grounded and nuanced understanding of the identity-based mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women. It helps to reveal how prominent colonial constructions of Afro-Brazilian women have shaped the contemporary societal perceptions, positions, and collective activism of this group. Therefore, the mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women at the Durban Conference cannot be viewed as separate from specific colonial narratives and nation-building ideologies in Brazil.

Another notable strength of postcolonial feminism comes in its challenge of the dominant theoretical and methodological perspectives of IR. Particular emphasis is placed on mainstream theoretical approaches that have disregarded or denied the significance of gender, race, class, nationality, sexuality, and language identities for the maintenance of hegemonic discourses in international politics. In an attempt to maintain and protect the so-called uniformity of the international system, disciplinary boundaries have often forced questions of identity and difference to the outskirts (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004). The obscuring of non-dominant identities and the diverse histories and struggles of marginalized groups is therefore one of the most fundamental shortcomings of the discipline. According to Agathangelou and Turcotte, postcolonial feminism has helped to expand "the orientation of IR scholarship to consider the different configurations and effects of international politics when attentive to various objects, subjects and power relations circulating in critical geographies" (2009, 44).

A postcolonial feminist rereading of Afro-Brazilian women's mobilization reveals the exploitation of race and gender categories by dominant groups. This study draws on

this approach to make a critical linkage between the manipulation of race and gender identities by colonial elites in Brazil and the inadequate responses of the Brazilian government to the cultural, political, and socioeconomic subordination of the Afro-Brazilian community in the present day.

Postcolonial feminism, however, stops short of extensively analyzing the centrality of race, gender, and other identity categories for the strategies, tactics, and outward actions of marginalized groups. In fact, there is a general lack of resources in IR to capture the ways in which the individual identity categories of Afro-Brazilian women are strategically and collectively engaged by the women themselves. The black feminist theory of intersectionality assists in filling this void.

Intersectionality

First introduced by black feminist and legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) to identify the factors contributing to the disproportionate levels of unemployment and domestic violence faced by black and immigrant women in the United States, intersectionality suggests that axes of identity and oppression, such as race, gender, and class, coalesce to shape an individual's experiences and social positioning.

While the discipline of political science has gradually begun to incorporate intersectionality research in studies of political representation (Hardy-Fanta 2006), electoral behaviour (Smooth 2006), and public policy (Manuel 2006; Verloo 2006), significant ground is yet to be covered. For example, research emerging within conventional IR has tended to conceal or ignore the identities and oppressions that

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underlie power struggles in the international realm. Critical IR theory has achieved greater success in analyzing the centrality of race, gender, and class hierarchies, but has also struggled to address the interactive character of these representations. In the words of Geeta Chowdry and Sheila Nair, "critical IR problematizes these sources and workings of power", but "is less able to or willing, with few exceptions, to address the intersections of race, class and gender in the construction of power asymmetries" (2004, 2).

One of the primary reasons for integrating an intersectional approach into this work is to allow an exploration of the intersection of identity categories and systems of oppression from a number of angles. The sites of intersectionality have been explored in several different ways by scholars across disciplinary boundaries. For example, there has been little shortage of work examining structural intersectionality, defined by Crenshaw (1991) as the specific experiences of privilege and discrimination faced by individuals situated at the convergence of identity categories. Structural intersectionality helps us to better understand the location of Afro-Brazilian women within economic, political, and social structures in comparison to other groups in Brazil, including black men and white women.

Representational intersectionality is also critical to the overall argument of this dissertation. This categorization refers to the ways in which race and gender are depicted in broader cultural imagery, oftentimes to ensure the maintenance and reproduction of hierarchies of inequality (Crenshaw 1991). As Chapter Three details, the widespread dissemination of sexualized and racialized images of black and multiracial women in Brazilian colonial narratives and national ideologies has been used to legitimize the

marginalized status of Afro-Brazilian women in spaces of activism and in the broader society.

Yet, for this study, the most important form of intersectionality is one that has not been extensively explored in the broader literature on social movements, IR or black feminism. For the purpose of this work, strategic intersectionality refers to the ways in which identity categories are strategically negotiated, articulated, and deployed in processes of mobilization by groups with intersectional identities.[3] Black feminist scholar Jennifer C. Nash argues that identities must not be narrowly conceptualized as sources of exclusion and stratification, but as critical resources of activists who occupy several different identity statuses simultaneously and are located in specific contexts (2008, 11). Re-envisioning identities in this way helps to reveal how Afro-Brazilian women activists situate the affirmation of race and gender identities at the forefront of their agendas and utilize these categories to strategically position themselves in activist arenas. In addition, bringing attention to the movement's identity-oriented strategies establishes these activists as strategic actors, rather than as static victims of their histories or of the Brazilian state.

Yet, as previously noted, the strategies and decisions of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement have not been unaffected by the national and transnational political

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[3]This term has been utilized by Fraga et al. (2005) to describe the leveraging of ethnic and gender identities to gain support in legislative processes by Latina elected officials the United States. Marie-Claire Bellau (2007) has also used the term to explain dynamic interactions between feminism and national identity politics in Canada and the global context. The definition used in this work is cognisant of these conceptualizations, but is not modelled after them.

landscape and must be examined in relation to both spheres. The political process model

provides particular insight into the external conditions that have influenced the strategic

use of race and gender categories in the mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women.

Political Process Model

The political process model provides a means to analyze the impact of particular

political and institutional environments on the strategies and decisions of social

movements. The main contention of the model is that an individual's participation and

actions in social movements are dependent on political opportunity structures. Social

movement theorist Sidney Tarrow defines political opportunity structures as the

"consistent—but not necessarily formal or permanent or national—dimensions of the

political environment which encourage people to engage in contentious politics" (1998,

19-20). Elements of the political opportunity structure include, but are not limited to:

political alignments, policy frameworks, the openings or closures of formal power

structures, and access to resources and symbolic events.

Several IR and social movement theorists, including Margaret Keck and Kathryn

Sikkink (1998), Myra Marx Ferree (2006), and Thomas Risse-Kappen (1995), have

looked at the interaction of national, international, and transnational opportunity

structures in different forms of collective action. Sanjeev Khagram, James Riker, and

Kathryn Sikkink argue that "to understand the effectiveness of transnational collective

action, we must understand the dynamic interaction between the international opportunity

structure and the domestic structure" (2002, 18). These scholars conclude that these

structures can either counteract or reinforce one another and that the impact of one level cannot be fully understood without consideration of the other.

In this study, the political process model enables us to problematize the different conditions and spaces in which Afro-Brazilian women activists have organized singular or multiple identity categories and the reasons behind their decisions. The political opportunity structures and articulations of identity emerging out of Brazil's democratic transition in the mid-1980s and the UN Conferences on Women in Beijing in 1995 and on Racism in Durban in 2001 are given particular consideration in this study. Chapters Four and Five illustrate how political opportunity structures encountered by the Afro-Brazilian women's movement have been significantly influenced by the Brazilian government's push to dominate the major political and economic channels of the region, to consolidate democracy within its borders, and to gain international distinction and admiration. As we move from the theoretical dimensions of this study, it is important to provide some background information on Brazil and pinpoint some significant moments in the country's political trajectory for the mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women.

Key Moments in Brazil's Political History[4]

At first glance, Brazil seems like a country making major strides in its effort to become an advanced industrialized democracy. Currently ranked as the ninth largest industrial economy in the world, a global leader in the production and exportation of Ethanol, and the slated host of the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Summer Olympics, Brazil's

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[4] Portions of this section are drawn from a chapter published by the author in an edited volume on Latin American Identities After 1980. See Franklin (2010).

political and economic ascension in the twenty-first century is nothing short of
impressive.

Upon closer examination, however, it is apparent that the Brazilian state and its
citizens are embroiled in a serious identity crisis. The country has long had one of the
most unequal distributions of income in the world and the highest levels of poverty in
Latin America (Power and Roberts 2000). In recent years several factors have contributed
to this disparity. One of the primary issues has been the implementation of neoliberal
economic and social policies by the administration of President Fernando Henrique
Cardoso (1994-2002). Within this context where a significant divide still exists between
the purveyors of justice and the people they are supposed to govern, constitutionalism and
rule of law have remained tenuous (Linz and Stepan 1996, 167). Moreover, although
crime rates have decreased over the past decade, recent studies indicate that violent crime
and drug trafficking remain pervasive social problems, particularly in urban low-income
communities commonly known as *favelas*.

At the heart of Brazil's identity crisis is the chasm between the extensive
socioeconomic disparities between African descendants and white populations and the
widely-influential ideology of racial democracy. Since the mid-1930s, this ideology,
premised on the idea that complete racial equality exists in Brazil, has structured
Brazilian political discourses, cultural symbols and images, and historical accounts. The
notion of racial democracy derives from social historian Gilberto Freyre's (1946)
ethnographic account of the relationship between Portuguese colonizers and African and
indigenous slaves in the colonial period. According to Freyre, Portuguese colonizers did

not construct the extreme structures of racial segregation and domination which defined other slave-based economies, but developed a uniquely amicable and equitable relationship with slave populations. With widespread miscegenation between Portuguese, African, and indigenous peoples, Brazil's population reflected the fluid integration of distinct races and cultures.

Freyre's romanticized depiction of interracial relations in colonial period would define the structure of Brazil's national identity for much of the twentieth century. Yet, as Chapter Three of this study reveals, it was during the era of colonization and slavery that some of the country's most enduring racial and gender stigmas were developed. The historical accounts of Brazil's 'pluralistic' colonial society, especially those offered by Freyre, are riddled with derogatory and sexualized images of African, mixed race, and indigenous women. These images continue to be promulgated and glorified in contemporary national discourse.

Brazilian and foreign intellectuals have since argued that the construction of the ideology of racial democracy was a purposeful act steered by elites "to show the rest of the world that they belonged to the group of civilized nations, those that had embraced modernity beyond slavery" (Goldstein 2003, 74). At the domestic level, the ideology helped to minimize the fact that during and following the influx of European immigrants in the 1920s and 1930s, Afro-Brazilians consistently remained in disadvantageous economic and social positions (Fernandes 1969). The corruption of the country's fledgling democracy by powerful state governors led to the establishment of a corporatist authoritarian regime in 1930. Under the leadership of President Getulio Vargas (1930-45;

1951-54), this regime refused to acknowledge racially distinctive groups and their peripheral positioning, and stifled the mass mobilization of Afro-Brazilian populations.

The suicide of Vargas in 1954 led to "a number of years of fragile democracy, with an increasing rift between the military and the left of the political spectrum" (Phillips 2010, 254). President Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1960) championed an ambitious campaign to industrialize Brazil, but his tenure was hampered by high levels of inflation. Despite Kubitschek's popularity among the Brazilian public, in 1960 he was succeeded by Janio Quadros who resigned after seven months in office. Upon assuming office, President Joao Goulart (1961-1964) faced immense pressure to balance the distribution of power in government through the establishment of a parliamentary system (Blake 2008, 168). In 1964 the country's brief respite from authoritarianism would come to an end when Goulart was forcibly removed from office by a military coup. This was the first of a series of dictatorships that utilized violent and covert tactics, including the murder, torture, surveillance and censorship of perceived political adversaries, to ensure the tacit control of the Brazilian population over the next twenty years (Goldstein 2003, 53).

Only since the mid-1970s have efforts to counter the myth of racial democracy and reveal the continued marginalization of Afro-Brazilians come to the forefront. The country's unprecedented economic progress from 1968 to 1974 shed light on significant disparities in the distribution of income across racial and class lines (Skidmore 1989). As workers and student populations grew increasingly restless with the unequal distribution of wealth and access to education in the country, newly elected President Ernesto Geisel (1974-79) advanced the idea of a *democratica abertura* (democratic opening) in 1974.

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Various forms and sources of social activism emerged during the early stages of Brazil's transition to democracy. Women, landless peasants, and the urban poor were among the multiple groups which demanded improved economic and social policies and increased transparency from the Brazilian government, and they found a key ally in the Brazilian Catholic Church. The Brazilian feminist movement saw its membership rapidly climb as thousands of women began collectively organizing to "formulate new claims grounded in gendered needs and identities" (Alvarez 1994, 13). During this period several black militants and exiled intellectuals also remerged after decades of repression. The *Movimento Negro Unificado* (MNU or Unified Black Movement) established chapters across major cities and openly challenged the myth of racial democracy by bringing attention to covert forms of racial exclusion in Brazilian society.

Along with the increased social mobilization of disparate groups over the past three decades, Brazil has faced marked challenges in the process of economic liberalization. As mentioned, the advancement of a neo-liberal economic development model by President Cardoso in the 1990s increased the already significant presence of foreign sectors in Brazilian markets and pushed those situated in vulnerable socio-economic positions into deeper disparity. A central pillar of the model was the drastic reduction of the public sector and the removal of job protection measures for public servants in the Constitution. While following the stipulations for economic restructuring outlined by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, the Cardoso administration faced heavy criticism at the domestic and international levels for the "high social debt, which by all accounts, exceed[ed] the dimensions of the external debt

accumulated over the same period" (Veltmeyer 2007, 90). In the mid-1990s, the federal government pledged to introduce "revolutionary equality policies" to show their vested interest in the improvement of social and economic relations (Reichmann 1999, 22).

Under the leadership of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) and President Dilma Rousseff (2011-present), the country has embarked on the challenging process of replacing the notion of racial democracy with an American-influenced system of affirmation action. In 2003, the Special Secretariat for Promotion of Policies on Racial Equality (SEPPIR) was created to develop policies aimed at improving the conditions of black individuals in Brazilian society. The most controversial policies to date have been educational quotas to increase the enrolment of black students at federal and state-funded universities. Critics of the quotas argue that these measures problematically distinguish students on the basis of ambiguous characteristics and do not effectively challenge the low numbers of black students at primary and secondary levels.

While such policies attempt to challenge institutionalized forms of racism in Brazil, they tend to construct race and class as singular sources of discrimination. As a result, affirmation action measures have largely overlooked the specificities of Afro-Brazilian women's intersectional identities and experiences. It is at this juncture of the introduction that we turn our attention to these women. The following section provides data on the stratification of Afro-Brazilian women in the areas of income, employment, and reproductive health care, and considers the impact on the broader objectives of mobilization. Doing so allows us to gain a sense of why this community, which remains

one of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged populations in Brazil and also one of

the most organized and vocal opponents of discrimination, is so important to study.

Socioeconomic Disparities and Political Exclusions of Afro-Brazilian Women

According to the preliminary results of the 2010 Brazilian Census, Afro-

Brazilians represent approximately 51 percent of the country's 190 million inhabitants.

While this number is up from 45 percent in 2000, researchers estimate that the number

could be as high as 70 percent when discrepancies in self-identification are considered

(Barsted and Hermann 2001; Nascimento 2007). Despite the use of two colour categories

to identify African descendants in the Brazilian Census, *preta* (black or dark-skinned) and

pardo (brown or mixed race), distorted self-perceptions have hampered the collection of

data on race by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). Inaccurate

statistics stem from the long-standing tendency of African descendants to classify

themselves as brown or white because of the aversion to blackness distilled in whitening

and racial democracy ideologies. This preference was strikingly evident in a 1999

National Household Sample Survey, in which 5.39 percent of the respondents classified

themselves as black while 39.9 percent identified themselves as brown.

Taking these factors into account, researchers estimate that Afro-Brazilian women

make up approximately 23 percent of the total Brazilian population and 44 percent of the

total female population (Barsted and Hermann 2001; Caldwell 2009). In her 2001 Human

Development Index (HDI) study accounting for race and gender, Wania Sant'anna

concludes that Afro-Brazilian women rank 114th out of a total of 174 countries. They are

more prone to informal and uncertain forms of work, earn significantly less than any other segment of the Brazilian population, and have limited access to health care.

As of 2000, one in three Afro-Brazilian women in Brazil was employed as a domestic servant (Lovell 2006, 73). Data on urban occupational distribution from the 1960 Brazilian Census reveals that this trend has changed only modestly in forty years. Findings from 1960 indicated that 94 percent of Afro-Brazilian women in the Brazilian workforce were situated in manual occupations with 66 percent working as domestic servants (Lovell 2006, 72). In the domain of non-manual jobs, Afro-Brazilian women represented a much smaller percentage. Compared to 48 percent for white women, Afro-Brazilian women made up less than 12 percent of those designated as middle level employees (office personnel, school teachers, nurses) and 0.1 percent of upper level professionals (managerial or planning positions) in the urban areas of Brazil (Lovell 1999, 146).

Peggy A. Lovell's study (2006) of Afro-Brazilian women's participation in the Sao Paulo labour force provides a glimpse into the workings of race and gender discrimination in a major urban area. She notes a dramatic shift in Afro-Brazilian women's employment in middle level professions from 1960 to 1991. She observes that over the course of three decades, the proportion of Afro-Brazilian women employed in these professions jumped by 28 percent. Lovell attributes this notable increase to two factors: the diversification and expansion of Sao Paulo's economy and the improved education levels among Afro-Brazilian women.

Nathalie Lebon is reluctant to celebrate the increased numbers of Afro-Brazilian women in middle levels of the Sao Paulo labour force during this period as a sign of the decline or effective confrontation of discriminatory ideologies in Brazil. She notes that "Afro-Brazilian women registered the largest absolute gain in this context because of their very modest starting point in 1960" and comparatively "lagged considerably behind white women, 63 percent of whom could be found in this employment" (Lebon 2007, 62). Rather, she suggests that this shift was indicative of processes of urbanization and industrialization taking shape in Sao Paulo. Lovell acknowledges that reversals of this trend were apparent by the early 1990s. Large numbers of women from both racial groups were forced to leave middle level positions and enter lower-paying service jobs. From this data, we can garner the modest changes that have occurred in Afro-Brazilian women's positioning in the labour market since the 1960s. It is important to recognize, however, that such shifts have occurred at a slow pace and are ultimately subject to reversal in times of economic crisis.

Research completed on income generation also exposes extreme gaps between Afro-Brazilian women and other segments of the Brazilian population. Elisa Larkin Nascimento asserts that "as a determinant of income, gender follows race" in Brazil (2007, 46). She notes that Afro-Brazilian men and women earn approximately half or less than half of what white men and women earn (Nascimento 2007, 26). Lucila Bandeira Beato offers a similar assessment, noting that "racial inequality is more intense than gender equality in the labor market in Brazil" (2004, 776). According to Beato, the racial and gender hierarchies in income generation work as follows: "white men, white women,

black men, black women" (2004, 776). She points to the research completed on labour

market demographics in the Sao Paulo Metropolitan Region as evidence of this hierarchy.

In 2000, the State Data Analysis Foundation found that employed white women earned

74.6 percent of the hourly income of white men in comparison with Afro-Brazilian men

who earned 51.8 percent and Afro-Brazilian women who earned 39.3 percent (Beato

2004, 777).

Many Afro-Brazilian women also primarily serve as heads of the household,

assuming responsibility for the social, economic, and personal well-being of the family

unit and of the community at large. Afro-Brazilian female headed households have

doubled since 1970, increasing from 13 percent to nearly 26 percent in 1998 (Lebon

2007, 64). This role is often fulfilled under conditions of extreme poverty with Afro-

Brazilian women heading 60 percent of the households that earn less than one minimum

wage (Lebon 2007, 64).

Extreme racial disparities are also visible in the areas of health care and

reproduction. Recent studies indicate sharp differences in terms of reproductive risks and

access to health care between white and black populations. Kia Lilly Caldwell notes that

in comparison to white women, Afro-Brazilian women have often been

disproportionately affected by various gender-specific reproductive health problems and

procedures, including fibroid tumors, caesarean sections, abortions, female sterilization,

and cervical cancer (2009, 122). Edna Roland points to the complicit role of the Brazilian

government in high levels of black female sterilization in Brazil's Northeast region

throughout the 1990s. She argues that "sterilization appears to be the inexorable destiny

of Northeastern Brazilian women, where in 1991 19 percent were sterilized by the age of 25" (1999, 201).

Afro-Brazilian women continue to be disproportionately targeted in population control programs in the 2000s. The coercive tactics of the Brazilian state are exemplified in the controversy surrounding *A Life Plan*, a population control initiative created by the Institute for Women's Awareness in the city of Porto Alegre. In 2006, after receiving funding from the Brazilian Ministry of Health, the local NGO fitted several women living in rural communities and state-run shelters with contraceptive implants. Outrage among local Afro-Brazilian women's organizations over the covertly discriminatory nature of the program soon followed. Activists argued that by making low socioeconomic status the only criteria for the receipt of the implant, Afro-Brazilian women would comprise the majority of candidates for the procedure.

Although the infant mortality rate within this community dropped significantly during the twentieth century, Beato asserts that the "differential between African descendant children and white children is still very high" (2004, 771). Her findings show that between 1993 and 1997, the decline in infant mortality rates among the children of white mothers was 43 percent in contrast to 25 percent for children of Afro-Brazilian women. In addition to this, the incidences of maternal death are highest among Afro-Brazilian women (Beato 2004).

Afro-Brazilian women also remain highly underrepresented in the arena of formal politics. The results of recent elections show that little progress has been made despite the

implementation of a quota system for female candidates in general elections by the

Brazilian Congress in 1998. While the original quota rose from 25 to 30 percent in 2000,

women made up just below 9 percent of the seats in the House of Representatives and 12

percent of the seats in the Senate in 2006 (Simoes and Matos 2008, 103-104).

Community activist and founding member of the *Partido dos Trabalhadoes* (PT

or Workers' Party) in Brazil, Benedita da Silva became the first Afro-Brazilian woman

elected to the National Constituent Assembly in 1986 and to the National Congress in

1987 (Lebon 2007, 68). Elected to the Brazilian Senate in 1994, da Silva also served as

the Governor of Rio de Janeiro in 2002. She was one of two females to hold the position

that year. In 2003, she also became one of three Afro-Brazilian women selected to hold

ministerial posts (Ministry of Social Welfare) under the Lula administration. The two

others were Matilde Ribeiro and Marina Silva. After a lengthy career in public service

and participation in black and feminist movements, Ribeiro was selected as the inaugural

Minister of SEPPIR. She left the post in 2008 amid allegations of the misappropriation of

government funds. Silva, a well-known environmental activist and two-term Senator,

also held the post of Minister of Environment until 2008. In 2010, she became the leader

of the *Partido Verde* (Green Party) and completed an unsuccessful presidential run. Long-

time MNU activist and scholar Luiza Bairros was appointed by President Rousseff to

head the Ministry of SEPPIR in 2011. For each of these women, extensive participation

in neighbourhood associations, community organizations, and social movements served

as a stepping stone for entry into Brazilian electoral politics.

The Objectives and Expansion of the Afro-Brazilian Women's Movement

Various Afro-Brazilian women's NGOs and collectives emerged across the country throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Caldwell 2009). The resources, membership, and focus of each collective varied, but the primary objective has remained constant: to bring greater public awareness to the specificity of black women's identities and struggles and to introduce novel means to counter their historical socio-economic subordination in Brazilian society. Currently, the Afro-Brazilian women's movement is comprised of multiple organizations as well as activists not affiliated with any particular organization. These individuals have played an active role in combatting racial and gender discrimination within individual neighbourhoods, educational institutions, and religious and cultural bodies. Some of the larger and oldest organizations, including the Sao-Paulo based *Geledes Instituto da Mulher Negra* (Geledes Black Women's Institute) and *Casa de Cultura de Mulher Negra* (Black Women's House of Culture) have received international recognition for their work in challenging domestic violence and sexist practices and in securing legislative and constitutional reforms to increase the rights of historically disadvantaged groups (Franklin 2010).

At the present time, one of the major representative bodies of the movement is the *Articulacao de ONGS de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras* (AMNB or Network of Black Brazilian Women's NGOs). Initially created to increase the presence of Afro-Brazilian women activists and movement platforms at the Durban Conference, it has since worked to increase communication and collaboration between movement organizations. Its key priorities since Durban reflect those of the movement at large. They are to:

- Contribute to the strengthening of the black women's NGOs; giving them the capacity to make qualified political interventions
- Consolidate and expand the Network's initiatives in the international and national scene
- Implement and monitor the recommendations of the Third World Conference Against Racism
- Monitor the public policies at the federal, state, and municipal level to improve the quality of life for black women and the black community
- Build a strategy to insert the theme of black women into the national media (Werneck 2006, 4)

What distinguishes Afro-Brazilian women activists from their counterparts in the Brazilian feminist and black movement is their drive to expose and challenge the prevailing colonial logics that have denied their right to be treated as equals in Brazilian society. This study reveals how such an undertaking requires a reconfiguration of race and gender identities as strategic resources and a heightened awareness of national and transnational political conditions. Afro-Brazilian women have mobilized within and outside of Brazil to "establish new forms of identity that challenge the nature of traditional hegemonic national identity" (Crook and Johnson 1999, 9). Melissa Nobles drives this point home when she asserts that this and other identity-based movements in Brazil have gone beyond "simply organizing on the basis of a shared and widely assumed identity, what these movements are shaping is a discourse about identity" (2000, 3).

Methodological Considerations

This qualitative study draws upon a number of primary and secondary sources to investigate the transformational capacity of national and transnational processes in the mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women. An extensive review of literature on Brazilian colonial and racial relations served as a key starting point. The primary purpose of this

exercise was to uncover and study the intersection between identity categories and systems of oppression in constructions of black women in the country's colonial accounts. The review also revealed the centrality of racialized and sexualized depictions of black women for the ideology of racial democracy. This specifically refers to the repeated correlation between the sexual impulsiveness of African slave women and the Portuguese male's propensity for racial mixing established by prominent Brazilian scholars, politicians, and foreign researchers. The review was approached with a postcolonial feminist lens in mind, often drawing upon the work of aforementioned theorists who emphasize the transnational dimension of national configurations of oppression. This approach helped to ground the sources and intersections of Afro-Brazilian women's identities and activism in broader transatlantic processes of colonization and slavery.

In order to illicit the views, experiences, and strategies of Afro-Brazilian women mobilized at the national and transnational level, documentary research and interviews were conducted. This process of data collection centered on over fifty internal and external movement documents, such as movement manifestos, meeting transcripts, position papers, reports for regional preparatory meetings and UN Conferences, activist interviews, and published magazine and newspaper articles. These documents were publicly held in the archives of state and university libraries, movement organizations, and on websites, and privately held in the personal collections of activists and researchers. The published writings of female figureheads in the black movement and the Afro-Brazilian women's movement, including Leila Gonzalez's *A Mulher Negra* (The

Black Woman), Sueli Carneiro and Thereza Santos's *Mulher Negra*: *Dossie Sobre Discriminacao Racial* (Black Woman: A Report on Racial Discrimination), and Jurema Werneck, Maisa Medonca, and Evelyn C. White's edited volume, *O Livro da Saude Mulheres Negras: Nossos Passos Vem de Longe* (The Book of Black Women's Health: Our Steps come from a Distance) were also extensively reviewed. Each document was examined for background information on the influences, goals, and positions of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement.

In addition, the specific articulations of the movement's goals and identities within these documents were examined for the purpose of seeing how and if these articulations changed during periods of political transition and in specific environments. For example, movement materials emerging before and after the 1995 UN Conference on Women in Beijing and the 2001 Durban Conference were compared to ascertain if and how the language, perspectives, and goals of the movement changed following the activists' experiences within these settings.

The one-on-one interviewing of leaders and long-standing activists within the Afro-Brazilian women's movement, activists within the Brazilian feminist movement, and researchers of black and feminist organizations in Brazil primarily occurred over the course of three months in 2007. It is important to provide some background on the criteria used to identify and select the interviewees. To get a sense of the strategic usage of race and gender categories in national and transnational spaces and the underlying logics and circumstances which shaped these articulations, it was necessary to speak with individuals who had a direct hand in those decisions over the past three decades. It was

especially necessary to speak with activists who had attended transnational forums like the Durban Conference and who had formally represented and communicated the movement's message within and outside of Brazil's borders. In most cases, these were activists that had been involved in the movement since its inception, had occupied leadership positions, and had a secondary source income. Several were also fluent in English and university educated.

Approximately forty activists and researchers were originally contacted to participate in the study. Based on the responses received, a total of twenty-five were interviewed. To ensure a diverse sample, respondents were affiliated with the following organizations, agencies, and research institutes: *Geledes*, *Criola*, *Fala Preta!*, Feminist Center for Research and Advisory Studies (CFEMEA), Cepia, CEAFRO, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Brasil, Department of International Development (UK), Brazilian Institute on Social and Economic Analysis (IBASE), Interdisciplinary Center for African Descendant Research and Heritage (NIREMA), MNU, Global Afro-Latino and Caribbean Initiative (GALCI), and ActionAid as well as those with no specific affiliations. Interviews were held in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador da Bahia, Juazeiro de Norte, Brasilia, and New York City. The interviews ranged from one to two hours and were conducted in NGO headquarters, offices, boardrooms, and in the homes of respondents. The cities of Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro were also visited for several weeks in 2006 to collect materials on the broader focus of the research project and establish contacts.

Each respondent was asked a standard list of questions about collective identity, strategy, and the impact of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement. Interviews with activists also included questions on their backgrounds (where they were born and raised, their age) and what stimulated their initial interest and involvement in the movement and the dynamics of their current participation (see Appendix). All interviews were conducted in confidentiality unless the interviewee requested that their name be included in the study.

It is necessary at this point to acknowledge some of the limitations of the interview strategy and to identify the reasons behind this decision. By choosing to primarily interview elites and long-standing members of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement, this study is unable to fully capture the voices and experiences of activists new to the movement and who are at the grassroots level and to identify their valuable contributions to identity formation and mobilization processes. This is not to suggest that these individuals have not had a significant impact on the efforts of the movement to challenge intersectional forms of discrimination at the national or transnational level or that their individual perspectives are not worthwhile to study. This selection undoubtedly contributes to internal frictions, particularly among young, educated, and grass-roots level activists who seek to take the Afro-Brazilian women's movement in a new direction and who object to the continued influence of a small number of individuals. While these voices will guide future research projects, this study's concentration on established activists in the movement takes a much needed-step towards solidifying women of African descent as politically relevant actors in IR.

It would be false to suggest that each of the activists encountered during the field research process was interested or willing to share their experiences and perspectives. I distinctly remember an experience early in my field research when one respondent exhibited hostility to my presence as a foreign researcher. She spoke at length of the appropriation of knowledge by foreign academics seeking information on the Afro-Brazilian women's movement, and in the end declined to participate in the interview. This emotionally-charged experience forced me to acknowledge the inherent inequality of the relationship between the researcher and the researched and to contemplate my own intersectional location as a black, Canadian, twenty-six year-old female graduate student.

Drawing upon feminist methodologies and research practices, I became more reflexive of the impact of my position on my interaction with respondents and of the positions I adopted in my research. On the one hand, my socioeconomic status, nationality, and education level at times proved more polarizing than the identity categories I shared with respondents. On the other hand, my race and gender opened up avenues of conversation that might have not been possible if I was not a black female. For example, respondents often questioned me about the treatment and social mobilization of black women in the Canadian context and my own encounters with discrimination. Such questions reflected the degree of comfort respondents were able to achieve during the interviews and made interviewing more of a two-way process, not just one which served my objectives as a researcher.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Two addresses the theoretical components of the study's integrative explanatory framework and establishes potential linkages between the distinctive components. Major arguments put forth by scholars of postcolonial feminism, intersectionality, and the political process model are drawn upon to theorize and contextualize Afro-Brazilian women's identity-based mobilization. For example, postcolonial feminism sheds light on the logics of colonialism and slavery underlying contemporary constructions of Afro-Brazilian women. Linking this approach to strategic intersectionality and the political process model enables us to see the utility and limitation of race and gender categories for Afro-Brazilian women in particular historical moments and political environments. Important insights from each approach greatly assist in theorizing the navigation of identity categories and the factors which inform the strategies and decisions of Afro-Brazilian women activists and others that embody multiple identity categories.

Chapter Three begins with an extensive examination of gender and racial hierarchies in the Brazilian context and specifically concentrates on intersecting constructions of blackness and femininity in colonial narratives. It reveals the careful construction of Afro-Brazilian women's bodies as disposable and inferior at the hands of Portuguese colonizers and later, Brazilian intellectuals and political elites. The symbolic representations of African and mixed race slave women's identities in Gilberto Freyre's influential ethnographic writings on Brazilian plantation life are given significant attention. This chapter provides a sense of the historical positioning and prevalent

characterizations of Afro-Brazilian women and draws attention to the implications of larger transnational processes of domination for their contemporary socioeconomic status and collective mobilization.

Chapter Four illustrates how the multiple identity positions, platforms, and directives negotiated by the Afro-Brazilian women's movement are directly linked to their confrontation of colonial logics and their recognition of political opportunity structures at the national and regional levels. The analysis charts the trajectory of the movement since its inception and pinpoints some of the most defining events and exchanges for Afro-Brazilian women activists in relation to the democratic transition in Brazil. Among these events were the symbolic and concrete marginalization of Afro-Brazilian women in the major organizations of the black movement and in the Brazilian feminist movement, the openings provided by gender-based mobilization for the emergence of black women's collectives, and the key power struggles and debates between Afro-Brazilian women and Brazilian feminist activists at national and Latin American feminist meetings. This chapter also shows how, despite facing extreme discrimination within national and regional spaces of anti-racist and feminist activism, Afro-Brazilian women utilized their identities and experiences to build the movement nationally, to develop regional alliances, and to increase awareness of intersectional forms of discrimination. Such analyses also shed light on the critical role played by national movements in encouraging—perhaps unknowingly—the transnational mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women.

Chapter Five examines the articulation, negotiation, and strategic use of race and gender identities and discriminations by Afro-Brazilian women in preparation for and during UN Conferences. Its primary focus is on the Beijing and Durban Conferences and it is therefore divided into two sections. First, the chapter takes a closer look at the efforts of Afro-Brazilian women activists to incorporate a racial dimension into frameworks to combat gender inequality during the Beijing process, and at the obstacles and openings provided by the domestic political environment and the Brazilian feminist movement. While increased collaboration between Afro-Brazilian women and the Brazilian feminist movement is evident throughout Beijing Conference process, the former were generally disappointed with the absence of commitment in the final documents to the gender and race-specific issues facing black women. Second, the chapter concentrates on the strategies and decisions of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement adopted six years later at Durban. It provides details about the ways in which members of the Network of Black Brazilian Women's NGOs grappled with communicating singular-identity and intersectional perspectives in their recommendations, and about the centrality of the UN in the legitimization of these issues.

The outcomes of Afro-Brazilian women's mobilization at Durban are explored in Chapter Six. First, the standards by which the impact of transnational collective action are measured by IR and social movement scholars are considered. These include subsequent shifts in domestic norms and policy frameworks and the creation of sustainable transnational feminist networks and solidarities. Each of these standards is used to examine the impact of Afro-Brazilian women activists in the post-Durban era. It finds that

while some progress has been made in the area of reproductive health care, domestic policy frameworks especially affirmative action policies have not fully embraced nor integrated intersectional perspectives. The chapter further examines the powerful role played by colonial legacies in limiting cross-national networks between other anti-racist and feminist organizations.

Second, unsatisfied with existing measurements, this chapter argues that a new contemplation of the impact of movements must emerge in IR that recognizes the importance of transnational processes for the articulation and establishment of intersectional movement identities and agendas. The focus on the increased power and leverage of the Network of Black Brazilian Women's NGOs since the Durban Conference demonstrates the positive consequences of transnational events and mobilizations for Afro-Brazilian women activists. The dissertation concludes with a synopsis of its main arguments and scholarly contributions and a brief discussion of future directions for research.

CHAPTER TWO

EXPLANATORY FRAMEWORK: IDENTITIES, INTERSECTIONS, AND OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

The purpose of this chapter is to build an integrative explanatory framework to address the specific national and transnational processes that have worked independently and interactively to shape the intersectional mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women. It examines the major arguments and insights from theorists of postcolonial feminism, intersectionality, and the political process model that aid in contextualizing the collective identities and activism of Afro-Brazilian women. It also draws key linkages among the approaches. Each perspective helps us to understand this social movement as situated in a broader web of identity constructions, political structures, and histories, not as bounded to one space or time (Thayer 2009, 6).

As previously noted, postcolonial feminists aim to historicize and substantiate contemporary forms of feminist activism by exploring the systems of colonial domination that underlie individual movements. This chapter pays particular attention to postcolonial feminist theorizations on the centrality of oppositional constructions of blackness and femininity for the operation of colonial rule and the dynamics of feminist agency in non-Western societies. By emphasizing the relationship between race and gender in colonial systems, this perspective grounds the transformation of these categories as instruments of oppression into those of political empowerment for Afro-Brazilian women.

Specific theorizations and examples of strategic intersectionality are also introduced in this chapter to reveal how identity categories are negotiated and mobilized

by activists with historically marginalized identity statuses. Particular focus is placed on literatures in sociology and political science that do not attempt to eliminate or minimize the distinctiveness of individual categories, but that are keen to determine the ways in which they relate to one another in social movement arenas.

The final component of this study's explanatory framework is the political process model. It is central to understanding what Pascale Dufour, Dominique Masson, and Dominique Caouette characterize as the "complex interactions between actors' strategies and their institutional and movement environments" (2010, 3). The linkage between the identities and actions of social movements and environmental contexts developed within the political process model is explored. Also examined are comparative theorizations on the significance of democratic transition processes for the directives of domestic movements, and IR positions on international political opportunity structures, specifically those created within UN Conferences.

These perspectives are used to determine how specific external processes and the conditions and resources they facilitate, shape the identity articulations and mobilization strategies used by Afro-Brazilian women activists. By bringing these three approaches into conversation, we take a step closer to a framework which considers the historically grounded and contextually specific nature of identity-based mobilization—a valuable and necessary interdisciplinary endeavour.

Postcolonial Feminist Theory: Core Premises and Contributions

Before delving into the significant contentions of postcolonial feminist theory for

this study, it is important to identify what is meant by the often contested term:

'postcolonial'.[5] As Leela Gandhi asserts, "there is little consensus regarding the proper

context, scope and relevance of postcolonial studies" (1998, 3). Much of the controversy

surrounds the prevalent characterization of postcolonialism as "a disciplinary project

devoted to the task of revisiting, remembering and crucially interrogating the colonial

past" (Gandhi 1998, 4). While rightly emphasizing the exploratory value of postcolonial

studies, such descriptions situate colonialism in the past and overlook the configurations

of colonial and imperial orders that exist in the present day. A comprehensive

conceptualization of postcolonialism must acknowledge and incorporate the perpetuation

of colonial hegemonies in the contemporary realm. As Ato Quayson explains:

> [It] is necessary to disentangle the term, "postcolonial", from its implicit
> dimension of chronological supersession, that aspect of its prefix, which suggests
> that the colonial stage has been surpassed and left behind. It is important to
> highlight instead a notion of the term as a process of coming-into-being and of
> struggle against colonialism and its after-effects (2000, 9).

This understanding has been widely accepted in critical IR literature. It challenges

conventional readings of colonization as the *former* imposition of formal political control,

economic exploitation, and cultural domination by Western powers on underdeveloped

nations. For most postcolonial IR scholars, investigations of the contemporary

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[5] Several critical theorists have examined the meaning of the 'post' designation and its implications for
studies of colonialism and imperialism. See Shohat (1992) and McClintock (1992) for more details on this
intellectual debate.

manifestations and consequences of colonialism and Western imperialism are of equal importance to the unpacking of historical colonial encounters. Two leading theorists in this arena, Philip Darby and A.J. Paolini, assert that "colonialism has come to signify a continuing set of practices that are seen to prescribe relations between the West and the Third World beyond the independence of former colonies" (1994, 375).

The critical analysis of the continuities of these practices and the distinct impact on the realities and activism of women situated in colonized societies is a central objective of postcolonial feminism. As M.I. Franklin states, by tracing what occurs "when contending subjectivities collide, clash, absorb, integrate, and eventually reformulate" (2004, 443), postcolonial feminists expose the structures of domination that underlie the mobilization efforts and strategies of historically marginalized groups like Afro-Brazilian women. From this framework we get a sense of the complex "*reasons for,* rather than *causes of,* action" (Ling 2002, 24).

In seeking to engage the multiple sources and locations of feminist knowledge and resistance, postcolonial feminism also stresses the agency of non-Western or 'Third world' women. Boniface E.S. Mgonja and Iddi A.M. Makombe argue that "postcolonial feminists challenge the perceived portrayal of women of non-Western societies as passive and voiceless victims, as opposed to the portrayal of Western women as modern, educated and empowered" (2009, 33). Of particular relevance for this work are postcolonial feminist analyses of the interconnected functioning of race and gender dichotomies in colonization and slavery, and the historically specific and localized impact on women's identity constructions and mobilizations.

Race and Gender Dichotomies in Colonization Processes

Central to the justification and perpetuation of colonial discourses are what Chilla Bulbeck classifies as "evaluative dualisms" (1998, 44). Examples include East/West, settler/native, self/other, and colonizer/colonized. The works of Edward W. Said are instrumental in revealing the purposeful and enduring construction of these representations in processes of colonization. In his renowned 1978 publication, *Orientalism*, Said explores romanticized accounts of the colonial encounter with the exotic and inferior 'other' by Western travellers and scholars. From this perspective, the "contrasting image, idea, personality and experience" (1978, 2) between East (also called the Orient) and West has been imperative to the self-image, cultural life, and global positioning of the latter and must be critically interrogated.

While other theorists of colonial discourse criticize such rigid dichotomies, they also reproduce them in their retorts to conventional readings of colonization. This is evident in a depiction offered by Franz Fanon on the relationship between settler and native in the French colonial regime in Algeria in his renowned publication, *The Wretched of the Earth*: "The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession—all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible. The colonized man is an envious man" (1963, 32). Fanon vividly articulates the complex psychological tools used to legitimize and perpetuate these hierarchical relationships, but similar to Said, does not fully capture the intricate intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class which underlie them.

Postcolonial feminists problematize the pervasiveness of such dichotomies by analyzing what underlies and drives them—the gendered, sexualized, and racialized dimensions of colonialism. Emphasis is placed on exploring the profound and reciprocal relationships between race, gender, class, and sexuality and their indispensability in the development of national identity and the legitimization of power hierarchies. Jan Jindy Pettman specifically addresses the critical role played by women's bodies in the constitution of the colonial empire's moral and racial boundaries. She describes the oppositional construction of colonizing and colonized women in historical accounts of colonial life:

> Colonizing women were distinguished from colonized women through racialized gender stereotypes which replicated the good mother/bad mother and the good woman/bad woman dichotomy […] Colonizing women were generally represented as pure, non-sexual, mothers, civilizing influences on 'their' men[…] Often [colonized women] were seen as sexual creatures, more of nature and less controlled and chaste than good white women. As temptresses or as amoral, they could be held responsible for the seduction of white men (1996, 33-34).

The hyper sexualization of colonized women on the basis of race is not only crucial to the designation of the superior and subordinated classes and the structuring of Eurocentric modes of thought, but also to the measurement of modernity and progress in the colonized nation. From this perspective, the construction of racial differences between women and the magnification of their sexual behaviours is as much a tool of colonial hegemony as physical forms of enslavement and segregation. These forms of physical and symbolic separation often worked together in the operation of colonial rule (Mohanty 1991).

As the above quotation from Pettman reveals, the intricate construction of the white woman as a figure of racial, sexual, and moral purity was indispensable to the implementation and justification of colonial ruling systems. Sara Mills deems her as the "standard against which the mixed race or indigenous woman could be judged and against which the degree of 'progress' of British civilization could be measured" (1998, 102). Chapter Three details how this figure played an integral role in the emergence of abolitionist lobbies and the transmission of whitening discourses in the wake of economic depression and social upheaval in nineteenth century Brazil.

The classification of white women as responsible for the biological and cultural reproduction of the nation (Yuval-Davis 1997) by policymakers and administrators of the Portuguese crown also permeated colonial relations in Brazil. In this context and others, the bodies of white women were viewed as under constant threat from racial miscegenation and thus demanded continual cleansing (moral and physical) and policing to ensure the protection of the colonial empire.

Anne McClintock specifically examines this drive to control the sexual behaviours of white women in processes of colonization. She describes the sexuality of these women as "cordoned off as the central transmitter of racial and hence cultural contagion" (McClintock 1995, 48). According to McClintock, "controlling women's sexuality, exalting maternity and breeding a virile race of empire builders were widely perceived as the paramount means for controlling the health and wealth of the male imperial body politic, so that by the turn of the century, sexual purity emerged as the controlling metaphor for racial, economic and political power" (1995, 47).

Postcolonial feminist analyses not only reveal the ways in which categories of gender, race, class, and sexuality are consciously manipulated to situate racialized women in the role of boundary makers in nation-building and imperial projects, but perhaps more importantly, they demonstrate the exploited nature of these categories in particular historical moments. An important line is drawn between the symbolic categorization of these women as builders or dividers of the nation and their strategies of resistance to these imagined, but institutionalized categorizations. In this respect, postcolonial feminists seek out "creative ways to move beyond constructed oppositions without ignoring the histories that have informed these concerns about power relations that have represented or structured conflicts up to this point" (Grewal and Kaplan 1997, 17).

Revealing the Agency and Strategy of 'Third World' Women

Postcolonial feminists point out that Western feminism[6] has greatly contributed to the perpetuation of race and gender dichotomies in colonial discourse through the distorted representation of women in colonized societies. Mohanty (1991) speaks specifically about the colonizing practices found in Western feminist analyses of "Third World difference" and the "Third World woman". In her critical analysis of prominent Western feminist texts, *Under Western Eyes*, she asserts that it is within these scholarly works that "Western feminisms appropriate and 'colonize' the constitutive complexities which characterize the lives of women in these countries" (1991, 54). Mohanty's scrutiny of dominant representations of "Third World women as a homogenous powerless group

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[6] This term generally refers to "a body of knowledge and the perspectives developed in the West by privileged, white, middle-class and heterosexual women" (Edward 2007, 52).

often located as implicit *victims* of particular socioeconomic systems" (1991, 57) exposes

the prevalence of oppositional colonial logics in Western feminist knowledge and the

need for increased scholarly consideration of the multiplicity and diversity of women.

This perspective also provides insight into the infiltration of colonial hierarchies

in the interactions between white and black women activists in Brazil. Chapters Four and

Five address the tensions that have long defined this relationship, "partly because of the

failure of white women to recognize that they stand in a power relationship with black

women that is a legacy of imperialism" (McEwan 2001, 98). This approach reveals that

the identities and histories of subordinated women are not constructed in isolation, but in

the relations of power vis-à-vis other groups.

Patricia Hill Collins notes, "each group encounter[s] a distinctive constellation of

experiences based on its placement in hierarchal power relations" (1998, 205). We see in

Chapter Six, how, as a result of this distinctive constellation, Afro-Brazilian women

activists also face difficulties in coalition-building at the transnational level. Offering

perspective on the consequences of colonial logics for transnational black feminist

activism, Collins acknowledges there is a "need to stimulate dialogue across national

borders to develop new ways of relation to one another, in order to unpack the

interconnectedness of black women's experiences" (2000, 235).

In problematizing dichotomous labels and the tensions and prejudices that

surround them, some postcolonial feminists also acknowledge their entrenchment in the

identity formation and mobilization of non-Western women. The binaries prevalent in

colonial systems are often inscribed in the thought processes and self-perceptions of women situated in colonized societies. Postcolonial feminist writer Trihna T. Min-ha speaks of the complex internalization of the insider/outsider dichotomy: "She who knows she cannot speak of them without speaking of herself, of history without involving her story, also knows that she cannot make a gesture without activating the to and fro movement of life" (1997, 418). This approach reveals how oppositional identities become deeply intertwined in processes of colonization and central to personal narratives and understandings.

In terms of collective mobilization, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1994) argues that under specific circumstances, particularly in resistance movements, it is imperative for a group to adopt a particular type of identity and subject position strategically without assuming or making a claim to a particular type of essence or authenticity. She characterizes this adoption as strategic essentialism. According to Spivak, this embodiment of the subject position in this instance does not reflect the apathy of the individual, but their agency. Min-ha provides an illuminating description of the strategy behind her personal claim to marginalized identities in an interview with Pratibha Pramar:

> [I]f it is a point of redeparture for those of us whose ethnicity and gender were historically debased, then identity remains necessary as a political/personal strategy of survival and resistance […] The claim of identity is often a strategic claim. It is a process which enables me to question my condition anew, and one by which I intimately come to understand how the personal is cultural, historical or political (1990, 72).

Based on this interpretation, the claim of identity serves as a means for personal reflection and to reassert forms of knowledge and voices that have been weakened by colonial structures of oppression. In short, the assertion of identity is a highly political act.

Here lies a crucial link between postcolonial feminist perspectives and those offered by proponents of intersectionality. Both perspectives point to the awareness of activists of the resource of identity categories for consciousness-raising and resistance. While postcolonial feminists concentrate on the reasons behind oppositional and essentialist categorizations, intersectionality theorists go further in their analysis of the scope of identity claims made by individuals occupying multiple identity statuses. They have taken up the challenge of exploring the complex configuration and articulation of intersectional identities and the conditions which shape their singular or simultaneous mobilization. Through this approach we can begin to delineate the ways in which race and gender categories are strategically used by Afro-Brazilian women in spaces of national and transnational activism.

Intersectionality as a Political Strategy

In recent years, a small number of scholars situated in the disciplines of sociology and political science have articulated dissatisfaction with the lack of attention given in the broader literature to the strategic deployment of identity categories by historically marginalized groups. Their response has been to re-envision intersectionality as a political strategy. These scholars argue that "from its inception, intersectionality has been a political strategy as much as it has been a theoretical lens" (Luft and Ward 2009, 10). At the heart of this "renewed intersectionist lens" (Pastrana Jr. 2010, 102), which is referred

to as strategic intersectionality in this study, is the increased recognition of the multiple identity statuses embodied by social activists and their strategic use in spaces of activism.

It should be briefly noted that some key parallels exist between these theorizations and new social movement theory (NSM). The latter analyzes the heightened mobilizations around non-state identities such as race, gender, youth, and sexual orientation that have emerged since the 1980s. These identity-based movements are characterized as new social movements because of their concentration on autonomous identity development and empowerment, their frequent emergence in democratic transitions, and their challenge to conventional understandings of the 'political' (Cohen 1985; Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Foweraker 1995; Larana et al. 1994; Slater 1985). NSM theory characterizes these movements as strategizing for the emergence of open and accessible organizational forms more than the achievement of policy reform (Bernstein 2003). This theory also emphasizes the framing of collective grievances and the processes of mobilization around these frames.

NSM theorists suggest that there are multiple identity constructions that can be articulated through mobilization, making it "impossible to speak of the social agent as if we were dealing with a unified homogenous entity" (Laclau 1985, 31). Both strategic intersectionality and NSM approaches view individuals as having "multiple subject positions corresponding both to the different social relations in which the individual participates and the discourses that constitute these relations" (Slater 1994, 15).

Despite these shared characteristics, NSM theories avoid extensive consideration of the function of specific identity categories in spaces of activism and the complex obstacles faced and strategies used by activists struggling on one or multiple fronts of identity and domination. Theorists of strategic intersectionality seek to bridge this gap by illustrating "how people have produced strategies for survival and success in the midst of experiencing multiple forms of oppression" (Pastrana Jr. 2010, 102).

The Independent and Intersectional Functions of Identity

While proponents of strategic intersectionality do not dispute the importance of structural intersectionality, their concern lies in addressing the distinct dynamics and influences of identity categories. An insightful assertion on the autonomous character of identity constructs by Nira Yuval-Davis is significant here. She states "it is important to remember that the ontological basis of each of these divisions is autonomous, and each prioritizes different spheres of social relations" (2006, 200-201).

According to S. Laurel Weldon, an "intersectionality only-model" falls short in its presumption that race, gender, and class can only be understood in terms of their confluence, not their separate functions. She argues that "precluding the possibility of autonomous effects assumes that systems of race, class and gender *always* work together seamlessly as a single system, and never have any significant independent effects" (2006, 241). Although she does not directly reference colonial logics, Weldon's work compliments the postcolonial feminist approach by viewing identity categories as mutually constitutive and subject to manipulation in different contexts. They are not,

however, interchangeable. As a result, their impact on identity formation and mobilization

processes can be either independent or intersectional.

Acknowledging the "identifiably separate dynamics" (Weldon 2006, 241) of

identity categories enables greater consideration of their strategic and contextual

engagement in spaces of activism. A key area of interest is the privileging or

minimization of particular categories by social activists embodying multiple identity

grounds. Antonio Pastrana Jr. uses the term "racial capital" to denote the ways in which

individuals of colour "navigate the field of social movement organizing by making use of

their objective status […] and the subjective ways in which they interpret this status"

(2010, 94). From this perspective, race can serve either as an asset or as a constraint to the

achievement of movement goals. Pastrana Jr. provides compelling evidence of the

awareness of activists of this dis/advantage in his recent study of identity dynamics in

lesbian and gay social movements in the United States:

> Though research participants viewed their lives as intersectional, particular
> settings or situations often called for certain traits or characteristics to take
> precedence over others (in particular, language, skin color, or group affiliations).
> […] Additionally, when asked to describe how their own racial-ethnic experience
> has helped or hindered them, all research participants report that it has helped
> them is some way, but that the reverse was not true (2010, 103).

From the above findings, we get a sense that a difficult balance that must be struck

between the privileging or repressing of different identity categories and the focusing on

multiple identity facets to exclusion of a single one by Afro-Brazilian women activists.

In this conceptualization of intersectionality, the influence of the ideological

environment on the articulation of identity categories cannot be downplayed. Rachel E.

Luft asserts that significant differences in "logics of domination" (2009, 106), which she

defines as the dominant ideological rules and expectations by which constructed identities

operate, require strategically different approaches to mobilization. According to Luft, the

current logics of gender in the United States demand the use of intersectional frames in

processes of consciousness-raising while logics of race necessitate a single-identity or

issue focus. She puts forth the following argument:

> [I]ntersectionality is not the most strategic methodological principle for the early stages of microinterventions when the objective includes antiracist consciousness change. In a post-civil rights context in which color blindness is the abiding ethos, race must be centrally and singularly figured simply in order to (re)introduce it to conscious discourse (2009, 103).

Certain ideological structures necessitate the usage of what Luft characterizes as

"strategic singularity"—a tactic used by groups situated in contexts where particular

forms of identity have been long repressed. For this study, we can see another important

link between postcolonial feminist approaches and strategic intersectionality. The former

identifies the significance of whitening and racial democracy ideologies in the

construction of race and gender identities while the latter highlights the impact of these

ideologies on the strategies utilized by Afro-Brazilian women activists.

From this perspective, it is simply not feasible for activists in intersectional

movements to effectively mobilize every category of difference at every stage of

mobilization. Myra Marx Ferree (2006) argues that the privileging or prioritization of

particular identity categories is often necessary to position activists in spaces of activism.

Chapters Four and Five touch on this phenomenon, illustrating Afro-Brazilian women's

acute awareness of the privilege afforded by gender identities and the oppression dictated

by race in the Brazilian context. As Erica Townsend-Bell explains, "It stands to reason

that groups operating under constraints will have to make trade-offs, prioritize and strategize. At certain moments groups may have to choose a path that looks 'un-intersectional'" (2009, 4). An 'un-intersectional' approach does not necessarily detract from a commitment to intersectionality, it is simply a short-term means to reach the "longer term goal of eradicating marginalization and difference" (Townsend-Bell 2009, 6).

In her case study of the Afro-Uruguayan Women's Support Group's (GAMA) turbulent efforts to engage in intersectional praxis, Townsend-Bell notes the barriers of skewed modernization ideologies. She explains, "in Uruguay, and in many parts of the world, the effects of modernizing tropes have often been to promote a vision of equality and homogeneity to a degree that makes it difficult even to introduce a dialogue around difference" (2009, 9). The consequences of such ideologies are evident in Brazil, where the long-standing promotion of racial democracy hindered the mass mobilization of Afro-Brazilians for much of the twentieth century.

One of the primary strengths of strategic intersectionality is that it enables a more comprehensive explanation of why particular categories of identity, such as race, are more prominent than others in certain historical and political moments in Brazil. It also acknowledges the critical role played by the state in creating such preferences.

It is the commitment to utilizing the existing theoretical tools and frameworks of intersectionality that limits the production of a coherent or consolidated theory of strategic intersectionality. As Nash convincingly argues, "intersectionality has yet to

contend with whether its theory explains or describes the processes and mechanisms by which subjects mobilize (or choose not to mobilize) particular aspects of their identities in particular circumstances" (2008, 11). A thorough examination of the complex constellation of political opportunity structures that shape the negotiation, operation, and mobilization of multiple identity categories is lacking in this body of scholarship. It is for this reason that this study draws on the political process model. This model enriches understandings of the political regimes and environments which have shaped the mobilization objectives and strategies of Afro-Brazilian women activists.

Political Process Model: Identifying Political Opportunity Structures

Prior to the emergence of the political process model in the mid-1980s, the resource mobilization approach dominated studies of social movement activity within North American and European scholarship. By avoiding emphasis on the structural conflicts underlying social movements, it countered the supremacy of earlier models of mass society and collective behaviour. Instead focus was placed on the organizational resources amassed by 'movement entrepreneurs' and their calculated advancement of substantive goals (McCarthy and Zald 1977). By the late 1970s, the resource mobilization model began to decline in use with critics arguing that its stress on the capacity of movement actors to access organizational and financial resources was no longer applicable in a world "where challengers are more likely to possess organizational deficits than resources" (McAdam et al. 2001, 44). It has largely been sidelined in favour of more interactive readings of collective action in specific environments.

The political process model offers this type of reading. It specifically examines the individual roles and relationships between four different variables in mobilization processes—political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, movement frames, and repertories. This study primarily focuses on the configurations and functions of political opportunity structures. On the one hand, political opportunity structures play a central role in the emergence of social movements as the "consistent dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for or constrains on people undertaking collective action" (Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2005, 17). On the other hand, once a social movement is underway, they "influence the choice of protest strategies and the impact of social movements on their environment" (Kitschelt 1986, 58). Political opportunity structures are often determined by the agendas and actions of the state, but other non-state actors, including economic elites, international institutions, and social movements can also play a key role.

One of the primary developers of the model, Doug McAdam, argues that political opportunity structures change considerably across history and cannot be understood as operating in a short or rigid timeframe. From this viewpoint, it is necessary to examine the "entire span of years during which conditions facilitative of insurgency" (McAdam 1982, 68) develop to fully comprehend the articulation and mobilization of identities. By creating a link between the political process model and postcolonial feminist perspectives, this expansive interpretation of social mobilization allows the impact of colonial logics and practices on Afro-Brazilian women's contemporary activism to be considered.

Complementing the construction of social activists as strategic actors put forth by postcolonial feminists and proponents of strategic intersectionality, this model illustrates the awareness of activists of the distinct incentives and barriers found within domestic and international political opportunity structures and their constant interaction at both levels. They carefully mobilize their identities and agendas with the external context in mind. Their projects are subject to constant change. For example, when what were once openings for identity-based mobilization close down, actors are forced to seek out and renegotiate new opportunities and sites. The model also demonstrates the capacity of activists to create their own opportunities through their constant monitoring of the ideological leanings and policy directives of the state and the international community.

Many proponents of the model have analyzed the political openings and closures for social activism during processes of democratic transition in various countries, including Chile, Uruguay, Venezuela, and South Korea (Canel 1992; Choe and Kim 2012; Friedman 1998; Gleditsch and Ruggeri 2010). Recognizing the different levels and configurations of democracy, this study primarily focuses on the role of Brazil's federalist structure and constitutional rule of law in creating favourable as well as tenuous conditions for the identity-based mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women.

Domestic Opportunity Structures in Processes of Democratic Transition

The extent to which processes of democratic transition create favourable conditions for the emergence of social activism and pattern the actions of social movements has largely been analyzed in literatures of comparative politics. Within these

analyses, openings created by the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule are

largely couched in terms of the degree of institutional access experienced by activists

(Jenkins 1995). Georgina Waylen (1994) asserts that this emphasis on institutional

accessibility in the political process model stems from a narrow conceptualization of

democracy as an institutional arrangement. She suggests that the concentration on

political citizenship and the electoral process in prominent definitions overlooks issues of

social and economic inequality and reflects an implicit gender bias.

Increased access to and participation in the formal political sphere, realignments

in ruling bodies, heightened availability of prominent political allies, and divisions

among political elites are among the elements of 'open' political opportunity structures

that are conditioned by the introduction of democratic systems (Bernstein 2003, 236).

Hanspeter Kriesi (2004) argues that in many ways political opportunity structures and

their specific properties act as a filter for democracy and as means for activists to produce

effective strategies. He speaks specifically about the permeability of decentralized

democratic systems:

> The degree of openness of the political system is a function of its (territorial)
> centralization and the degree of its (functional) separation of power. The greater
> degree of decentralization, the wider is the formal access [for activists] and the
> smaller the capacity of any one part of the system to act. Decentralization implies
> a multiplication of state actors, and, therefore, of points of access and decision-
> making (2004, 70).

This trend is evident in the Brazilian context where the return to civilian rule in the mid-

1980s led to highly decentralized institutions and greater consideration of women's rights

in constitutional frameworks.

While these theorizations illustrate the significance of regime shifts for

mobilization resources and strategies, they tend to disregard the critical role played by

identity categories and systems of oppression in structuring political opportunities. This is

a problematic oversight for this study which places the race and gender of Afro-Brazilian

women at its center. Rita K. Noonan's critique that "women's political power is not well

captured by a traditional examination of political opportunities" (1995, 84) is fitting at

this juncture. Elisabeth J. Friedman expresses a similar concern with existing

interpretations of the political process model and democratic transition processes. She

notes that when examining the actions of women and other non-traditional political

actors, the incorporation of identity is critical to any assessment of the political

environment (Friedman 1998, 96). Therefore, it is important to recognize that the

institutional changes which characterize democratic transitions have gendered

implications and provide "a unique set of opportunities and obstacles that condition

women's political participation" (Friedman 1998, 88).[7]

Few have examined the interplay between democratic transitions, political

opportunity structures, and women's social mobilization in Latin America in greater

depth than Sonia E. Alvarez. She specifically analyzes gendered political openings in

Brazil's transition to democracy and the subsequent impact on gender-centered

mobilizations. For this study, one of the most significant contributions of Alvarez's work

for is her illustration of Brazilian women's consciousness of the specific openings for

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[7] See also Navarro (1989) for an in-depth examination of the gendered openings for women's activism in
Argentina's democratic transition. The work specifically examines the mobilization of Argentina's Mothers
of the Plaza do Mayo during and in the aftermath of the country's repressive military dictatorship from
1976 to 1983.

gender-related claims provided by transition politics. According to Alvarez, at the heart of the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule and the legitimization of the latter is a dramatic restructuring of class and gender relations. She states: "Unequal gender power relations breed systemic authoritarianism; thus, gender inequality must be combated, along with class and racial oppression, if authoritarianism is to be eradicated from Latin American social, cultural and political institutions" (1990, 7). Primarily concentrating on the actions of white middle-class activists in the 1980s, she argues that Brazilian feminist organizations took advantage of the government's drive to eliminate the gendered remnants of authoritarianism by advancing novel policy reforms on women's rights and gender equality.

As Chapter Four reveals, the Brazilian feminist movement carved out a crucial "space in the state" (Jaquette 1994, 337) during the transition period through the implementation of federal and state women's councils and police stations dedicated to combatting domestic violence against women. In her writings on democratization, transnationalism, and gender relations in Chile and Argentina, Susan Franceschet notes that similar trends can be seen across the region. As in these two countries, in Brazil there arose "a context that legitimized demands for women's rights as part of the democratization process" (2007, 1). She suggests that their participation in and support of UN Conferences on Women also served as a means to ensure the infiltration of norms on gender equality—at least symbolically—in their transitioning state. In her words, "Latin America's newly democratizing states were eager to adopt [gender equality] norms as

indicators of their democratic credentials and their status as modern and civilizing states"
(Franceschet 2007, 1).

A similar trend is visible when examining the democratic transitions of countries,
like South Africa, with a history of institutionalized racial segregation. Catherine
Albertyn notes that despite the heavy anti-apartheid sentiment underlying South Africa's
transition process in the early 1990s "gender equality had emerged as the moral
touchstone for the new democracy" (2003, 595). As state elites struggled to deal with
extreme discord among racial groups and to gain respect among an international
community that had grown impatient with its continuance of legalized segregation, the
integration of gender equality norms symbolized a step forward and "remained an
important part of the rhetoric of democracy in South Africa" (Albertyn 2003, 596). Given
these trends, the climate of domestic race relations and underlying motivations of the state
cannot be cast aside in the analysis of the identity articulations and strategies of the Afro-
Brazilian women's movement.

This study builds on the argument that the prioritization of gender equality in the
Brazilian Constitution and other institutional frameworks was as much a strategy of the
state to consolidate democracy as it was an outcome of the long-standing efforts of the
Brazilian feminist movement. It is with this heightened domestic and international focus
on women's rights in mind that consideration is given to the strategic use of gender in the
mandates and platforms of Afro-Brazilian women's movement in Chapters Four and Five.

International Opportunity Structures: The Dual Purpose of the UN

IR theorists have largely approached international political opportunity structures as a reflection of the "degree of openness of international institutions to the participation of transnational NGOS, networks and coalitions" (Sikkink 2005, 156). These scholars see international institutions, such as the UN, as representing significant political opportunity structures for social movement activities at the national and transnational level. Through its decentralized structure, the UN is able to offer many points of accessibility—a critical resource for movements seeking increased leverage and influence—and thus serves as a solid alternative to the domestic policy arena. In addition, UN Conferences and their respective NGO forums provide critical openings for lobbying and interaction between civil society actors. In her study of transnational social movements and processes, Jackie Smith describes these venues "as 'training grounds' in global policies, as networking arenas, as spaces for information exchange and dialogue, and as targets for local and national political campaigns" (2008, 322). UN Conferences offer institutional support for actors seeking to initiate policy change at the domestic level, and ideological, material, and symbolic resources for activist groups, like Afro-Brazilian women, seeking the legitimization of their identity claims.

In terms of this explanatory framework, it is important to recognize the dual role played by this institution and its Conferences. Drawing from Kathryn Sikkink's (2005) discussion of dynamic multilevel governance, we see how Conferences served as opportunities, not threats for the Afro-Brazilian women's movement in their struggle to affirm identities historically denied by the Brazilian state. In addition, by "establishing the agenda for global discussion or the rules through which nongovernmental representatives

can participate" (Friedman 2003, 315) and by designating priorities on broader issues of racial and gender discrimination, UN Conferences heavily influence the conditions under which this movement articulates their concerns.

In her research of the strategic frames used by women's NGOs at the UN, Jutta Joachim outlines the powerful influence of the institution in the determination of issues, interests, and identity claims:

> (1) it functions as "gatekeeper', privileging certain frames and marginalizing others; (2) it provides a "tool kit" for action by providing material and symbolic resources for social actors; and (3) it creates "windows of opportunities" for action because of its dynamic nature (2003, 251).

In this respect, because UN Conferences possess the material and ideological resources that these actors lack, they are able to strengthen and legitimize the concerns of activists that are marginalized in the domestic realm. In Chapter Five of this study, the capacity of the UN to create empowerment opportunities is analyzed. It examines how, through the incorporation of intersectionality frameworks, UN Conferences and their preparatory meetings offered Afro-Brazilian women activists an opportunity to bring increased visibility and legitimacy to their multidimensional identities and struggles.

While the preceding statements focus on the openings provided by UN Conference processes, it is also important to note the restrictions encountered by NGOs seeking to mobilize their concerns at these forums. Several transnational feminist scholars argue that multiple barriers to extensive civil society-state dialogue exist at UN Conferences and question their value for the cultivation of gender-conscious policy frameworks and cross-border feminist alliances. A key argument raised in these works is

about the inaccessibility of Conference processes for local feminist activists and feminists situated in the Global South. Poorly funded NGOs and individuals not affiliated with particular social movements are either denied entry or cannot actively engage in these processes because they lack the financial and human resources required. Manisha Desai asserts that within these forums "participation by non-state actors is confined to registered NGOs, which furthers the NGOisation and depoliticisation of movements" (2005, 323). Her examination of transnational feminist politics in the aftermath of the Beijing Conference suggests that an overarching commitment to addressing the economic and security relations between member states or "'inter' national rather than 'trans' national relations" (Desai 2005, 323) continually undermines the presence of feminist activists at the UN.

Other scholars draw attention to the negative consequences of Conference processes for the cohesion of domestic movements and transnational feminist dialogues. Emphasis is placed on the power struggles between civil society groups ignited by these processes and the marked disparity between popular images of open dialogue and the actual interactions between activists on the ground. Take for example the critical review of the Beijing Conference offered by Alvarez. Pointing to the dominance of Western feminist expressions and elites within the NGO forum, she asserts that "the manifold democratic contradictions evident in the Beijing processes should further caution us against uncritically extolling the virtues of "global civil society", for it, too, is a terrain mined by highly unequal relations of power" (1997, 381).

Moreover, the normative and strategic frames of reference and organizational resources required to participate in the UN system often polarize activists within individual movements and accentuate divisions between feminist NGOs in the global North and South. Amrita Basu (2003) specifically addresses the implications of hegemonic liberal human rights principles and narrow definitions of gender violence for transnational feminist networks. From this perspective, the empowerment opportunities created in these spaces are overshadowed by the silencing or cooption of under-resourced feminist organizations and the competition for leverage between established ones.

The geopolitical tensions and bureaucratic obstacles produced within this political opportunity structure are not overlooked in this work. Chapters Five and Chapter Six specifically describe the frustration and disappointment articulated by actors in the Afro-Brazilian women's movement over the closed deliberations between states and select civil society organizations at the Durban Conference and their reluctance to fully embrace this site given its two-tiered system for national governments and NGOs. These chapters also briefly address the reasoning given by Afro-Brazilian women activists for their continued engagement in the UN system and the ideological and organizational means they use to counter and manage its shortcomings.

Multilevel Opportunity Structures

IR theorists also emphasize that interactions between multilevel political opportunity structures are constant and can be easy as well as difficult to decipher. Here the description of the "nested" character of political opportunity structures offered by Franklin Daniel Rothman and Pamela Oliver is useful: "Local political opportunity

structures are embedded in national political opportunity structures, which are in turn

embedded in international political opportunity structures. These nested structures create

the possibility for very complex patterns of relationships among actors" (2002, 117).

Thomas Risse-Kappen also seeks to generate a better understanding of the effects of

multilevel opportunity structures on transnational collective action. According to him,

"governments have considerable leeway to enable or constrain transnational activities"

and as such, "domestic structures are likely to determine both the availability of access

points into the political systems and the size of and requirements for 'winning coalitions'"

(1995, 25).

The impact of the interactions between multilevel opportunity structures on

identity articulations and claims is of key importance to this study. Chapter Five discusses

how the Brazilian government's readiness to publicly acknowledge the historical

marginalization of Afro-Brazilian women was directly linked to the UN's commitment to

produce a Declaration recognizing past acts of racism at the Durban Conference in 2001.

Afro-Brazilian women activists recognized the congruency of these multilevel openings

and their positive implications for their access to the UN and the communication of

movement platforms.

Chapter Four also pays increased attention to a level that has often been

overlooked in IR analyses: the regional. It examines the ways in which forums and

interactions with feminist organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean have figured

prominently into the mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the necessity and value of using multiple theoretical approaches to analyze the historical and contextual factors influencing the intersectional mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women. A postcolonial feminist framework helps to reveal the colonial contours of race and gender underlying the emergence, platforms, and obstacles of this social movement. This approach generates insight into how dichotomies operate in particular historical moments and their importance for the maintenance and justification of unequal power hierarchies.

However, we must be careful not to assume that the mobilization strategies and barriers encountered by Afro-Brazilian women activists can be easily explained or entirely defined by colonial logics and legacies. Such a determinist reading would fail to thoroughly consider the crucial role played by the activists themselves and their awareness of political environments. By adopting the lens of strategic intersectionality, greater consideration is given to the ways in which race and gender identities are reclaimed, expressed, and deployed by activists embodying multiple identity statuses. While linking these two approaches increases our understanding of race and gender identities as instruments and incentives in the mobilization process, it is also important to be mindful of their historically specific and contextual character.

Through the political process model, we gain insight into the constitutive features of political opportunity structures and their capacity to shape the identity articulations and political objectives of Afro-Brazilian women activists. On the one hand, analyses of

domestic political opportunity structures emerging within democratic transitions illustrate the importance of regime shifts for the advancement of marginalized platforms because of the state's drive to adhere to democratic principles and embark on significant institutional reform. However, feminist critiques rightly point out that political opportunity structures emerging in transitory periods often reproduce gender biases rooted within political and societal institutions. On the other hand, IR perspectives open our eyes to the critical role of international institutions in creating openings for this domestic social movement to explore more nuanced definitions of identity and discrimination, to engage in transnational activist exchanges, and to apply pressure on their government. By drawing upon these applications of the political process model, we can decipher the specific opportunities and leverage gained by Brazil's democratic transition and by UN Conferences for the mobilization of intersectional identity platforms by Afro-Brazilian women activists.

The next chapter draws upon this explanatory framework to examine the construction and treatment of Afro-Brazilian women as inferior subjects in Brazilian colonial accounts and nation-building discourse. By providing details on the construction of race and gender hierarchies in Brazilian colonial and nation-building projects, a more comprehensive understanding of the strategic mobilization of these identities by Afro-Brazilian women activists will emerge in later chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

OPPRESSIONS STEEPED IN HISTORY: AFRO-BRAZILIAN WOMEN IN COLONIAL NARRATIVES AND NATIONAL IDEOLOGIES

Brazilian society taught me how to be a black woman. Every day, I thank that profoundly racist society for the opportunity to discover myself as a person.

—Thereza Santos

The above quotation from Afro-Brazilian activist Thereza Santos (1999, 23) offers a glimpse into the pivotal role of state and societal institutions in the construction of black female identities and the systems of oppression they encounter. While Santos specifically highlights the centrality of racism in her journey of self-discovery, this chapter's analysis of the distinctive and dysfunctional treatment of race and gender in Brazil's colonial history and nation-building projects reveals that this form of oppression has rarely developed or operated in isolation.

Examining the characterizations of African and Afro-Brazilian women in colonial narratives on family life, sexual encounters, and domestic labour that have been popularized in Brazilian national and cultural discourse enables us to identify the highly derogatory meanings linked to these individuals since the colonial period. It also helps to reveal the implications of these characterizations for the development of collective identities and strategies. These narratives serve as a key starting point for this study. They establish a connection between transnational processes of colonization and slavery and the articulations of race and gender by Afro-Brazilian women in spaces of activism and political reform. This chapter builds on the argument that studies of transnational social organizing against sexism and racism must be historically grounded and contextualized

by giving increased consideration to the sources of identity and discrimination and their manifestations in specific societies.

This chapter also illustrates how Afro-Brazilian women's identities have been carefully framed and ordered within a context of sexual appropriation and racial oppression by Portuguese colonizers, foreign observers, and Brazilian political and intellectual elites. In this respect, it offers a chronological overview of the development of the black female figure in Brazil. Consideration is given to the colour-based continuum emerging from colonization and the transatlantic slave trade in Brazil, the prevalent constructions of the African slave woman and interracial relations in the accounts of Western travellers, and the powerful influence of their observations in the construction and transmission of racial and gender hierarchies.

This is followed by a detailed discussion of the symbolic representations of African and Afro-Brazilian women's identities in Gilberto Freyre's 1946 publication, *Casa Grande e Senzala* (The Masters and the Slaves). This ethnographic account of plantation life in Brazil is widely credited with laying the ideological foundation for a Brazilian national identity premised on complete racial equality. Particular focus is placed on the prominence accorded to *mae preta* (Black Mother/Mammy) and *mulata* (a woman of mixed racial heritage) depictions in nation-building projects in the post abolition period, specifically in the ideologies of whitening and racial democracy. The recent commodification of the Brazilian *mulata* figure in domestic and international sex tourism is also examined as an extension of colonial violence against the black female body.

This analysis of symbolic images and their integration at public and official levels sheds light on the interconnected character and scope of processes of racialization and sexualization in Brazil's colonial history. As we see in later chapters, Afro-Brazilian women continuously grapple with and confront their location in colonial and nationalist projects in contemporary spaces of activism.

Slavery and the Colour Continuum

Early constructions of racial and gender identities in Brazil can be traced back to the arrival of Portuguese settlers in 1500. The subsequent establishment of the African slave trade in 1538 solidified the presence and domination of the Portuguese Crown, which up until that point had assumed a largely temporary status with trading outposts in the country's coastal regions. Although the slave trade was initially introduced as a temporary means to supplement the rapidly declining native population, it would last over three centuries and establish Brazil as the largest slave based economy in the world (Garcia-Zamor 1970).

The triangular trade route basically mirrored that found throughout the Americas: slaves primarily from West Africa were brought to Brazil, Brazilian raw materials were exported to Europe, and European products were sent to West Africa in exchange for slaves. Sugar was the country's top export with large scale plantations dominating the Northeast region throughout the seventeenth century. The sheer numbers of slaves, however, dwarfed that found in other societies in the New World. While the exact number is not known, estimates of the number of African slaves forcibly transported to work in

Brazil's plantation economy from 1538 to the abolition of the slave trade in 1888 typically range from 3.5 to 4.5 million.

The sheer length of time, impact on global and regional economic relations, and drastic shift to the domestic racial landscape are three key reasons why the transatlantic slave trade has been described by Brazilian race relations historian George Reid Andrews as "the most determinative experience in Brazilian history" (1997, 3). Yet, looking at these features alone does not provide a complete picture of the role of the institution in the production and maintenance of particular racial hierarchies. Andrews points to the indelible mark left by racial homogenizing strategies of Portuguese colonizers in the city of Sao Paulo: "Europeans may have viewed Africans as sharing a common racial identity, but most Africans did not learn about the identity until they arrived in the New World and were informed that they were all 'blacks'" (2004, 21). In this colonial encounter, the colonizer seized and wielded the power to manipulate racial identities and individual realities (Reichmann 1999).

At first glance, Brazil seemed to avoid the outward and stringent colour sub-divisions and caste lines that defined institutions of slavery in the United States and other European colonies. Racial classifications still existed, but they were highly subjective and convoluted. Categorizations were dependent on arbitrary interpretations of various phenotypical characteristics, including hair texture, facial features, and skin colour (Skidmore 1992, 6). Several racial labels emerged to describe the numerous gradations of skin colour that fell somewhere between the *branco* (white) apex, the *pardo* or *mulato* (brown) middle, and the *preto* or *negro* (black) at the base of a colour continuum that still

exists in the present day (Skidmore 1992, 3). According to Edward E. Telles, "color is often preferred because it captures the continuous aspects of Brazilian racial conceptions in which groups shade into one another" (2004, 7). Colour classifications were frequently predicated on the geographical region of the country and tended to prompt, according to Michael Hanchard, "an ensemble of meanings, often pejorative, in the minds of the others and sometimes even among [slaves]" (1994, 4). Mieko Nishida offers a description of the racial classification system in her study of slavery and identity in Salvador, Brazil:

> During the colonial period, Brazilian-born people of color were occasionally described with such ill-defined phrases as *trigueiro*, *corado bastamente* (brown, fairly brown), *de cor fechada* (of a closed color), *de uma cor equivoaca* (of a dubious color), *ao parecer branco* (white to all appearances), or *de cor fula* (of the color of the Fulah). In present-day Brazil hundreds of terms of color exist, which are impossible to translate into English (2003, 7).

The seemingly fluid nature of individual categories presupposed the existence of a lax system of stratification under slavery and the absence of concrete racial differences in Brazil (Caldwell 2007). However, the gradient system applied and evaluated by Portuguese colonizers did not derail the emergence of pervasive racial hierarchies and the mistreatment of blacks in this context. On the contrary, it served as an integral instrument of the Portuguese Crown. Blackness and whiteness were and continue to operate as the two ends of the colour spectrum. The former is "continually portrayed as antithetical to modernity, intrinsically innocent and in opposition to the mainstream" (Sansone 2003, 174) while the latter represents idealized notions of prosperity, intelligence, and modernity. In this respect, "enslavement was part of a more comprehensive process of racial domination that had cultural, epistemological, and ideological consequences" (Hanchard 1999, 4).

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The composition of 'homogenous' black identities and hierarchical relations between Portuguese colonizers and African slaves cannot be fully contemplated as separate from gender, sexuality, religious or class hierarchies in colonial Brazil. A closer look at the often forced and violent sexual relationships between Portuguese male colonizers and African female slaves and widespread miscegenation in colonial Brazil reveals the integral role played by the intersection of race and gender constructs in the retention of the Portuguese Crown's power, the repression of African women, and the reproduction of the country's colour continuum.

Interracial Relations and the Exploitation of African slave women

Numerous writers on the slavery era in Brazil have offered various arguments for the prevalence of miscegenation during the colonial period. Jean-Claude Garcia-Zamor gives voice to a common ethnocentric explanation extolling the innate open-mindedness of the Portuguese male:

> The Portuguese colonizer of Brazil did not come from a pure race but from an ethnic group that had been formed though centuries of mixture of several anthropological types. Consequently, he brought to Brazil a blend of varied cultures, dosed with a certain racial tolerance (1970, 243).

Other scholars of Brazilian colonial and race relations, such as Darien J. Davis (1999), A. J. R. Russell-Wood (1982), and Thomas E. Skidmore (1974), have attributed the process to skewed demographics. These authors point to the limited number of Portuguese women of a marriageable age in colonial Brazil as the major catalyst for the widespread sexual relationships and on a smaller scale, marriages between Portuguese males and indigenous and African slave women. Take for example the description offered by

Russell-Wood, who characterizes the sexual appropriation of Afro-Brazilian women as an unavoidable act of convenience: "It was inevitable that the Portuguese in Brazil should take as his mistress a women of African descent or an Amerindian […] The settler just took the nearest available woman. In colonial Brazil this was usually the black female slave" (1982, 30).

Romanticized descriptions of interracial relations in colonial Brazil serve to perpetuate constructions of Brazilian slavery as a relatively mild and humane regime. Mary Karasch paints an idyllic picture of unions between African women and Portuguese explorers in her study of slave women in the Brazilian interior during the nineteenth century. She notes that while African women slaves were brought on mining excursions to provide for the sexual and domestic needs of the men as cooks and prostitutes, "miners often formed stable consensual unions with African women, freed them and even recognized their children. In some cases they married them in the churches" (1996, 84).

Such explanations fail to acknowledge or minimize the intersection of patriarchy and racial superiority in these encounters, typified in the male colonizer's mentality of possession. Furthermore, the critical economic and social function filled by African women slaves in these stratified roles is overlooked. A small number of black feminist historians and anthropologists from Brazil and United States bring these intersections to the forefront in their analyses of black women in Brazilian plantation life. Angela M. Gilliam (2001) argues that prevalent depictions of miscegenation and intermarriage in Brazilian historical accounts are deceiving and inaccurate because they fail to consider the reality of social conditions under which interracial unions took place and disregard the

class orders of marriage. Characterizations of harmonious racial intermarriages in colonial Brazil like Karasch's compel Gilliam to ask: "How can you describe as 'intermarriage' the social relations between elite men and dominated women?" (2001, 171-172)

In her historical overview of black women and the institution of slavery in Brazil, Sonia Maria Giacomini (1988) suggests that the colonial logics of patriarchy and racism seem to draw their harshest configurations on the bodies of *mulata* women. She asserts that understood within the ownership of all African female slaves by Portuguese masters was the sexual exploitation of their bodies. In contrast to white women who were viewed as highly chaste and in need of protection, *mulatas* were sexualized as immoral and promiscuous beings, and consequentially subjected to various forms of sexual abuse and violence, including rape and sodomy. She notes that sex and gender distinctions did not necessarily protect African male slaves from the advances of Portuguese colonizers. On a smaller scale, enslaved men were also forced to submit to forms of sexual abuse because of their perceived sexual and racial inferiority.

In addition to being responsible for the sexual gratification of Portuguese men, the enslavement of African women was marked by domestic service and the nursing and rearing of children in the white plantation family. A slave woman's positioning in the colour continuum was critical to the occupation she held in or outside of the household. In effect, "those who most closely approached the white norms of physical beauty were most likely to be selected for domestic services, while those who were defined as black were more likely to labor in the fields" (Karasch 1996, 84).

A different type of gendered violence was implicit in the separation of African slave women from their newborn children and their subsequent rental as wet-nurses for the purpose of economic profit (Rezende and Lima 2004, 760). Kia Lilly Caldwell states that these women often assumed the role of surrogate mother for white women who were either disinclined or incapable of breastfeed their children (2007, 53). The consequences for the biological children of slave women were severe with many suffering from malnutrition or displacement (Caldwell 2007, 54). Despite the significant market for wet-nurses illustrated in multiple classified postings in Brazilian newspapers, in the same media white mothers were cautioned against fully relinquishing childcare responsibilities to the *mae preta* and advised to be diligent in their surveillance of these 'invaders and corruptors'. The tone of racial superiority reverberates in the following excerpt from the Brazilian newspaper *O Mentor das Brasileiras* in 1840:

> If our Portuguese parents' childhood was badly guided, our upbringing was even more depraved by our mixing with slaves, which has corrupted our habits and customs and even our language; because they communicate their ideas and atrocities to us from the first moments of our soul's development. They give us nannies that are black, commonly slaves and also African. From this you can tell the quality of these nannies' practices, and their influence on the children (quoted in Giacomini 1988, 49-50).

This excerpt illustrates the extensive racialization of gender roles in the colonial slave era and their ambiguous and contradictory character. On the one hand, in her nurturing role as a wet nurse and surrogate mother, the *mae preta* represented "a symbol of unconditional fidelity and absolute servitude to the master's class" (Roncador 2008, 56). On the other hand, African women slaves were defeminized and demoralized in their work as domestic

labourers and followers of African religions, like Candomblé, and characterized as capable of destroying the family values of the white ruling class.

As Jennifer J. Manthei notes in her examination of the instrumental sexualization and commodification of the Brazilian *mulata* woman, "Over time, the images attached to these social roles have been reinterpreted and deployed by different social groups with varied political goals in specific historical contexts" (2007, 189). It is useful to delve deeper into the specific depictions of the *mae preta* and *mulata* in twentieth century national ideologies because they forcefully reveal the careful manipulation and dissemination of these contrasting figures in the ideologies of whitening and racial democracy.

The following sections of this chapter examine the ways in which such representations and their iconic presence in Brazilian popular culture and official political doctrines derived from observations and pressures *outside* of the Brazilian context. They illustrate the centrality of contrasting constructions of the white Portuguese woman and the Afro-Brazilian woman for processes of nation-building and the willingness of Brazilian political elites and scholars to utilize the bodies of black women in an effort to gain the respect and admiration of the international community. This analysis allows for a more panoramic yet grounded view of Afro-Brazilian women's mobilization to emerge in future chapters of this study. Each chapter will help to draw a crucial link between colonial logics crafted in Brazilian slavery and perpetuated in national ideologies, the prejudice operating against Afro-Brazilian women, and their choices and strategies in spaces of activism.

Post Abolition Dynamics and the Power of the Foreigner's Gaze

In 1888, Brazil became the last country in the New World to abolish the institution of slavery. This significant historical moment, which led to the eventual creation of the Brazilian Republic, is often attributed to the actions of one prominent figure in the Portuguese monarchy: Princess Regent Isabel. The daughter of Emperor Pedro II and heir to the throne, Regent Isabel lobbied for the emancipation of African slaves throughout the late 1800s. She signed the Law of Free Birth in 1871 freeing children of enslaved parents and the Golden Law which declared slavery extinct within Brazil's borders. One of the most celebrated figures in Brazilian history— in historical and cultural accounts she is commonly referred to as the 'redemptress'—Regent Isabel is memorialized as a tireless advocate of libertarian principles (Barman 2002, 1). Much less consideration is given to the role played by race and gender constructs in the cultivation of Regent Isabel as the saviour of Brazil's slave populations and the general complicity displayed by white Portuguese women in processes of colonization and enslavement.

Here the aforementioned theorizations on the salience of the white female figure for colonial projects offered by Mills and McClintock are extremely useful. These postcolonial feminist perspectives help to reveal the centrality of oppositional constructs of Portuguese and African women in the establishment of the Brazilian nation's legitimacy and civility, and in the justification of racial and gender hierarchies. Through this lens, we see how the framing of Brazil as a modern and independent nation was purposefully predicated on the image of a virtuous white woman of Portuguese lineage in contrast to the backward and mischievous African woman slave.

Despite the demarcation of the white Portuguese woman as the pinnacle of beauty and integrity by colonial elites, it was the black female figure which captured the attention of Brazilians at large in the post abolition period. While the pejorative and hostile language which pervaded newspaper editorials remained, there was a marked increase in popular artistic expressions and literary texts focused on the identities of black women. In her examination of racial and gender hierarchies in Brazilian post abolition music and the significance for the formation of national identities, Martha Abreu describes the ways the language in songs like, *Gusto de Negra* (I like the black woman) revealed "that racialized gender roles could be disseminated through humour, criticism and irreverence" (2005, 271). These art forms drew attention to the explicit nature of racial and gender stereotypes and explored their ambiguities.

Interestingly, lyrics valorizing the sexual inhibition of black and mixed race women emerged during a time in which Brazilian political and intellectual elites were seeking a more subtle means to limit the upward economic mobility and social integration of former slaves. Abreu remarks that this music "presented an ironic view of the social and cultural conflicts of a society that was reorganizing mechanisms of domination and social control after the abolition of slavery" (2005, 271). A significant linkage therefore exists between popular representations of black and mixed race women and efforts by the state to accentuate differences between newly freed slave populations and white Brazilians.

With the establishment of the Brazilian Republic in 1889, Brazilian elites sought to create a distinguishable national culture from their Latin American counterparts. They

relied on imported racial idealisms to carve out a distinct identity. The power of foreign

impressions in the construction of the nation's image and the objectification of the Afro-

Brazilian community cannot be understated in this context. Beginning in the early

nineteenth century, explorers, travelers, politicians, artists, and scientists predominantly

from North America and Europe wrote extensively on their first-hand observations of

race relations in Brazilian society. These works spoke of the exotic and tropical landscape

of the country and the seemingly amicable relationships among the racially diverse

populous. In his in-depth comparative study of slavery and race relations in the United

States and Brazil, Carl N. Degler provides details about the fascination and curiosity of

first-time visitors with a black-dominated population:

> One English visitor to Rio de Janeiro in 1829 remarked that "my eye really was so
> familiarized to black visages that the occurrence of a white face in the streets of
> some parts of the town, really struck me as a novelty […] Also in the early years
> of the nineteenth century, another English visitor, Maria Graham, estimated that in
> the city of Recife, "not above one third are white; and the rest are mulatto or
> Negro" (1971, 4).

With such idyllic accounts being globally circulated and produced, Brazil quickly gained

a reputation as the world's first colour-blind country.

However, as foreign proclamations of harmonious Brazilian race relations began

to decline with the rise of biological determinist analyses on race in Europe and North

America, Brazilian politicians and intellectuals found themselves at an ideological

crossroads. Increasingly prominent theories of scientific racism dispelled the 'melting

pot' imagery that had dominated foreign and domestic narratives on racial exceptionality

in Brazilian colonial life. Instead, these theories purported that complete modernity could

not be achieved in Brazil because of its innate propensity for miscegenation—characterized by eugenicists as "a process that would lead inexorably to the degradation of the [European] species" (Nascimento 2007, 51). Once Brazil's most glorified and distinctive feature in a world marked by explicit racial demarcations, miscegenation had become its most despised. In short, the prevalence of racial mixing prefaced on the sexual accessibility of African and mixed race women condemned Brazilian society to a state of perpetual backwardness.

In response to increasing external and internal pressures (prominent Brazilian intellectuals such as Raymundo Nina Rodrigues and Francisco de Oliveira Vianna were outspoken proponents of scientific racism), Brazilian elites created an assimilationist ideology which recognized the necessity of miscegenation to ensure the proliferation and superiority of the European race. Also known as *branqueamento* or the "whitening thesis", this "new theory exalted race mixture by justifying it as a way to dilute the inferior African base of the Brazilian racial stock and strengthen the superior white component" (Nascimento 2007, 51). Put simply, miscegenation would enable the gradual whitening of the population through the selective mixing of races and contribute to the creation of a modern Brazilian 'civilization'. According to Vianna, "the two primitive races only became civilizing agents when they lost their purity and mated with the white" (1938, 182-185). The whitening process enabled the advancement of the Brazilian civilization and in his words would "raise the Aryan content of our blood" (1938, 182-185). The Brazilian government followed up these hypotheses with the implementation of

extensive immigration policies explicit in their prioritization and promotion of whiteness.[8]

Elisa Larkin Nascimento explains that the subordination of Afro-Brazilian women was critical to the cultivation and integration of whitening policies and ideals. According to Nascimento, as Brazilian society became increasingly consumed with the whitening of the Brazilian race, the racialized sexual hierarchy of white, mixed, and black women became more pronounced. White women were viewed as integral to maintaining the purity of Brazil's genetic composition, but of little assistance to the actual process of expunging the African race. Any suggestion of a physical sexual contact between a white woman and black man raised significant anxieties and was often interpreted as rape due to the colonial constructions of black men as savage and violent. In contrast, women of African or mixed racial ancestry, whose sexual availability was compulsory as slaves, became crucial targets. Nascimento explains that "the norm for relationships that produced whitening was the concubinage of African descendants" (2007, 52). She notes the driving principle of the whitening process was imbued in the following widely known and referenced adage in Brazilian folklore: "marry a white woman, get a black woman to do the work, and have a *mulata* to fornicate with" (Nascimento 2007, 52).

It was not until the 1930s that Brazilian racial discourse and policies began to move away from eugenic orientations. Two key factors influenced this shift: the

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[8]A decree dated June 28, 1890 issued by the Provisional government stipulated that Brazil was open "to free entry by persons healthy and able to work" and not facing any criminal prosecution in their country of origin. The following clause was also included: "except natives of Asia or Africa, who can be admitted only by the authorization of the National Congress and in accordance with stipulated conditions."

emergence of a new wave of scholars focused on establishing a national identity distinct

from European inferences and an authoritarian leader committed to nationalist policies

promoting Brazilian culture in the aftermath of international economic crisis and war.

Economically, the administration of President Vargas created import substitution

industrialization (ISI) models to rebound from the decline of Brazil's primary exports

during the Great Depression. On the social front, Vargas's goal of creating a sense of

national unity through notions of sameness and equality was exemplified in Title III of

the 1934 Constitution: "There will be no privileges, nor distinctions because of birth, sex,

race, personal professions or professions of parents, social class, wealth, religious beliefs

or political ideas" (quoted in Davis 1999, 9).

For the next six decades, an idea first constructed by Western-educated Brazilian

anthropologist and social historian Gilberto Freyre would greatly assist the Vargas

administration in advancing its nationalist project and in shaping understandings and

representations of race in the country's ideological and political spheres. It would also be

crucial to the relegation of Afro-Brazilian women to the subaltern categories of domestic

servant and sexual object in the Brazilian cultural imaginary for years to come (Caldwell

2007).

Identity in Crisis: The *Mae Preta* and *Mulata* in the Myth of Racial Democracy

Freyre's notion of 'racial democracy', detailed in *Casa Grande e Senzala* (The

Masters and the Slaves), is credited with transforming "the concept of miscegenation

from its former pejorative connotation into a positive national characteristic and the most

important symbol of Brazilian culture" (Telles 2004, 34). This idea suggested that extensive racial mixing within Brazil's colonial past provided a critical foundation for a modern democracy and a culturally unified society free from the perils of racism.

In direct opposition to the determinist pronouncements of Vianna, Freyre argued that the miscegenation among Portuguese, African and indigenous peoples did not weaken the Brazilian people or result in their moral degradation, but created a distinct racial resiliency and authenticity. He concentrated on the intricate intertwining of Portuguese, indigenous, and African cultural traditions in the production of a cultural hybrid called *mesticagem*. According to Freyre, cultural hybridity was made possible because of the unparalleled adaptability and racially unconscious disposition of Portuguese male colonizers and the sexually precocious character of African women. He articulates the significance of this admixture for the expansion of the colonial enterprise and the formation of a national identity:

> As to their miscibility, no colonizing people in modern times has exceeded or so much as equalled the Portuguese in this regard. From their first contact with women of color, they mingled with them and procreated mestizo sons; and the result was that a few thousand daring males succeed in establishing themselves firmly in possession of a vast territory and were able to compete with great and numerous peoples in the extension of their colonial domain and in the efficiency of their colonizing activity (1946, 19).

From this reading, Brazil's distinctively racially mixed character—what has been characterized as *Brazilianess*—was derived from "the productive fusion of agonistic cultures, placed in a hierarchy in which the opposites complemented each other harmoniously" (Rezende and Lima 2004, 759).

In Freyre's colonial analysis, the patriarchal rural slave plantation was cast as the site of racial democracy and enslaved African and mixed race women were its protagonists. The ideal of racial democracy could not be grasped or achieved without them. Seeking to reveal the crucial influence of the 'Negro' slave in the rearing and reproduction of the Brazilian nation, Freyre adopts a masculinist and mythical approach to laud the contributions and appeal of these previously debased figures:

> [I]n everything that is a sincere expression of our lives, we almost all of us bear the mark of that influence. Of the female slave or "mammy" who rocked us. Who suckled us. Who fed us, mashing our food with her own hands. The influence of the old woman who told us our first tales of ghost and *bicho* [goblins]. Of the mulatto girl who relived us of our first *bicho de pe* [tick], of a parturiency that was so enjoyable. Who initiated us into physical love and, to the creaking of a canvas cot, gave us our first complete sensation of being a man (1946, 255).

He challenges degrading depictions of the *mae preta* and instead invokes a sentimental image centered on their generosity, docility, and self-sacrifice in the master's household. In their willingness to provide for the domestic needs of the white patriarchal family, these women performed a refined service in honour of the Brazilian nation. The traits that came to be viewed as the defects of the *mae preta* thus became inverted: "Generally old, corpulent, superstitious […] the Black Mammy would not awaken any danger of moral degradation of the family through copulation with the white master or his sons" (Roncador 2009, 56). Freyre suggests that her expertise and dominance in the colonial kitchen resulted in the enhancement of several Portuguese dishes and the integration of several African cuisines and culinary techniques. Veering away from associations of Candomblé with sorcery and sexual promiscuity, he speaks of the critical

role of African female followers in the "interpenetration of cultural influences in the development of Brazilian Catholicism" (Freyre 1946, 335).

Despite touting the voracious sexual instincts of the African slave woman as the impetus for Brazil's multilayered racial composition throughout the book, he is careful to downplay the sexual identity of the *mae preta*. He situates her as an aged asexual labourer at the center of the family structure and emphasizes her 'natural' nourishment and caregiving capacities, a derivative of her biological racial composition and African 'homeland'. In his words, "when it comes to a wet-nurse, there is none like a Negro women" (1946, 335). He articulates the trusted role that the slave wet-nurse came to assume in the life of the Brazilian family, suggesting "it was a rare case in which a Brazilian lad was not suckled by a Negro nurse and did not become more accustomed to talking to her than to his own father and mother" (Freyre 1946, 320).

In his anthropological study of black women and popular Christianity in Brazil, John Burdick identifies the larger implications of Freyre's depiction of the *mae preta* for nation-building efforts: "The black nursemaid's transfer of her 'strong blood' through her breast milk to the child of the white ruling class is part of a larger set of images and practices through which blacks symbolically contribute through donating their blood, to the health of the nation" (1998, 48-49). Here the salience of black female figures for the biological reproduction and cultural boundaries of the nation is apparent. By focusing on the transmission of African lineage and cultural values through her domestic role, Freyre effectively desexualizes the figure of the *mae preta* and enables her broader acceptance and integration as 'mother' of the Brazilian nation.

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The social and symbolic construction of the *mulata* in Freyre's ideology of racial democracy is altogether different from that of the *mae preta*. The *mulata* is the embodiment and the vehicle of racial democracy; the biological product and the social link between the three races and cultures (Manthei 2007, 191). On the one hand, Freyre distinguished the "lascivious hybrid woman" as the initiator of sexual encounters with plantation owners and their sons. On the other hand, he was keen not to paint the Brazilian *mulata* as the intentional corruptor of the white patriarchal family and characterized her as the passive participant in sexual relations between masters and slaves.

Freyre was able to sustain this dual character by focusing on the *mulata's* embodiment of mystical and bewitching qualities. More specifically, she represented a vice of the white male population in their search for sexual gratification in the slave holding regime; what Freyre described as "a quicksand in which many an insatiable adolescent was hopelessly lost" (1946, 348). He observed that "mulatism" became a necessary evil in attempts to increase marriages between European men and women during the colonial period as men did not want to be married forever and preferred illegitimate unions or illicit affairs with *mulata* women. From this reading, elite white men were helpless to the innate desirability of *mulata* women and as such, were the *victims* of their erotic and exotic behaviour. In contrast, *mulatas* are depicted as the submissive mistresses and willing objects of male consumption (Manthei 2007, 192-193).

Freyre's work is often praised as the driving force behind the drastic ideological shift from whitening to racial democracy; a paradigm shift made possible through his

construction of enslaved women as the founders and reproducers of the Brazilian nation. Natasha Pravaz argues that by establishing a concrete connection between the bodies and actions of these women and quintessential *Brazilianess*, Freyre laid the groundwork for the transformation of the idyllic archetypes of the *mae preta* and *mulata* into immortalized symbols of national unity by the Vargas administration (2000, 48). Seeking to affirm the ideology of racial democracy and a distinctly Brazilian character in the domestic and international arena, Vargas nationalized activities constructed as being synonymous with the enticing Brazilian *mulata*, specifically samba music and dancing. Over the course of the 1930s and 1940s, carnival associations and samba schools in Rio de Janeiro were selected to receive financial subsidies from the government and musicians were encouraged to produce lyrics about the advancement of the Brazilian nation and the work ethic and patriotism of its population (Pravaz 2000). Pravaz remarks that with this push from the Brazilian government, the music industry, and the literary community, "samba would eventually become Brazil's trademark, representing the nation at home and abroad" (2000, 49-50).

Politicians also worked with Afro-Brazilian communities in Sao Paulo, Campinas, and Rio de Janeiro to erect monuments commemorating the contributions of the *mae preta* during this period. Similarly viewed as a means to affirm racial democracy, *mae preta* monuments reflected the idealization of this figure as a legend responsible for the cohesion of the national Brazilian family. Of equal importance to this commemoration was the disassociation of Brazilian slavery and race relations with that in the United States. Monolithically framed as the representation of Brazil's racially harmonious past,

Brazil's *mae preta* stood in stark contrast to the modern white American woman. Micol

Siegel describes the *mae preta* as "a prism through which to refract a global gaze", noting

that "though groups of supporters imagined international opinion differently, each hoped

it would sanction their particular vision of their nation's modern body politic" (2009,

208).

These national campaigns failed to realize the prevalence of *mae preta* figures in

American historical accounts and popular culture. More specifically, this iconic image

was and continues to be similarly culturally fetishized in attempts to minimize the explicit

racial misogyny of this period. In his analysis of the sentimental and seductive images of

the Afro-Brazilian women supplied in Freyre's writings on colonial Brazil, Abidas do

Nascimento speaks to the veritable overlap between Brazil's *mae preta* and Aunt Jemima

stereotypes in the U.S.:

> This is exactly the same cheap emotional appeal that the slave era produced in the
> United States, and the image still stares at Black people from boxes of powder
> pancake mix and Uncle Ben's rice. Brazil is far from unique for the Black
> Mammy: white women of the colonial aristocracies were universally parasitic,
> neglectful of their own children, leaving their material responsibilities to slave
> women whose very milk was drained from the mouths of their Black sons and
> daughters. The contention that such circumstances constitute the grounds of a
> "racial democracy" can only be classed as patently absurd (1989, 63).

Although Freyre's ideas began to come under fire by Afro-Brazilian intellectuals

and activists like Nascimento and international researchers in the early l950s (public

questioning of the ideology of racial democracy was also spurred on by the death of

Vargas in August 1954), his depictions of the subaltern Afro-Brazilian woman as a

domestic worker and sexual object remain very much alive in everyday Brazilian

discourse. Burdick suggests that the image of the *mae preta* "continues to be one of the most durable in Brazilian popular culture, reinforced through everyday practice, as well as by storytelling, media, schoolbooks—and even by the figure of the *preta velha* (old black woman) in the religion of *umbanda*"(1998, 47).

The *mulata* has become synonymous with Brazilian national identity and as product for domestic and international mass consumption (Gilliam 1998). The Brazilian tourist industry heavily relies on images of the sexually cunning and samba-dancing *mulata* to draw in foreign crowds during the country's annual carnival season. Richard Parker notes that "[I]n the elaborate theater of the *carnaval*, the *mulata* thus emerges as the most concrete symbol of a much broader ethos. Embodying an entire ideology, she becomes a representation of Brazil itself" (1991, 53). The foreigner's admiration remains powerful and desired as domestic and international tourism campaigns return to Freyre's eroticized images to attract wealthy male tourists. Realizing the enticement of Brazil's racial and sexual 'paradise' and the national pride associated with the *mulata* figure, thousands of young women and children enter the Brazilian sex trade every year. Figures suggest that nearly half a million Brazilian children work as prostitutes (Sachs 1994, 26).

In her study*, Brazilian Mulatice: Performing Race, Gender and the Nation*, Pravaz examines the conscious embodiment of manufactured features of the Brazilian *mulata* by young black women in contemporary Brazil. Her research reveals that these women are far from subjects disconnected from their race, gender, class, or sexuality, but individuals who carefully strategize and embrace their hybrid identities. She describes the motivations behind this continual process of identity transformation and performance:

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[F]or both Afro- and white poor Brazilian women, becoming the mulata is a strategy of upward mobility (not only regarding the extra income afforded, but also in terms of the opportunities for "marrying up" or travelling abroad) and social recognition in a socioeconomic context which offers these women a limited set of job options, such as domestic, secretarial, and retail work (Pravaz 2003, 119).

Upon first glance, some parallels between Pravaz's discussion of "strategic hybridity" (2003, 118) and Spivak's notion of strategic essentialism are visible. Both conceptualizations recognize the agency of the individual in embodying historically marginalized identity forms to grapple with oppressions grounded in processes of colonization and slavery. A distinguishing feature, however, is Spivak's emphasis on the reclamation of identity constructs for the purpose of individual and collective consciousness-raising and resistance. Pravaz's work shows the drive of Brazilian women to reproduce racialized and sexualized representations of the *mulata* for the sole purpose of social mobility and economic returns. Unlike Afro-Brazilian women activists, their embodiment of intersectional identities reflects an attempt to escape a system of identity-based oppression, not to transform it.

From this work we can ascertain the ways in which colonial narratives and national ideology contribute to the construction and the acceptance of black women as symbolic devices to be commodified and consumed, but not engaged as citizens (Gilliam and Gilliam 1999, 65). To ensure that the state profits from the atrocities of the slave trade, Afro-Brazilian women's lives, according to Angela Gilliam and Onik'a Gilliam, "will encompass more than one representation as they move from being sexualized, objectified *mulatas* in their youth to being caretaking, desexualized, nurturing black women as they age" (1999, 64). The statistical data provided in this work's introductory

chapter illustrates the power and persistence of these images in determining the jobs fit for black women, but not the status accorded to them. Cultural capital stands for little in this context where the duties of domestic servants, carnival performers, and sex workers are viewed as fleeting and economically negligible. The perilous social and economic situation of Afro-Brazilian women speaks to the stark realities of their historical origins and the pervasive influence of idealized representations of black female bodies as apt for economic and sexual exploitation.

Conclusion

Several historical, ideological and political forces at the domestic and transnational level have influenced the identity constructions of Afro-Brazilian women and their socioeconomic positioning in contemporary Brazilian society. When analyzing the identity articulations and mobilizations of Afro-Brazilian women in the contemporary period, the impact of colonialism and slavery and their revision under the ideology of racial democracy cannot be understated. The naturalization of associations of blackness and femininity with domestic labour and sexual deviance by Freyre and other intellectual and political elites has disguised and sanctioned the sexual exploitation and economic domination of Afro-Brazilian women for decades. Heavily influenced by foreign observations and idealisms, these narratives reproduce racial and gender hierarchies established in the colonial era and underlie the commercial appropriation of black female bodies in the Brazilian and global economy. Oppositional depictions of the *mae preta* as the docile worker and the *mulata* as the coveted object of desire remain very much alive in Brazilian historical accounts, social imagery, and tourism campaigns.

The following chapter explores the penetration of the above logics in domestic and regional activist spaces and their confrontation by Afro-Brazilian women activists in the 1970s and 1980s. In doing so, it connects the remnants of Brazil's colonial experience to the contemporary identity negotiations and mandates of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement. The chapter also goes into greater depth on the domestic political conditions which facilitated the emergence of novel articulations of race and gender in Brazil and the strategic mobilization of these categories by Afro-Brazilian women activists.

CHAPTER FOUR

**AXES OF ENTRY AND EXCLUSION: CHARTING THE COURSE OF THE
AFRO-BRAZILIAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT 1975-1995**

> We cannot think about the Conference without remembering many parts of the
> way, including the obstacles we removed day after day.
>
> —Nilma Bentes

The above excerpt is taken from the article *Brasil-Durban-Brasil: Um Marco da
Luta Contra Racismo* (Brazil-Durban-Brazil: A Framework for the Fight Against Racism)
(Bentes 2002, 230). A long-time activist in the Afro-Brazilian women's movement,
Nilma Bentes specifically focuses on the ideological and structural challenges faced by
activists in the movement in the months leading up to and during the Durban Conference.
Yet, her words also testify to the historical struggles of this community to be recognized
as a voice deserving of equal consideration at the national, regional and international
level.

Much of the contemporary research on Afro-Brazilian women's national and
transnational social activism has emphasized their heightened participation at UN
Conferences in the 1990s and early 2000s. The works of Bentes, Bairros (2002), Carneiro
(2002), and Caldwell (2009) offer critical insight into the experiences of Afro-Brazilian
women activists in the Durban Conference process and the ideological and structural
challenges they faced upon re-entering the Brazilian context. The development of
identities, interests, and strategies in the years prior to their participation in Conference
processes and the historical, national, and transnational forces which influenced these
activities, have received less attention in existing studies.

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The disregard of contextual factors in many studies of transnational social organizing against racism and sexism reflects a broader trend in social movement and IR literature. There is a tendency in these fields to focus on the objectives of mobilization and interactions of actors at transnational policy and activist forums, such as UN Conferences and World Social Forums, and the subsequent outcomes. Inadequate consideration is given to the political exchanges, openings, and exclusions that precipitate this mobilization and shape its direction, what Bentes might characterize as the "many parts of the way".

As the previous chapter illustrated, paying attention to the intersectional hierarchies imposed by systems of slavery and colonialism helps to ground the contemporary identity articulations and mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women. A clearer sense of the 'politics on the ground' and specific domestic political conditions in which movement decisions and identity-based strategies are crafted is also needed. In this chapter, particular emphasis is placed on the openings and closures for intersectional identity claims and platforms provided by the democratic transition in Brazil. Further insight is gained from examining the experiences of Afro-Brazilian women activists in the "extra-official processes" of national and Latin American politics. Sonia E. Alvarez et al. describe these processes as those outside "official public international arenas", which enable feminist activists across the globe "to build solidarity, devise innovative forms of political praxis, and elaborate discourses that challenge gender-based and sexual oppression" (2002, 538).

Bringing these realms of influence together draws attention to the ideological and empirical sources of intersectional forms of mobilization, the pathways that activists embodying multiple identity statuses take to collectively mobilize, and the different ways they position themselves once in spaces of activism. Here a statement from Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier's study on collective identity formation in lesbian social movements is particularly fitting: "To understand any politicized identity community, it is necessary to analyze the social and political struggle that created the identity" (1992, 110).

This chapter explores the impact of national and regional processes on the mobilization of race and gender identities in the early stages of the contemporary Afro-Brazilian women's movement. Its primary argument is that the development and identity articulations of this movement cannot be understood in isolation from the confrontation of colonial logics in Brazilian black and feminist movements; the openings for gender-oriented action emerging in Brazil's democratic transition; and the experiences of activists in contentious regional feminist exchanges.

The chapter charts the development and actions of the movement over the course of the twentieth century with particular emphasis on the decades of the 1970s and 1980s. It begins by examining the symbolic constructions and actual experiences of Afro-Brazilian women in major black movement organizations and the Brazilian feminist movement, and the reproduction of colonial racial and gender hierarchies in these spaces of 'emancipatory' politics. This discussion identifies how the implicit inferiorization of black women as servants and subaltern women contributed to the emergence of the autonomous Afro-Brazilian women's movement.

The focus then shifts to Afro-Brazilian women's recognition of the opportunities provided by particular identity categories and movement spaces, specifically gender, during the country's democratic transition. Emphasis is placed on the engagements and decisions of Afro-Brazilian women activists in Sao Paulo's *Conselho Estadual da Condicao Feminina* (CECF or Sao Paulo's State Council on the Feminine Condition) and their critical awareness of a domestic opportunity structure open to gender-focused policies and mobilizations in the formative stages of the movement. This discussion sheds light on practices of strategic intersectionality, specifically detailing the strategy of introducing intersectional claims under the lens of gender—one which would be later deployed by Afro-Brazilian women activists in UN Conferences and preparatory processes.

The final section of this chapter concentrates on some of the key power struggles and debates between Afro-Brazilian women and Brazilian feminist activists at national and regional feminist meetings in the 1980s. It examines how, despite facing extreme racial discrimination at national and regional sites of feminist activism, including Latin America and Caribbean Feminist *Encuentros* (Encounters), Afro-Brazilian women utilized these forums to establish the movement nationally, to develop regional alliances, and to increase awareness of intersecting forms of racism and sexism in domestic environments.

In contextualizing the efforts and experiences of Afro-Brazilian women activists prior to their participation at UN Conferences, this chapter reveals that the heightened presence of Afro-Brazilian women activists in this arena was not only the result of

openings in multilevel opportunity structures, but was built from years of challenging exclusionary practices, entering into dialogues, and continuous strategizing in the Brazilian context and beyond.

Afro-Brazilian Women in Black and Feminist Movements

While this chapter primarily concentrates on the identity articulations and mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women since the 1970s, it is important to note that their engagement in formal and informal collective forms of activism can be traced back much farther. During the colonial period, Afro-Brazilian women led and participated in various activities centred on challenging the patriarchal slave regime and celebrating African traditions and female figureheads, such as Felippa María Aranha and Sinhá Inocência.[9] Examples included open and clandestine women's societies, spiritual gatherings, and cultural festivals. Although these initiatives are rarely acknowledged in colonial narratives or historical accounts of black and feminist resistances, they continue to serve as significant organizational and behavioural models for Afro-Brazilian women's collective mobilization in the present day (Werneck 2007).

Personal acts of defiance and violent resistance were also asserted by African women slaves. In her study of slave women's resistance in nineteenth century Bahia, Jane-Marie Collins challenges the disregard of violent physical attacks by enslaved women against masters and mistresses in the region's colonial plantation system in literatures on Latin American slave societies. Perhaps the most unexpected and

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[9] Felippa María Aranha led a former slave community in the Amazonian region of Trombates and Sinhá Inocência was a story-teller versed in Yorubian dialect that preserved African traditions in Bahia through her art. See Davis (1995) for more details on the lives and contributions of both women.

transformative outcomes of these acts came in the public questioning of the perpetrators in the courts. In what Collins describes as "rare opportunities in which slave women actually had a public voice" (1999, 39), these testimonies were first-hand accounts of the depravity experienced in plantation life and they shook the pervasive dichotomous constructions of African women slaves as submissive and subaltern. The violent and non-violent tactics employed by African women slaves reflect the long-standing social consciousness and strategy engaged within this community. Furthermore, it provides a glimpse into their autonomous mobilization prior to engagements in black and feminist organizations in the twentieth century.

Gender Discrimination in Black Political and Cultural Organizations

Afro-Brazilian women became involved with the first formal black political organization in Brazil, the *Frente Negra Brasileira* (FNB) or the Brazilian Black Front in the 1930s. Officially established in Sao Paulo in 1931, the FNB fought to ensure the material progression of the black population in the face of extreme economic depression and to rebuild the moral reputation of a race that had been severely tarnished in the slavery period. The organization concentrated on improving the socioeconomic positions of its members, who were primarily situated in the working class, and the general black population through the independent ownership of elementary schools, medical and dental clinics, credit unions, and legal and financial aid programs (Andrews 1997, 149). Members were encouraged to become involved in Brazilian electoral politics and to voice the objectives and mandates of the FNB to state councils and the Vargas administration.

The following excerpt from the FNB-owned newspaper, *Progresso*, articulates this call to service:

> In the hour in which Brazil prepares to convene its Constitutional Assembly, setting the tone for the new Brazil, the men and women of the black race must prepare to fight so that Assembly black people are represented by their legitimate racial brothers… Men and women of the black race, struggle bravely so that in the highest councils of the nation the voice of the black will lift like a clarion, imposing on Brazil the splendors of Justice for our race (quoted in Andrews 1991, 148).

Despite stipulating in Article 2 of the organization's official statute that membership was open to "all productive Black people of the nation, of both sexes in accordance with the fundamental laws of Brazil" (Butler 2000, 113-114), the onus placed on "legitimate racial brothers" as representatives of the black community provides a pivotal glimpse into the gender hierarchies which permeated the organization. The upper echelons of movement activity were reserved for men while women were expected to contribute to the social fabric of the organization. They were encouraged to join the Black Roses Women's auxiliary and participate in the frequent social gatherings of the organization, including dances, picnics, and athletic events (Butler 2000, 115).

It should not be assumed, however, that women in the FNB were silent or ineffectual in communicating their experiences of intersectional forms of discrimination. Characterized as *frentenegrinas*, Davis asserts that female FNB members "were considered strong, assertive, dependable and capable women who would not tolerate racism or sexism" (1995, 256). This reputation had significant repercussions for female members in the Brazilian labour market. Employers hesitated or refused to hire women

affiliated with an organization that was largely seen as divisive and combative (Davis 1995, 256).

After establishing chapters across the country and amassing over 200,000 members, the FNB was disbanded in the face of strict authoritarian rule in 1937. The dismantling of black mobilization in this period signified the overwhelming nationalist and interventionist orientation of Vargas's administration, which sought to destroy any potential threats of opposition by creating favourable social and labour policies for working-class and poor Brazilians. One of the primary objectives of the *Estado Novo* (New State) was to gain control over predominantly black populations by generating increased employment opportunities and expanding the national economy (Andrews 1991, 181). With the introduction of the ISI model, black men and women were heavily relied upon as sources of political support and cheap labour in labour intensive industries but were also closely monitored to curtail any efforts to collectively mobilize.

Marked by the creation of the *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (Black Experimental Theater) or TEN in 1944, a new phase of black organizing emerged in the midst of Vargas's push for national and racial unification. Founded by Afro-Brazilian activist, scholar, and playwright Abdias do Nascimento in Rio de Janeiro, TEN emphasized the social integration and cultural contributions of Afro-Brazilian peoples through arts-based educational initiatives for all Brazilian citizens. Unlike the FNB, TEN did not prioritize the political advancement of blacks in electoral politics—a tactic which ensured minimal confrontation with the authoritarian leadership. A description offered by do Nascimento illustrates, however, that the organization's intentions were to combat deeply etched

forms of white superiority at the domestic level. In his words, "the Black Experimental Theater was conceived as an instrument to counter the domination and supremacy of white European culture, and as a systematic unmasking of the hypocritical racial ideology ruling the nation" (1989, 45).

According to do Nascimento, TEN productions offered an unprecedented stage and a voice for "many typical black women, often humble domestic servants, cooks or maids" and "made the traditionally dominant image of the black person as a caricature or domesticated servant obsolete" (1989, 47). Ruth de Souza, Marina Goncalvez and Arinda Serafim were among the most well-known Afro-Brazilian actresses in TEN productions (Jones-de Oliveira 2003). de Souza frequently wrote about her individual insecurities and obstacles as a black actress in Brazil and transformative experiences in the black theater in TEN's journal, *Quilombo* (Davis 1995). Yet, de Souza's extensive acting career in Brazil and eventual move to the United States to attend university made her an outlier amongst most Afro-Brazilian women and activists at the time. Davis affirms this disconnect, stating that "She does not speak for all women nor does she represent the Afro-Brazilian population" (Davis 1995, 257). Similar criticisms of elitist behaviour plagued TEN until its dissolution in 1963. Afro-Brazilian historian Clovis Moura was one of the most outspoken critics of the organization. Moura chastised TEN's leadership and members for offering little recourse for the majority of blacks living in impoverished conditions (Barcelos 1999).

In contrast, Afro-Brazilian women were dominant symbolic figures in black organizations marked by what Hanchard describes as the "abstraction, reification and

commodification" (1993, 61) of traditions, symbols, and religious practices expressed by African slaves during the colonial period. Black cultural organizations gained popularity in the early 1950s when the Vargas administration looked to widely enforce the ideology of racial democracy by celebrating the role of African cultural practices and lineage in the creation of a racially harmonious state. While the platforms of cultural organizations and carnival societies, such as *Blocos Afro* (Salvador da Bahia), *Filhos de Ghandy* (Salvador da Bahia), and in later years, *Groupo Vissungo* (Rio de Janeiro) initially called for heritage of Brazil's African descendants to be reclaimed, frozen images of the obedient *mae preta* and the seductive samba-dancing *mulata* "persisted under paternalistic state-sponsored processes of folklorization and commercial appropriation" (Crook and Johnson 1999, 1). Black cultural organizations often perpetuated folkloric stereotypes of black women to identify with what the majority of Brazilians understood as distinctly African and to gain a wider base of support. As one member of the *Groupo Vissungo* reflected in a 1978 interview with Olivia Maria Gomes da Cunha, "in order to survive and develop, the group also had to learn from the popular classes. We [Groupo Vissungo] had to continue to learn, to exchange. They [are] not taking culture, they are identifying with the existing culture" (1998, 225).

While Afro-Brazilian women were embraced as symbolic bodies by black cultural organizations, the realities of their intersecting discriminations were not. Afro-Brazilian activist and scholar Joselina da Silva notes that although black women were not dissuaded from participating in black cultural organizations or assuming leadership roles, the

communication of gender-specific concerns was not encouraged. She speaks about her experience in the Rio chapter of *Blocos Afros* during the early 1980s:

> Then the two main leaders were women, the director and the vice director were women, but gender subjects were almost never discussed in there. I tried to begin a black women's group inside the Bloco Afros […] but it never became a real thing because it was like strange forces within the group didn't accept it (da Silva 2007).

Importantly, this statement reveals how even with women at the helm, black cultural organizations were unwilling to challenge dominant cultural stereotypes of Afro-Brazilian women because of the allegiance to mystical representations exhibited by black and white Brazilians. As a result, these organizations failed to create spaces for women to reclaim denigrated identity forms and to address the complex intersectional oppressions affecting their everyday lives.

Similar to the FNB, women were situated on the outskirts of the country's largest organization of the black movement, the *Movimento Negro Unificado* (Unified Black Movement or MNU). The partial restoration of civil liberties by the Geisel administration provided a key opening for this organization which emerged in July 1978. Its objectives were clear: to improve the positioning of the black population in "every political, economic, social and cultural arena"; to force a "re-evaluation of the role of Black people in Brazilian history", and to engage in the "systematic combat of [Afro-Brazilian culture's] commercialization, folklorization, and distortion" (Convin 2006, 203). The organization also called for the complete eradication of capitalism in Brazil and the introduction of socialist principles. Under this political mandate, class and racial discrimination could not be confronted separately. In principle, the MNU was committed

to the recognition and elimination of the "sexual, economic and social exploitation of the Black woman" (Convin 2006, 206) and welcomed women who were seeking to challenge pervasive forms of racial injustice to join the membership and leadership ranks.

However, once they became members of the organization, women were gradually moved to behind the scenes and were expected to complete secretarial and organizational tasks. Former representative for the Bahia MNU chapter and national coordinator of the organization from 1991 to 1992, Luiza Bairros, shares her confrontation of this gender bias:

> We [black women] noticed that there was very strong domination of males because the MNU was a mixed organization of men and women and men were controlling the organization. They were the leaders. They held the power to speak and were always providing the answers for everything. They were the ones who had the speeches organized, always ready to answer everything and the women were doing the work that was more invisible which was, from the other side, the most important work. This was the work of maintaining the organization and keeping it alive and situated within the black community (2007).

From her comments we see how, similar to Freyre's depiction of the *mae preta* in the white master's household, Afro-Brazilian women served as the backbone of the MNU, but were made to feel invisible and disposable. An explicit contradiction also existed between the anti-discriminatory principles of the organization and actual treatment of black women in the organization (Caldwell 2007). The use of derogatory language against black women and homosexuals in MNU Conferences was not an uncommon occurrence. Some male members openly expressed sexist and homophobic views and challenged the capabilities and contributions of black female members who were viewed more as rivals than colleagues (Convin 2006, 110).

The demeaning treatment of Afro-Brazilian women in several black movement organizations illustrates the infiltration of patriarchal colonial logics in activist settings and the significant implications for black women's positioning in spaces of racial consciousness-raising. As Santos asserts, "despite the role of black women as the economic mainstay of black men and in the struggle for resistance, black women's participation has been relegated to that of servant, as a consequence of the machista[10] ideology that has permeated the black movement" (1999, 27). For much of the 1970s and 1980s, the perpetuation of an attitude of male superiority by actors in the black movement and the unwavering adherence of Brazilians to the ideology of racial democracy obstructed the communication of intersectional frameworks in the black movement and strained relations between black male and female activists.

Yet, this exclusion also served a catalyzing function for subsequent mobilization strategies and platforms of Afro-Brazilian women. More specifically, this discrimination from within opened Afro-Brazilian female activists eyes to the pervasiveness of gender discrimination within a space of resistance. In this way, the black movement in Brazil became a site for 'gendering consciousness'. This is the process through which gender meanings, relations and identities are continually constructed and revised. Dawn Duke provides an apt description of this process, noting "from the 1980s onwards […] there has been a strengthening in the black female's perception of her position within such settings, her interpretation of ethnic pride in terms of what it means for her as a woman, and her determination to represent herself in all significant spheres of life" (2003, 362).

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[10] Term refers to the overt or exaggerated embodiment of constructed masculine traits, such as aggressiveness, virility and assertiveness displayed in different Latin American cultures.

While many Afro-Brazilian women like Bairros continued to challenge discriminatory

barriers from within the black movement and to lobby for the inclusion of their

viewpoints, others became involved in socialist and student organizations like the

National Union of Students or turned to the Brazilian feminist movement.[11]

Racial Hierarchies in the Brazilian Feminist Movement

Like the black movement, the Brazilian feminist movement underwent a

resurgence in the mid-1970s. Prior to the implementation of Vargas's New State, upper

and middle class white women were at the forefront of lobbies for access to post-

secondary education and universal suffrage. A small number were involved in cross-

border feminist exchanges and alliances, including the International Women's Suffrage

Alliance and International Council of Women. When non-state sponsored civil

organizations were forced to disband, feminist activists often remained engaged through

clandestine student and socialist organizations. Once the restrictions on these

organizations were lifted, white middle class feminists, like poor and working class

Brazilian women, mobilized around gender-specific issues in exceptional numbers. While

the latter demanded better-quality social and urban services, the platforms of the former

centred upon the protection of women's rights in the wake of Brazil's rapid economic

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[11] See Santos (1999b) for an account of Afro-Brazilian women's struggles to expose and combat forms
racial discrimination in student organizations and unions.

decline in the 1970s.[12] Greater emphasis was placed on the economic security of women, specifically improved wages and access to employment.

It was during this period of transition that Afro-Brazilian women realized that the colonial logics of patriarchal and racial domination prevented their full inclusion in Brazilian feminist spaces and discourse. One of the few female MNU leaders in the country, Leila Gonzalez discusses the exclusion of black women's issues in the published writings of the feminist movement. She asserts: "Most of the texts, although dealing with the relations of sexual, social and economic domination that the woman is subjected to, as well as the problems of women from the poorest regions, do not deal with the fact of racial oppression" (1982, 100).

Reflecting on her initial encounters with a women's organization in Sao Paulo, Edna Roland writes that "at first the relations [of black women] with white women and the feminist movement were tense, often characterized by a paternalistic posture [on the part of white women]" (2000, 238). Her experience was not unique. A number of Afro-Brazilian women have detailed their experiences of racial exclusion and paternalism in the Brazilian feminist movement over the course of the 1970s and shed light on the dynamics of this historically unequal and contentious relationship. Sueli Carneiro and Thereza Santos offer an account of the pervasive racial division of labour in feminist organizations in *Mulher Negra*:

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[12] According to Blake (2008), this decline was attributed to the response of the military regime to OPEC crisis of 1973. In an effort to circumvent a recession, the regime took out several large loans with interest rates linked to U.S. economic indicators. With the jump of U.S. interest rates in the early 1980s, Brazil's foreign debt skyrocketed from 71 billion to 94 billion.

Thus, if the sexual division of labor in Brazil establishes gender roles for women that the feminist movement seeks to challenge and redefine, the racial division of labor establishes different roles and functions within the feminist movement where a different cost-benefit analysis determines the levels of exploitation and oppression for women of different racial groups (1985, 44).

The low status positions frequently accorded to black women within feminist organizations and overwhelming presence of black domestic workers in the homes of white middle class members served as further evidence of the penetration of racial hierarchies. White feminists responded that Brazilian women's issues cut across racial and class differences and that emphasizing distinctive experiences would make any attempt to create a homogenizing or universal discourse on gender inequality impossible.

Like those involved in the black movement, many Afro-Brazilian women continued to press for the inclusion of race as a key variable in the discrimination faced by women from inside of the Brazilian feminist movement, an undertaking Carneiro has characterized as the "blackening of feminism" (2001). Yet, what distinguished these experiences of marginalization from the sexism encountered in black movement organizations was the realization on the part of Afro-Brazilian women activists of the scope and appeal of gender platforms in Brazil's democratic transition. They also recognized the value of Brazilian feminist spaces for the autonomous organization of Afro-Brazilian women. In short, the Brazilian state's backing of gender-equity themes as indicators of a commitment to democracy would provide a crucial opening for the development and organization of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement and for the introduction of intersectional perspectives.

Gender as an Axis of Entry: Brazil's Democratic Transition and the Autonomous Organization of Afro-Brazilian Women

Prior to examining Afro-Brazilian women's strategic use of gender identities and spaces as avenues for their intersectional mobilization, it is necessary to pinpoint some key aspects of the domestic opportunity structure which facilitated and influenced their actions. A number of decisions undertaken by the Geisel administration (1974-1979) had significant implications for feminist and anti-racist mobilizations in Brazil. While it seemed that the return to democratic rule was the only viable option in a period marred by economic upheaval and labour disputes, most events were carefully orchestrated by the military to prolong their control over the transition process.

One such event was the national commemoration of International Women's Day and Year (IWY) in 1975. Facing heavy pressure to heed the UN's appeals to eliminate domestic forms of gender discrimination and seeking to abide by its newly stated objectives of "Equality, Development, and Peace" (Alvarez 1990, 91), the regime publicly recognized IWY and the feminist movement seized the opportunity at this critical historical juncture. Over the course of three years, feminists from various levels of civil society: unions, neighbourhood associations, student and church organizations came together to develop new national organizations centred on the promotion of gender equality platforms. These included the *Centro da Mulher Brasileira* (Brazilian Women's Center) in Rio de Janeiro and *Centro Desenvolvimento da Mulher Brasileira* (Center for the Development of Brazilian Women) in Sao Paulo.

The direction of the movement was the primary topic of discussion at the

Congresso das Mulheres Brasileiras (Congress of Brazilian Women) held in honour of

the International Women's Decade. Alliances were forged with members of the *Alianca*

Renovadora Nacional (Alliance for National Renewal) and *Movimento Democratico*

Brasileiro (the Brazilian Democratic Movement), the two political parties created by the

dictatorship in 1965. In addition to a widely circulated movement manifesto entitled

Alerta Feminista (Feminist Alert), two feminist newspapers were also created: *Nos*

Mulheres (We Women) and *Brasil Mulher* (Woman Brazil).

With the goal of drawing a clear link between the achievement of political

democracy and the democratization of gender relations in Brazil, these national

organizations introduced alternative discourses on gender-specific issues, such as

women's role in the institution of family, domestic violence, and reproductive rights.

Debates on these topics reached various dimensions of Brazilian society, from soap

operas to public policy forums. Fanny Tabak elaborates on the critical role played by the

Brazilian media in bringing the movement's mandate to the forefront of the 1978

elections:

> The 1978 campaign differed from previous ones in part because issues that were
> raised by feminist groups in 1975 began to be discussed by all the candidates—
> male and female. In this respect, the mass media, especially television, helped to
> widen public debate around sex-based discrimination, sexual and domestic
> violence and other issues. Each candidate had to take a stand on women's issues,
> which served to identify his or her position and thus helped to define the support
> or rejection of the female electorate (1994, 132).

The competition between the political parties to secure the female vote yielded substantial

returns for the communication of the movement's lobbies and for the formal

representation of women at local and state level. In 1978, with the election of over two dozen women to local councils and state legislatures across the country, the movement established their capacity to mobilize the vote, to initiate dialogue within legislative and judiciary bodies, and to directly reach those who were responsible for making and implementing laws and for creating human rights frameworks.

Another monumental shift came in 1982 with the first country's election since the abandonment of the two-party system. The regime anticipated that the dissolution would be widely received as a step towards ideological and discursive integration of democratic principles and that the subsequent fragmenting of parties would extend their power on the ground (Phillips 2010). However, the unanticipated emergence of several new opposition parties; *Partido Movimento Democratica Brasileiro* (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement); *Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro* (Brazilian Labor Party); *Partido Democratico Trabalhista* (Democratic Labor or Workers' Party) and *Partido dos Trabalhadoes* (Workers' Party) marked the regime's weakening grip and set in motion demands for sweeping electoral reform. A feminist presence was visible in the candidates of right and left-wing opposition parties. The election of nearly two thousand female councillors to municipal governments, 28 female representatives to state legislatures, and 8 women to the House of Representatives as well as male politicians aligned with the movement in 1982 sent a clear signal of the greater integration and acceptance of feminist platforms in the country (Tabak 1994).

The heightened presence of feminist candidates and representatives in electoral politics was in marked contrast to the experience of black activists. Prior to the 1980s, a

very small number of blacks had been elected into Congress or had served as leaders in national parties (Johnson 1998, 102). This void was likely exacerbated by the large number of movement leaders, black intellectuals, and left-wing politicians, including do Nascimento and Leonel Brizola, who were in exile during much of the 1970s. Similar to their feminist counterparts, newly formed parties were keen to gain a base of black support and to integrate anti-racism pledges into their mandates. Andrews notes this that trend was especially evident in Sao Paulo, where an unprecedented number of black activists were nominated as party representatives in the 1982 elections (1991, 194). However, the failure to elect most of the candidates reflected the hesitancy of Brazilians to address the implicit contradictions between democratic principles and the treasured ideology of racial democracy.

By the mid-1980s, the consistent lobbying by feminist politicians and activists for gender equality in the name of Brazil's democratic transition led to "the inclusion of a feminist agenda in public policies and normative frames" (Pitanguy 2002, 807). According to Simoes and Matos, the feminist wave of the 1980s was distinguished by the "more effective transformation of long time demands into platforms of intervention in and by the state" (2008-09, 96). This transformation was most apparent in policy frameworks and legislative advancements. Feminist politicians and non-aligned activists in grassroots and national organizations were the driving force behind the creation in 1983 of State Councils on Women's Condition; the introduction of the *Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher* (National Council for Women's Rights); and the establishment of the world's

first women-only police precincts in 1985. The latter advancements coincided with the election of the head of the civilian opposition, Tancredo Neves, in 1985.[13]

The use of gender equality reform as a "hallmark of the process of democratic transition" (Simoes and Matos 2008-09, 96) persisted in the drafting of the 1988 Constitution. Dubbed the "lipstick lobby" in the Brazilian media, the movement reached out to activists and organizations across the country requesting their input and support of proposals and it established a formidable lobbying body at the National Congress during the drafting sessions. Approximately eighty percent of movement proposals on matters ranging from paid maternity leaves to increased rights for domestic workers were passed and integrated into Constitutional articles (Simoes and Matos 2008-09, 96).

Briefly mapping the terrain of the feminist movement in the context of Brazil's democratic transition provides significant insight on why gender-centred organizing more so than that premised on race appealed to Afro-Brazilian women activists seeking to mobilize intersectional concerns. As illustrated in previous chapters, race is an extremely contested and convoluted subject in the Brazilian political and cultural imaginary. On the one hand, organizations of the black movement, like the MNU, looked for the Brazilian government to assume public responsibility for its role in the historical exclusion and mistreatment of Afro-Brazilians and to attest to the falsehood of racial democracy. On the other hand, the feminist movement concentrated on the progression of the country not through the admission of wrongdoing, but through the development of a more nuanced

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[13] Although Neves was elected, he died before taking office. His vice presidential selection, Jose Sarney, assumed the leadership and became the country's first civilian president in over two decades.

understanding of the relationship between women's rights and democracy. Their platform emphasized collaborations, not conflicts with the Brazilian state.

In this context, the scope of identity-based struggles was limited. While the transition to democracy was driven by the increased engagement of the state with civil society groups, in the early stages of the transition, overarching ideological leanings prevented the diffusion of anti-racist platforms. During the 1980s, gender equality was a more attractive platform because it did not directly challenge the still widely held myth of racial democracy. Rather, the feminist movement tended to completely ignore the existence of the ideology or to downplay the relevance of race. The reputation and agenda of the exiting military regime were also critical as they sought to establish symbols and benchmarks for the country's fledgling democracy. As Simoes and Matos assert, "one of the most important contributions of the feminist movement in the 1980s was that it showed the viability of developing new democratic practices" (2008-09, 95). In terms of material and organizational resources, there were more opportunities for funding and greater access to these opportunities for the feminist movement because of its long standing relationships with national and international agencies.

Yet, as previously illustrated, it was an uphill battle for Afro-Brazilian women to begin a dialogue with feminist and state actors and to achieve full accessibility because of pervasive racial divisions and the promotion of women's universality in feminist platforms. Using the specific experiences and actions of Afro-Brazilian women on the State Council on the Feminine Condition (CECF) in Sao Paulo as a point of reference, the

following section offers a critical glimpse into the strategic use of gender by Afro-Brazilian women to mobilize intersectional platforms.

"No Room for Us": Afro-Brazilian Women and the State Council on the Feminine Condition

The Sao Paulo CECF was created in 1983 by the newly elected Governor of Sao Paulo, Franco Montoro. Montoro's goal was to develop councils that would serve as spaces for democratic participation and would encourage the involvement of burgeoning civil society groups, such as feminists, in the policy-making affairs of the state. However, for Afro-Brazilian women activists involved in various urban movements and political organizations, the appointment of all white women to the thirty-two person council by Montoro reflected the inability of white male politicians in Brazil to consider the distinct experiences and multiple contributions of black women (Santos 2005, 93). When Roland, Sueli Carneiro, Thereza Santos, and other Sao-Paulo based Afro-Brazilian women activists questioned their blatant exclusion in the nomination process, the Council members retorted that it was because they were not formally organized. The long-term objective of the small group became the creation of a formal black women's collective. In the short-term, Santos was designated as the unofficial representative of black women's concerns on the Council. She describes her struggles to be heard and acknowledged in a hostile setting: "Though the white women of the council often ignored or personally attacked me, I didn't play the game and demanded that all projects focus on the problematic of the black woman" (Santos 1999b, 198).

Created in 1984, the First Black Women's Collective of Sao Paulo was comprised of Afro-Brazilian women active in the black and feminist movement and those unaffiliated with social movements. The organization emerged to confront the discriminatory practices of the feminist CECF members, but it also utilized the ideological and organizational resources of the Council. Founding member of the Collective, Edna Roland delineates how the CECF and its gender-focus became a critical point of entry and served as a key strategy for Afro-Brazilian women's mobilization in Sao Paulo:

> Black women had the opportunity through this business of gender to access information, organizational, and administrative experience. We were able to get a social and political capital that was more difficult for black men and were able to access resources through contact with foundations and governmental bodies that worked with gender. This was a key issue for us. Access to agencies, corporations and the university, these were key factors that gave us the possibility to have an experience that black men did not have or it was more difficult for them (2007).

Pointing to their newly acquired organizational status, the Collective pressed for four seats on the CECF but were denied. Concerned with alienating black constituents in the upcoming state election, Montoro's office eventually reversed the Council's decision and provided four seats to Collective members. These were held by Santos, Carneiro, Ilma Fatima de Jesus, and Vera Lucia Saraiva (Santos 1999b, 198). As a result of the Collective's extensive lobbying, Roland was one of the two black women nominated to sit on the Council in a later round of official nominations. Their inclusion resulted in the creation of the CECF's first Commission on Black Women's Issues.

Four key dynamics in this local political opportunity structure are at work here. Firstly, because Afro-Brazilian women were aware of the broader implications of their

absence on the Council for race relations in the state of Sao Paulo, they timed their

demands to capture the attention and to ensure the intervention of non-feminist state

actors. Second, the nature of Brazil's federalist structure, which has long placed

significant power in the hands of state governors, enabled Montoro to act relatively

autonomously to overturn the ruling of the Council. In return, he sought to strengthen

political allegiances and alignments with Sao Paulo's black community. Third, with the

influx of civil society representatives in governmental bodies and the emphasis placed on

the integration of democratic principles in these organizations, activists realized their

inclusion on the Council would likely be perceived as a larger symbol of democracy's

expansion and consolidation in Brazil. Fourth, the pointed observations about the

disjointed and informal character of Afro-Brazilian women's activism by Council

members drew attention to the attitude of racial superiority imbued in the universalist and

homogenizing rhetoric of the feminist movement and to the need for Afro-Brazilian

women to organize their grievances independently.

Four years later, recognizing the limited organizational and outreach capacity of

the Black Women's Collective, Roland and Carneiro founded a new black women's

organization called *Geledes- Instituto da Mulher Negra* (Geledes- Institute of Black

Women). The organization focused on the promotion of black women's rights and the

struggle against multiple forms of discrimination. It has since become one of the largest

black women's organizations in the country with four streams designated to the

empowerment of black women and youth: health, education, communication, and human

rights. One of the longest running initiatives of the organization is *SOS Racism*, a

program that encourages victims of racial discrimination to come forward and that offers

them free legal aid and counselling.

Through this example, we see how Afro-Brazilian women's "mobilization as

autonomous social actors emerged out of gender struggles, though in reaction to racial

discrimination" (Santos 2005, 93). Roland recounts that this strategy was not unique to

Sao Paulo and was occurring across the country:

> We were a group of black women mobilizing and fighting within a gender body but we argued that we have been victims of racial discrimination. This model, this situation, is very frequent in the political organization of black women in Brazil. Very frequent. We are discussing, arguing the issues of racial discrimination. We are victims of racial discrimination and we do this within a space of gender politics. So this is emblematic, we go through our process of political organization like this and as we move ourselves within a political space of gender relations, we get in contact with feminist issues. I acquired a gender consciousness in this process. […] I started to learn reproductive rights and reproductive health and I had to try and think in terms of our perspectives as black women. What is our perspective? Do we have a specific perspective? It is different from the general feminist movement? It is different from the general black movement? I had to start thinking about these things (2007).

Her statement illustrates the complexities of reconciling gender issues with racial

perspectives and the powerful role played by designated feminist spaces and transition

processes in the development and communication of intersectional perspectives.

Over the course of the 1980s, fourteen black women's collectives and

organizations emerged in various Brazilian cities to address the distinctive intersectional

issues faced by Afro-Brazilian women (dos Santos 2009). The *Coletivo de Mulheres*

Negras da Baixada Santista (The Baixada Santista Black Women's Collective) in Sao

Paulo and *Maria Mulher* in Porto Alegre are two key examples. Arising from informal

discussions of worker's rights and economic constraints among twelve black domestic workers, nurses, and teachers throughout the 1970s, the Baixada Santista Black Women's Collective was formally established in 1984 and led by two Afro-Brazilian women activists, Alzira Rufino and Nilza Iraci (Duke 2003, 358). Located in Sao Paulo, its agenda centred on "fighting for black women's rights, racial discrimination and gender violence, and strengthening the cultural traditions of the Afro-Brazilian women" (Duke 2003, 359). Changing its name later to the *Casa de Cultura da Mulher Negra* (Black Women's Cultural Center), its current projects include legal aid and psychological counselling for victims of racial and gender violence and educational campaigns on the long-term consequences of racial and gender discrimination and violence against women. The Center is also home to an extensive collection of archives on the historical and cultural contributions of Afro-Brazilian women and a "permanent exhibition of sculptures, paintings, masks and other decorative objects from Africa and Brazil" (Duke 2003, 360).

Formed in 1987, *Maria Mulher* was the first formal black women's organization to emerge in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Its objectives are threefold: to combat racial, gender, and social discrimination; to propose public policies centred on the achievement of black women's full citizenship; and to provide instruments to black women that encourage their independent agency. The organization's initiatives have centred on the empowerment of vulnerable young black women. They include workshops held at local schools and community centers on literacy, political participation, personal self-esteem, and professional development. In addition, *Maria Mulher* has developed a number of

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initiatives that focus on HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness. The goal of these programs

is to shed light on the powerful linkage between violence perpetuated against black

women and their health problems (Caldwell 2009b).

The profiles of these two organizations provide a glimpse of the diverse mandates

and initiatives of black women's organizations created in the 1980s. While the

participation of Afro-Brazilian women in the national feminist movement was a strategic

action that paved the way for these autonomous bodies, it would take regional feminist

forums for them to bring their ideas and agendas into conversation. The final section of

this chapter focuses on the experiences and strategies of Afro-Brazilian women activists

in Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounters and the importance of these

regional sites for the consolidation of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement, articulation

of intersectional identities and mandates, and subsequent mobilization of activists at the

transnational level. These settings are specifically considered in this work because they

offer a novel approach to explore the multilevel political opportunity structures at work in

the articulation of intersectional identities during the developmental stages of the

movement.

Grappling with (Counter)Hegemonic Spaces: Afro-Brazilian Women and Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounters

Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounters are primary examples of

extra-official processes. Held in two to three year intervals since 1981, these regional

feminist meetings have focused on providing a counterhegemonic space for feminists to

share ideological and strategic perspectives that can be integrated into national and local

struggles. For these reasons they are viewed as being extremely influential and transformative sites in a region plagued by the remnants of authoritarianism and widespread poverty.

A pressing issue that has been acknowledged, but not extensively explored in existing studies of the Encounters, is the expression and confrontation of racism by feminists in these spaces (Alvarez et al. 2002; Alvarez et al. 2003; Sternbach et al. 1992). In terms of feminist organizing in Brazil, these regional meetings served to accentuate the significant racial divisions and animosities between Afro-Brazilian women activists and the Brazilian feminist movement throughout the 1980s. The Third Latin American Feminist Encounter held in Bertioga, Brazil, in 1985 had particularly detrimental effects for this fledging relationship, but had positive consequences for the consolidation of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement.

Barriers in Bertioga

While Afro-Brazilian women activists had attended the two previous Encounters (Bogota, Colombia, in 1981 and Lima, Peru, in 1983), this was the first to be held in Brazil where black women's organizations and writings were gaining increased currency and support on the national and international scale. More specifically, the UN Conference on the Decade of Women (1975-1985) had recently concluded in Nairobi, Kenya, where Carneiro and Santos's book, *Mulher Negra*, was featured in a series of documents prepared by the Brazilian delegation for the UN Council on Women (Carneiro 2004, 311). This was coupled with the presentation of the *Manifestos do Mulheres Negras*

(Black Woman's Manifesto) to the Council. This document detailed the specificity of

Afro-Brazilian women's experiences and identities, placing emphasis on the racial

dimensions of gender discrimination (Caldwell 2001). Contributors to this document

included Leila Gonzalez and Benedita da Silva, an Afro-Brazilian community activist and

politician in Rio de Janeiro, both of whom attended the UN Conference. The increased

visibility of Afro-Brazilian women activists and their publications in Nairobi resulted in

the attendance of unprecedented numbers of black female activists from various countries

in the region at the Encounter in Bertioga. A total of one hundred and sixteen black

women were present (Ribeiro 1995).

On the national scale, the Black Women's Manifesto had also been shared during

the aforementioned Congress of Brazilian Women. According to Caldwell, the

presentation of the document "marked the first formal recognition of racial divisions

within the Brazilian feminist movement" (2001, 222). The Manifesto directly challenged

images and assumptions of feminist solidarity in Brazil. It emphasized the links between

black women's inferior societal treatment and economic positioning and white women's

participation in the formal labour force and levels of higher education. In addition, the

document exposed the ways in which race, gender, and class had coalesced to perpetuate

derogatory constructs of black women in the colonial period and their continued

exploitation in the domestic realm and in the labour force.

Bertioga was one of the first documented Encounters in which the widespread

marginalization of black women in national and regional feminist movements was

recognized, but not because analyses of racial dimensions of sexism were integrated into

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the official agenda. Rather, issues surrounding racial identities and exclusions in feminist discourses and movements emerged through the unscripted testimonies of black female activists. Matilde Ribeiro, an Afro-Brazilian activist, civil servant, and attendee recounts the statement of one black female activist from Dominican Republic at the Encounter: "When I joined in the women's movement, I realized that I could not claim the problem of being black. I had to be placed in another category which took into account another specificity. What is happening in the Dominican Republic is that it is difficult to find a group of women who approach the issue of being black" (1995, 450). Looking at this quote, it could be inferred that the Encounter, despite avoiding the racial question, did meet one of its primary goals of stimulating dialogues between feminist activists. Afro-Brazilian women were able to gain a sense of common struggle with other black female activists in the region. Such exchanges were seen as major strides for Afro-Brazilian women activists struggling with the increasingly separate mobilization of white and black women in the Brazilian context despite formal acknowledgments made by the Brazilian feminist movement.

An incident involving unregistered black female participants that occurred at the three-day event speaks specifically to this polarization. It is described by Nancy Sternbach et al. (1992) in their analysis of feminist engagements in Latin America. According to their account, a bus occupied with predominantly black and poor women from the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro arrived unexpectedly at the conference site on the first day. They requested entry into the meeting despite being unable to pay the registration fee of US$60. Word of their arrival and request spread quickly throughout the site and

created significant dissension amongst conference attendees. The predominantly white female organizing committee took the position that everyone must abide by the existing rules and thus be responsible for paying the registration fee even though it "was prohibitive for the vast majority of Latin American women" (Sternbach et al. 1992, 415). Since the final decision rested with the committee, the women were denied admission.

They explained that their decision did not reflect a racial prejudice, but was in response to suspected manipulation of the women by political parties critical of the feminist movement. Sternbach et al. note that the bus was provided by the Lion's Club in Rio de Janeiro, an organization affiliated with the dominant state party at the time (1992, 415). The power imbalances underlying the federalist structure of Brazilian political institutions come into play at this juncture. More specifically, we see how the agenda of state political parties and social activists become intertwined in the former's attempt to garner the attention of the Governor and the latter's struggle to counter the exclusionary practices of feminist groups in the state. Several attendees, including members of the recently formed Black Women's Collective of Sao Paulo, did not support the organizers' decision. Their position was that refusal to admit the women into the meeting was indeed a reflection of the pervasive racial prejudices that divided the Brazilian feminist movement.

While the decision was not reversed and the meeting continued with no further episodes, the incident had far reaching implications for the Afro-Brazilian women's movement. Black female activists realized that these regional spaces of feminist dialogue and reflection were in fact "privileged spaces for the reflection, exchange and formulation

of strategies between white middle class feminists" (Carneiro 2004, 313). However, they were not dissuaded from using Encounters to stimulate dialogue between leaders and members of Afro-Brazilian women's organizations. These sites continue to offer a venue for activists across the country to come together to discuss the issues they faced in their individual states and to assist in the development of new initiatives and strategies.[14] While their participation in the Encounters was limited because of the minimal consideration of race and gender-specific issues in the official sessions, the presence of Afro-Brazilian women activists was not. In a strategy first developed and applied at the local level to initiate the autonomous development of black women's organizations, Afro-Brazilian women drew upon regional feminist spaces to facilitate their national organization.

At the following Regional Feminist Encounter in Taxco, Mexico, in 1987, Afro-Brazilian female activists met among themselves to discuss two critical issues: the effectiveness of these forums in integrating and representing their concerns and the potential opportunities to strengthen strained relationships between black and white feminists. In what Carneiro describes as a "point of inflexion" (2004, 313) for the movement, activists also decided to organize the first national meeting of black women the following year. Roland and Carneiro spearheaded the efforts, drawing upon their resources and international contacts at the CECF. When asked if she was concerned about the possible conflict of interest, Roland replied: "We were doing the business of politics, we had to use the opportunity of being within this governmental body and space, we had

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[14] I saw this strategy firsthand during the Regional Conference of the Americas in Brasilia, Brazil, in 2006. Afro-Brazilian women activists used the space to meet and discuss key issues in the movement and future meeting sites.

the means, we had telephones, we had faxes, we had the space to make our meetings. So we were organizing the black women's movement nationally from the Council and in the process, helping the organization of the first national meeting of black women" (2007). Once again the importance of this feminist space and its resources for the mobilization of black women's agendas is visible. Black CECF members' awareness of the strategic benefit derived from the ideological and material resources of the space is of note because they maintained a presence on the Council despite racial hostilities.

The First National Encounter of Black Women was held in Valenca, Rio de Janeiro over three days in December 1988. To provide a sense of the scope and organizational capacity of Afro-Brazilian women's activism in comparison to the black movement in Brazil at the time, the first national meeting of Brazilian black organizations would not occur until 1991. Four hundred and fifty black women from seventeen states, various sectors, and organizational backgrounds participated in the meeting proceedings that included activists from Canada, Ecuador, and the United States (Carneiro 2004, 313). At the meeting, participants discussed the precarious situation of black women, particularly in the labour market and in institutions of higher education. Movement activists also addressed the need to be recognized as legitimate activists in the struggle to achieve social transformation and they emphasized the importance of building coalitions across Brazilian social movements. The demands laid out by the movement were largely symbolic, drawing on universal human rights, but key areas for domestic policy reform were also identified by Ribeiro:

Raising the flag of battle is necessary to achieve better conditions of life and citizenship, for the guarantee of antiracist and antisexist legislation, the development of programs to combat sexual violence, and the legalization of abortion and to implant changes in the action of public health services that introduce the question of colour into the formulas of health, giving attention to the specific reality of black women in the Program of Integral Assistance for Women's Health (PAISM) (Ribeiro 1995, 453).

While the First National Encounter of Black Women can be characterized as a ground-breaking moment for the Afro-Brazilian women's movement in terms of publicly defining their intersectional platforms, it was the power struggles and exchanges that occurred at the regional Encounters and within domestic movements that helped to establish the parameters of the movement. Within these sites they proved their organizational proficiency, their recognition of politically attractive and effective platforms, and their ability to access and take advantage of local and domestic political openings and resources for mobilization.

Conclusion

This chapter sheds light on complex processes of race and gender consciousness-raising in spaces of resistance and on the multiple factors operating at the local, national, and regional levels which inform the engagement and mobilization of intersectional identities. Building from the concept of strategic intersectionality, this chapter illustrates how individuals situated in multiple identity categories can achieve increased accessibility and opportunities through certain categories—for Afro-Brazilian women, gender was a critical axis of entry—and struggle with oppression on others.

The experience and strategies of Afro-Brazilian women activists also speaks to the uneven terrain of Brazil's democratic transition and the complex issues faced by racialized and gendered activists within the transition process. While the return to civilian rule opened up possibilities for Afro-Brazilian women to enter and openly participate in civil society organizations without fear of reproach from the government, it did not challenge the reproduction of colonial logics on race and gender within these spaces. Realizing the draw of gender equality platforms and the hesitancy to acknowledge racism by the military regime, activists situated themselves in the feminist movement with the goal of increasing awareness of the racial dimensions of sexism, breaking down barriers to financial and organizational support, and developing an autonomous space for women experiencing intersectional forms of discrimination. Their actions not only reflect the openings for women to challenge gendered exclusions in the policy arenas produced in the transition period, but also the blockages to lobbies demanding the revision of dominant ideological frameworks on race in the same context. In short, their actions illustrate that the transition to democracy in Brazil did not facilitate the democratization of race relations.

In many ways, their struggles to be fully accepted within black and feminist movements and at Latin American and Caribbean Encounters encouraged and prepared Afro-Brazilian women activists to participate in formal spaces of international politics. The following chapter illustrates how these activists, seemingly unable to fully integrate or address their concerns in singular-identity movements and regional feminist spaces, and seeking to expand the parameters of Brazilian democracy to include racial equality,

increased their involvement in UN Conference processes throughout the 1990s and early

2000s.

CHAPTER FIVE

CREATING OUR OWN BENCHMARKS: THE AFRO-BRAZILIAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AT BEIJING AND DURBAN

> Katrina Payne: Are you optimistic about the future for black women in Brazil?
>
> Alzira Rufino: Yes, I am. Black women are advancing and occupying some of the positions that were denied us before. Black women are 'coming out' and denouncing on an international stage the racism and the sexism they experience in Brazil.

The above transcript is taken from an interview of Afro-Brazilian activist and founder of *Casa de Cultura da Mulher Negra*, Alzira Rufino, by Katrina Payne (Payne 1995, 58). Rufino's response specifically refers to the increased participation of Afro-Brazilian women in UN Conferences during the early 1990s. For Rufino and other leadership figures in the Afro-Brazilian women's movement, their entry and visibility in the official spaces of international politics after decades of exclusion and careful strategizing at the national and regional level marked a significant turning point in the advancement of intersectional platforms.

As noted in the previous chapter, a small group of Afro-Brazilian women activists first became acquainted with these forums during the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985). Their participation also occurred in the midst of efforts to incorporate an intersectional approach to discrimination in feminist and anti-racist mobilizations at the national and regional level. The racial and gender hierarchies faced at these levels, commonalities found with other black female activists in the region, and repeated denial of systemic forms of racism by the Brazilian state were among the factors that contributed

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to the adoption of what Carneiro has called an "internationalist vision" (2001) among movement actors.

This chapter focuses on the strategic use of race and gender identities by Afro-Brazilian women activists in the context of two UN Conferences that were critical to the international and domestic exposure of intersectional forms of discrimination: the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995 and the UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, in 2001 (Robinson 2001; Chan-Tiberghien 2004). Only by exploring the structural and ideological obstacles faced and strategic decisions made by Afro-Brazilian women activists in relation to multilevel political opportunity structures, can we determine how UN Conference processes enabled the progression of intersectional identity claims in some cases and remained as largely symbolic events in others.

After a brief overview of the representation of the movement at UN Conferences in the early 1990s, the chapter concentrates on the involvement of Afro-Brazilian women activists in the NGO Preparatory Forum for Beijing held in Mar del Plata in September 1994 and the *Articulacao das Mulheres Brasileiras* (AMB or the Brazilian Women's Articulation). The AMB was created by Brazilian feminist movement in 1994 to coordinate the activities of the movement in the preparatory stages of the Beijing Conference and in its follow up (Htun 2002).

Close attention is also paid to the extensive involvement of the Brazilian state in the preparatory processes. It argues that the actions of the Franco and Cardoso administrations in the months and years leading up to Beijing reflected an attempt by the

government to gain greater influence over civil society activities as well as the beginnings

of a monumental shift in racial discourse in the country. This section also addresses what

some Afro-Brazilian women activists initially considered a step in the right direction, the

incorporation of 'race' in the documents of the AMB and the final Beijing Declaration,

and their subsequent disappointment in the limited enactment of policies to address the

racial dimensions of gender equality in the Brazilian context. The significance of the

Beijing Conference for strategic coalition-building between the Afro-Brazilian women's

movement and the feminist movement, and the incorporation of intersectional

perspectives within the latter is also considered.

The chapter then moves on to address movement dynamics in relation to domestic

and international political opportunity structures prior to and during the Durban

Conference. Emphasis is placed on the openness of the UN structure to the integration of

an intersectional framework and on the drive of the Brazilian government to change

international and domestic opinions on existing racism within its borders, important

interacting opportunity structures for the movement. It details the compilation of the

Articulacao de ONGs de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras Rumo a III Conferencia (AMNB

or the Network of Black Brazilian Women's NGOs for the Durban Conference) prior to

Durban, the development and communication of its strategies leading up to the

conference, and the key proposals put forth in their seminal report for the Conference

entitled *We, Brazilian Black Women*. It argues that the prominence given to intersectional

perspectives in the network's mandate and report reflected a more nuanced frame of

expression and action for the movement. The struggle of some movement actors to

reconcile power imbalances in the UN with its capacity to generate increased attention to their distinctive struggles and to influence domestic policy frameworks is also addressed.

At the broadest level, this chapter provides some insight into the important, but often strained relationship between activists embodying marginalized identity statuses and international institutions, and the ways they position or classify themselves once situated in these arenas. It highlights the frustration of some Afro-Brazilian women activists with the rules which governed and at times stymied their participation in UN Conference proceedings and their recognition of the capacity of these venues to provide a source of leverage at the domestic level. Lastly, it lays the groundwork for the final chapter of the study, which analyzes existing measurements of the movement's impact and progression in the post-Durban era.

Key Moments at the UN before Beijing

As can be seen in the attendees and exchanges at the First National Encounter of Black Women in Valenca in 1988, by the late 1980s Afro-Brazilian women activists had begun to develop connections with other black women activists in the region and in North America "with a view [of] strengthening our participation at international forums, where governments and civil society confront each other" (Carneiro 2001). In 1992, a small group of Afro-Brazilian women activists, including Edna Roland, participated in "The Female Planet", an NGO forum designated for dialogue on questions of race, gender, development, and the environment at the UN World Conference on the Environment in Rio de Janeiro (Carneiro 2004). At the UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, Rufino served as a representative of the movement along with Deise Benedito,

long-time activist and now president of Sao Paulo-based black women's organization *Fala Preta!*. It was at this Conference that the Brazilian delegation first lobbied for a UN Conference to address racism at the global level, a request which came to fruition in 2001 (Carneiro 2001).

In one of the first illustrations of the importance of these events for the articulation of domestic movement platforms, in August 1993 members of *Geledes* organized the National Seminar on Black Women's Reproductive Rights (Caldwell 2010, 181). The seminar was held in preparation for the 1994 UN World Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt (Carneiro 2004, 322). Forty-five Afro-Brazilian women activists from seventeen Brazilian states attended the seminar. The result was the *Declaracao da Itapecerica da Serra das Mulheres Negras* (Itapecerica da Serra Declaration for Black Brazilian Women), the first document to provide details on the movement's position on the reproductive rights of Afro-Brazilian women and on population control initiatives intended for this community in the Brazil.

Afro-Brazilian Women and the Beijing Conference Process[15]

The 1995 United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing and the regional preparatory meetings marked a pivotal step in the global struggle to recognize women's human rights. For many women's rights advocates the impetus for change was laid two years earlier at the 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. It was there that women's concerns were first integrated into the mainstream of United Nations human

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[15] Portions of this section are drawn from a chapter published by the author in an edited volume on Women's Global Networks. See Franklin (2011).

rights bodies and agendas (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 186). With over thirty thousand women converging to challenge the silencing of women's voices; to encourage the emergence of peace, development, and equality; and to demand increased support and accountability from national governments, the transformative capacity of gender-centred discourses and organizations was solidified.

As indicated above, for most of the leadership figures of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement the experience of participating in a UN World Conference was not new. At these Conferences, leaders of black women's organizations joined various international and regional feminist networks, including the Afro-Latin American, Afro-Caribbean, and Diaspora Women's Network, and worked to raise awareness about the racial dimension of gender inequality. While these activists were committed to exposing the perilous realities for black women in Brazil and elsewhere, their overall objective for the Beijing Conference focused on enriching the discussion on violence against women. Specifically, activists sought to expand the definition of violence against women to include racism. Carneiro elaborates on the specific dimensions of this articulation:

> We understood that the Beijing Conference should state definitively that racism reflects a form of violence and violation of women's rights. We argued that racism prevents the exercise of citizenship in all instances of social life, expressing itself in more subtle and more violent forms through disqualifying aesthetics, inequality in access to employment, education, health and other social rights (Carneiro 2000, 250).

It is important to delineate the specific contextual factors that contributed this particular focus by activists in the movement. First, activists recognized the widespread attention and funding given to initiatives which centred on the exposure and elimination

of domestic violence in Brazil. A primary reason for the creation of aforementioned

women-only police stations was to combat the high incidences of unprosecuted domestic

violence in the country and to encourage female victims to come forward without fear of

judgement from male officers. Second, violence against women was garnering

unprecedented levels of attention as a global epidemic with specific cultural and domestic

manifestations. On the regional level, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention,

Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women also known as the Convention

Belem do Para was created in 1993 and implemented by the Organization of American

States in June 1994. Several international women's organizations, including the Center

for Women's Global Leadership, the International Women's Tribune Center, and

International Women's Rights Action Watch also sought to create collective–

consciousness around the problem and to force state governments into action (Joachim

1995, 142). As a result, several transnational and regional networks against domestic and

sexual violence emerged over the course of the 1980s and 1990s.

These external policy developments and activist initiatives shaped Afro-Brazilian

women's decision to extend normative conceptualizations of violence to incorporate the

dimension of race. This strategy mirrors one first noted in the setting of the CECF: the

development and introduction of a distinctive black perspective on prevalent issues in

Brazilian and international feminist agendas.

While the racial dimensions of violence were still largely absent in the agendas of

their white counterparts in Brazil, the preparations for the Beijing Conference provided an

exceptional opportunity for Afro-Brazilian women to strategize with other feminists

across the region and world on the institutional and ideological mechanisms necessary to

integrate race into women's human rights frameworks. Pointing to the heightened

presence and concrete agendas of Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Colombian women activists,

Alvarez (2002) argues that the Beijing process motivated Afro-Latin American women to

engage in "transnational IGO-advocacy logic" around their stigmatized identities and

specific concerns. In contrast to what she calls the "internationalist identity solidarity

logic" that informed agendas and interactions at the Latin American and Feminist

Encounters, she notes that the goal of transnational IGO advocacy is to engage with

international government organizations (IGOs) so as to gain leverage in national policy-

making arenas that perpetuated gender inequalities and inequalities (Alvarez 2002). In

effect, "targeted funds from agencies and IGOs enabled some black women activists to

participate in government seminars held to prepare governments' reports to the UN and to

play a leadership role in the women's movement coalition that was formed to influence

the Beijing process" (Caldwell 2009b, 110).

Afro-Brazilian women drew upon these resources in their extensive national and

regional preparations for Beijing, including the three-day seminar *Black Women in Latin*

America and Caribbean: Balance and Perspectives for the Third Millennium held in

conjunction with the Regional NGO Preparatory Forum in Mar Del Plata, Argentina, in

September 1994. Organized by *Geledes* in partnership with UNIFEM, the seminar

brought together black women activists from nineteen countries to discuss the

manifestations of racism and machismo in their individual societies and the subsequent

impact on the lives and struggles of black women. Participants produced the document,

Proposta das Mulheres Negras Latino-Americans e Caribenhas para Beijing (The

Proposal of Black Latin-American and Caribbean Women for Beijing) which outlined a

series of recommendations for the Preparatory Forum's final report. One notable

recommendation from the seminar was included in Article Five of the final document:

> We demand the inclusion of specific issues relating to black women, lesbians,
> youth, indigenous and disabled peoples, in order to build a diverse and plural
> political project that extends citizenship (Carneiro 2000, 256).

Political Openings and Coalitions on the Domestic Front

At the national level, the prevalence of cooption in Brazilian government in the

years leading up to the Conference greatly influenced the involvement of Afro-Brazilian

women in domestic preparatory processes. More specifically, while the administration of

President Itamar Franco outwardly sought to forge stronger relationships with civil

society organizations, encouraging their contributions to the development of social

programs and their collective lobbying as a reflection of the emergent democracy, they

also wanted to exercise a greater degree of surveillance over their activities and

criticisms. In contrast to the UN Conferences held earlier in the decade, the Brazilian

government became actively involved in preparatory processes for Beijing for this reason.

On a decree from President Franco, the National Committee for the Participation

in the Fourth Conference on Women was created in 1993. The Committee included

representatives from the Ministries of Education, Agriculture, Labour, and Health as well

as the *Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher* (CNDM or National Council on the

Rights of Women), a federal agency established in 1985 (Saffioti 1995). In her study of

strategic interactions between the Brazilian government and Brazilian feminist NGOs

prior to Beijing, Heleieth I.B. Saffioti (1995) notes that the Franco administration was

eager to integrate the positions of various feminist NGOs into the government's official

position. Between April and August 1994, the administration contracted activists to serve

as consultants in the drafting of discussion papers on the major themes of the Conference

and as workshop leaders for a series of seminars on women's rights held across the

country. Saffioti asserts:

> Prodded by the United Nations, articulated through civil society, especially the
> voice of NGOs and independent feminists, the Brazilian government acted more
> openly in 1994 than in the three previous occasions, opting to hire consultants to
> prepare papers that provided reliable and systematic information for the
> discussions scheduled for the workshops (1995, 200).

Sueli Carneiro was invited to lead the seminar on violence against women in Sao Paulo.

This invitation not only reflected the federal government's drive to establish allies in the

Afro-Brazilian women's movement, but also its acknowledgement of the expertise and

clout held by movement leaders. On Carneiro's end, her participation served as a critical

opportunity to impress upon feminist activists and government representatives the need

for a more nuanced definition of violence. In addition, her correlation between racism and

gender-based violence increased the pressure already facing the government from the

black movement to make a statement about the existence of racism in Brazilian society.

With the Conference on the horizon, actors in both the Brazilian feminist and

Afro-Brazilian women's movement were keen to reach some form of consensus even for

outward appearances. Parties from both sides recognized that their separate organizing

signaled internal divisions to their regional and international counterparts and funding

sources, and that it limited their potential impact on Conference proceedings. According

to Guacira Cesar de Oliveira and Wania Sant'anna (2002), over the course of the

preparatory period, several white feminist activists publicly denounced their silence on

the issues of race. These individuals acknowledged that their homogenizing and

hegemonic disposition did not take the interests and needs of black women into account,

and worse, that it perpetuated the discriminatory and prejudicial attitudes that the

movement sought to challenge.

For Afro-Brazilian women activists, this coalition was imperative in order to gain

increased leverage in state and international bodies, two arenas where the Brazilian

feminist movement had already achieved notable success. As Athayde Motta, a researcher

of black NGOs in Brazil explains: "What [Afro-Brazilian women] did that very few Afro-

Brazilian women's organizations did before them was partner with feminist organizations

that were very much international" (2007). In this respect, the partnering of Brazilian

feminist networks, such as the National Feminist Network of Health and Reproductive

Rights, and the largest black women's organizations in the country, *Geledes*, *Maria*

Mulher and *Criola* (established in 1991 in Rio de Janeiro) in the early 1990s was a

purposeful action on both sides, "driven by strategic needs as well as by a shared

commitment to feminist ideas and demands" (McCallum 2007, 63).

Afro-Brazilian women also became active members of the *Articulacao das*

Mulheres Brasileiras (AMB). From January 1994 to May 1995, the AMB brought

together over eight hundred women's organizations from across the country, resulting in

the development of ninety-one local advocacy coalitions and women's forums

(Articulacao das Mulheres Brasileiras 1995). According to Alvarez, "these forums

played a crucial role in promoting dialogue and collaboration among diverse groups of

women activists" (2002, 46) and in setting the priorities for the meeting. At the Brazilian

National Conference "On the Road to Beijing" in June 1995, the AMB produced the

Synthesis of Brazilian Women which recommended a number of political measures and

commitments to gender and racial equality to be adopted by the Brazilian government and

other Latin American and Caribbean nations. Three priorities which integrated a racial

perspective were as follows:

> To ensure that the public sector adheres to the principle of social wellbeing,
> committing itself to public policies for women, with programs to promote equal
> opportunities and social mobility, especially for poor women and women from
> ethnic and racial groups that have been victimized by social exclusion by use of
> legal sanctions against discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity identity,
> gender, disability, or sexual preference in various spheres of social life.

> To guarantee the right to work for all women, adopting specific measure to
> monitor and prevent discriminatory practices in access to formal labour, for
> young, married, black, indigenous, pregnant, and elderly women and women with
> disabilities.

> To guarantee the struggle against racial and ethnic violence (Articulacao das
> Mulheres Brasileiras 1995, 18).

With the inclusion of the above articles, the document went further than previous

Brazilian feminist proclamations by incorporating the perspectives and concerns of black

AMB members. According to Carneiro, the documents produced at the meeting "best

express the advancement of race in Brazilian women's movement. They also assist in

documenting the development of partnerships and solidarity between the black and white

women" (Carneiro 2000, 254).

Another significant achievement for the movement came in the final report prepared by the Brazilian government for the Beijing conference, entitled *A General Report about the Women in Brazilian Society.* In the report, the government acknowledged the fallacy of the racial democracy ideology in Brazil and the destructive impact of racism on the progress of black women in the national and international context (Carneiro 2000). A small number of Afro-Brazilian women also participated as government and NGO representatives and observers in Brazil's official delegation at the Conference. They included: Nilza Iraci Silva (*Geledes*), Wania Sant'Anna (AMB), Marta Oliveria (Institute for Religious Studies), and then Brazilian Senator, Benedita da Silva (Carneiro 2004, 322). This support by the Brazilian government illustrated an increased respect of the positions being asserted by black women and their feminist allies, and the long-awaited acknowledgment of racial discrimination as a serious problem at the national and international level.

A major triumph for some movement participants was the inclusion of the terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' in Article 32 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which affirmed the need to intensify efforts to ensure the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all females who face multiple barriers due to race, age, ethnic origin, culture, and religion, and the inclusion of Article 132, which characterized racial discrimination as a human rights violation (Carneiro 2004, 322-323). Carneiro writes that for others, victory was achieved in the extensive deliberations and exchanges between black women from the Global North and South along with the solidarity of white women which resulted in these measures (Carneiro 2000, 255). Her words offer a

different way of understanding the articulation and legitimization of intersectional claims

at these sites. Legitimacy in this sense stems not only from declarations on paper, but in

the open discussion and confrontation of the manifestations of gender and race-based

oppressions in spaces typically occupied by women of the Global North.

Lessons Learned

In spite of the extensive efforts and involvement of Afro-Brazilian women,

tensions between white and black activists still persisted. For some Afro-Brazilian

delegates, attempts to unify white and black feminists effectively trumped the specificity

of black women's oppressions. In her 1997 autobiography, da Silva characterizes the

Brazilian delegation in Beijing as progressive and unrelenting in their demands for

universal women's rights. One of the few black female governmental representatives, da

Silva downplays her affiliations with the movement in her recollection of the Conference.

She fails to mention the advancement of race-specific claims during the conference,

instead focusing on the continued struggle of all women to achieve a "true partnership

with men" (Benjamin, Mendoca and da Silva 1997, 17). This omission may have

reflected the ongoing struggle of Afro-Brazilian women to balance a commitment to a

unified women's struggle with the recognition of the significance of intersecting forms of

oppression for women in a gender space.

At the National Conference of Representatives of Black Women's Organizations

in October 2000, participants acknowledged the importance of the black women's

movement in the preparations for Beijing. They also expressed disappointment with the

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minimal amount of consideration given to their concerns in the actual Conference

proceedings and at the Beijing +5, the review of the Beijing Declaration of Action and its

implementation held at the UN General Assembly in June 2000. As Beijing attendee and

Geledes representative, Nilza Iraci Silva noted: "Everybody acknowledges the importance

of black women's issues but when formal documents are produced, the issue disappears"

(Reichmann 2000, 1). Despite the capacity of the Beijing Conference process to bring

issues of intersectional discrimination into the fore of feminist discussions at the national,

regional and international level, these words speak to the awareness of Afro-Brazilian

women activists of the limits of the UN system for effecting permanent discursive and

domestic policy change. This disappointment did not, however, result in the

disengagement of Afro-Brazilian women activists from UN forums or from the

international political arena. As the following section highlights, they became more

attuned to the advancement of anti-racist lobbies at the domestic level and chose to revise

their approach for the Durban Conference held in 2001.

Afro-Brazilian Women and the Durban Conference Process

The internal evaluation of the movement's participation in the Beijing process not

only revealed the extreme difficulty of institutionalizing broader conceptualizations of

gender discrimination, but also the critical linkage between activist success in the UN

policy arena and a centralized organizational structure. More specifically, the

proceedings of the Beijing Conference effectively exposed the disjointed character and

organization that had somewhat hampered the Afro-Brazilian women's movement since

its inception (Caldwell 2009b). Although the emergence of over thirty black women's

organizations between 1980 and 2000 was met with enthusiasm and the National

Encounters of Black Women were organized every two to three years, movement actors

consistently struggled to consolidate a national agenda among the diverse issues of

reproductive health, domestic violence, and religious freedom, and the geographic locales

represented. These obstacles coupled with activists' reluctance to consolidate decision-

making processes, significant telecommunication and transportation barriers, and the

limited financial resources of some rural organizations strained opportunities for joint

action (Carneiro 2003, 19). The preparations for Durban offered an opportunity for Afro-

Brazilian women activists to take a different approach to centralized organizing and to

improve their capacity to participate in UN Conferences (Caldwell 2009b).

Several national and international observers similarly characterized the event as a

crucial opportunity for Brazil, which, as noted, had only acknowledged the existence of

deeply ingrained systems of racial prejudice in the previous five years—an admission that

stood in direct opposition to its long-standing reputation as a racially harmonious society.

In the mid-1990s, the Cardoso administration had taken significant steps to counter

institutionalized forms of racism and rebuild Brazil's tarnished image. These included the

public admission of the existence of racism,[16] the establishment of the country's first

National Human Rights Program in 1996, and the proposition of racial quotas in the areas

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[16] Cardoso was the first presidential figure to publicly acknowledge the existence of racial discrimination against blacks in Brazil. A sample of this admission is found in a speech addressed to international delegates at the 1996 conference on Multiculturalism and Racism (hosted by Brazil's Ministry of Justice): "Discrimination in our society [Brazil] has long been consolidated and its constantly reproduced…The situation must be brought out in to the open so that we can condemn it, and not with word but also through mechanisms and processes that will lead to a transformation of our society into one where truly democratic relations among different races, classes, and social groups can abound" (Souza 1997, 14-16; quoted in dos Santos 2006).

of education and labour (Htun 2004, 67). By the end of the decade the government was in the midst of a full scale campaign to curtail pervasive racial stereotypes and divisions (Da Silva et al. 2004).

The Durban Conference added increased pressure, "effectively triggering processes and generating effects in Brazil even before it began" (Saboia and Porto 2003, 140). Across the country, heated debates about the Conference's topics sparked notable shifts in public opinion. The pronounced invisibility of Afro-Brazilians in formal politics, universities, and television programming became the focus of news stories, intellectual debates, and activist platforms (dos Santos 2006). Coupled with these domestic shifts were widespread comparisons of Brazil to historically segregated societies, including South Africa and the United States, in the international media. Already facing pressure to curb political corruption and to implement a well-established rule of law from U.S. administration, Brazil saw its reputation as a regional power and role model for newly democratic societies in jeopardy. In effect, Durban was the state's chance to satisfy domestic and international concerns by demonstrating its commitment to confronting the problem of racism on the home front and asserting itself as a leader in global efforts to combat racism.

Recognizing the urgency of the Brazilian government to strengthen existing alliances, in September 2000, three of the largest black women's organizations in the country—*Geledes*, *Criola*, and *Maria Mulher*—organized a national seminar in preparation for Durban. Attendees of the Rio de Janeiro meeting included representatives from twenty-four black women's organizations and experts from previous UN World

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Conferences. The objectives were twofold. First, to establish mechanisms that ensured the informed and coordinated mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women at the national level. Second, to develop strategies that would allow for the involvement of qualified Afro-Brazilian women in all national and transnational activities related to the Durban Conference (Carneiro 2003, 19). The success of the second would be dependent on the achievement of the first.

Network of Black Brazilian Women's NGOs for the III Conference

The result was the creation of the *Articulacao de ONGs de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras Rumo a III Conferencia* (AMNB) or the Network of Black Brazilian Women's NGOs for the III Conference. To avoid hierarchical leadership structures, the network established a coordination collegium. This was an elected council made up of five of the twenty-five participating organizations. In addition to the collegium, the Network created an Executive Secretariat consisting of the three organizations mentioned above (Werneck 2006, 3). Former Executive Secretary Jurema Werneck describes how the extensive informal and formal organizational experience of black women served as the Network's foundation:

> At the root of this collaboration was the recognition of the historic involvement of black women in the emergence of social movements […] in the research of information, and in the establishment of alliances […], this would enable the rapid learning of the negotiation techniques within the space of the UN and coordinated action in seeking execution of our objectives (2003, 10).

Although the focus of the Network primarily centered upon creating the conditions for the increased integration of Afro-Brazilian women in the Durban

processes, its official mission moved beyond the parameters of the UN Conference. It emphasized the promotion of the political action by black women's organizations in the fight against racism, sexism, class oppression, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination, and the active support of efforts to transform power relations in the construction of an equitable society. Underlying this commitment to challenge all forms of inequality, however, was an explicit belief in the centrality of racism in the disadvantageous positioning of black women in the Brazilian and Latin American context. In her description of the development and vision of the Network, Werneck explains that its composition was a response to "the widespread understanding among black women's organizations that the racial dimension—and racism—was the principal factor in the production of the adverse conditions in which we live" (2006, 3).

Returning to the earlier discussion of strategic intersectionality, we can see how the prominence accorded to race and racism served as a critical tool in the process of consensus building among Afro-Brazilian women activists in the aftermath of Beijing. Following their experiences in Brazilian feminist movements, several activists were displeased with the configuration of racism as a secondary variable in the oppression of women by white feminists in the Beijing process and expressed concern with limited consideration given to the specific condition of black women.[17] For these activists, the impact of racism in the creation of social hierarchies could not be minimized. Yet, they also grappled with the realization that racism could not be characterized as the only

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[17] Interestingly, in their seminal work *O Mulher Negra*, Afro-Brazilian activists Theresa Santos and Sueli Carneiro recognized the ease by which the racial question could be camouflaged by the Brazilian feminist movement. They urged black women "to privilege the racial question over the sexual [question]", suggesting that "the oppression of black women in Brazilian society does not originate in biological differences, but in racial ones" (1985, 41).

source of black women's social exclusion for ideological and strategic purposes. This

characterization would counter the gender consciousness-raising processes encouraged

and experienced by movement activists throughout the 1980s and 1990s, threaten newly

established alliances with white feminist groups, and steer the movement away from

intersectional definitions of gender discrimination brought about in Beijing.

The struggle of movement actors to negotiate this delicate balance between the

prioritization of racism and "the multiple forms of social exclusion that black women are

subjected to as a consequence of the pervasive configuration of racism and sexism"

(Carneiro 2002, 210) in movement discourse was visible in *The Declaration of Brazilian*

Black Women. This document detailing the historical economic and social

marginalization of Afro-Brazilian women was composed by the founding members of the

Network at the national seminar. Three consecutive paragraphs read as follows:

> The magnitude of repercussions of racism on black women's mental health
> requires study and public policies. Racism's impact on our daily life is
> undeniable. It radically lowers self-esteem, thus impeding a full and healthy
> life.

> Demographic studies of marriage in Brazil show that stereotypes of black
> women produced by racism lead to their rejection on the marriage market,
> with negative effects on their self-esteem.

> Gender and racial oppression experienced by black women is worse for those
> whose   sexual orientation is different from the heterosexual (Articulação de
> Organizações de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras 2000).

This document outlined the central contribution of black women to the

"sustainable production and consumption of goods and services for their families and

communities" (Articulação de Organizações de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras 2000) and

revealed the vast statistical disparities between this segment and white Brazilians in the

areas of education, life expectancy, and income. It would serve as a stepping stone for

Nos Mulheres Negras (We, Black Brazilian Women), the extensive publication produced

by the Network in the months leading up to Durban that detailed the exclusion faced by

Afro-Brazilian women in the areas of education, law, health care, and private enterprise,

and also provided a series of recommendations for the inclusion and advancement of

black women in these sectors in line with existing international conventions on human

rights (Caldwell 2009b).

A commitment to the incorporation of race as an intersectional concept also

seemed to be strengthened during the aforementioned National Conference of

Representatives of Black Women's Organizations which occurred one month later.[18] Co-

sponsored by a number of national and international agencies including the Brazilian

Ministry of Justice, UNIFEM, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural

Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the

event addressed a number of issues related to the marginalized positioning of Afro-

Brazilian women. Themes included the negative depictions in the Brazilian media and

social imaginary, the intersectional dimensions of poverty, and the inadequacies of

Brazilian anti-racism policy frameworks. In an effort to expand the support base of the

Network and to coordinate strategies among different groups, representatives from the

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[18]This meeting coincided with several other government sponsored national preparatory meetings for the WCAR that took place in major Brazilian cities, including Belem, Sao Paulo, and Salvador in 2000. Afro-Brazilian woment activists and researchers were also present at these meetings, including Wania Sant'Anna who presented a paper entitled "New Frameworks for ethnic/racial realtions in Brazil: A Collective Responsiblity" in Salvador. Extensive regional preparations among non-state actors, including the "Call Council Meeting of the World Conference against Racism, Xenophobia, Intolerance and Discrimination- A Forum for NGOs and civil society organizations in the Americas" in Santiago, Chile, were also taking place during this period.

Brazilian feminist movement, Brazilian universities, and black movements from across Latin America were invited to attend. The goal was not only to prepare and familiarize activists with the processes of UN Conferences, but to deepen understandings of the multiple actors and institutions that would affect both the exclusion and empowerment of Afro-Brazilian women. By doing so, more comprehensive proposals for action could be established by the Network at Durban.

Durban's Emphasis on Intersectionality

Activists also recognized that far greater emphasis was placed on recognizing the interrelationship between racism and sexism as a universal phenomenon at Durban, and thus a race-centric perspective would likely be viewed as a reversion and would gain limited support at this Conference. Framed as a meeting to explore potential mechanisms to confront historical legacies and contemporary manifestations of racism, the Durban Conference required a more sophisticated analysis of the complex dimensions of discrimination. Conference organizers were determined to move beyond the "gender-plus" approach adopted in the Beijing Platform for Action. Referring to the "double discrimination" inferences made in the Beijing Declaration, UN High Commissioner Mary Robinson states:

> The Beijing wording is useful because there is a tendency to speak of so-called 'double discrimination' in relation to the women of an ethnic or racial group who experience discrimination based on their gender and on their race and ethnicity. But in real life the problem is much more complex than this. There are in fact, multiple forms of discrimination involved (2001, 17).

The Durban Conference sought to distinguish itself from previous UN Conferences by placing greater emphasis on the intersection of racism and multiple forms of discrimination, including sexism, homophobia, and classism. This commitment was not only reflected in the Conference's mandate and language—Durban was the first UN World Conference Against Racism to include the notion "related intolerance" to acknowledge the intersection of racism with other systems of oppression—but was embodied in the regional preparatory activities and delegations represented in the governmental and NGO forums. One notable example was the Expert Group Meeting on Gender and Racial Discrimination in November 2000 held in Zagreb, Croatia. The meeting's General Rapporteur, Kimberle Crenshaw, facilitated discussions on the intersection of gender and racial discrimination and recommendations for action at the national and international level. Maria Aparecida Cidinha da Silva, then president of *Geledes*, attended the meeting and also served as a member of the UN Women's Human Rights Caucus for Durban. Drawing from themes and articles in the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), this Caucus was charged with the development and promotion of temporary special measures and made general recommendations for women experiencing intersectional forms of discrimination. As Johanna E. Bond asserts, "the Durban conference offered activists an opportunity to develop a more nuanced approach to modern human rights violations, one that would take into account the multiple consciousness of human rights victims and the intersections of rights violations that are based on race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, and sexual orientation" (2003, 144).

Activists familiar with UN World Conferences, such as Sonia Correa and Edna Roland, argued that in order for the interests of black women to be effectively communicated within the UN human rights thematic and for cross-cutting global alliances to be established, global forms of intersectional of discrimination had to be fully recognized. This was articulated in the National Conference's final report which noted that "The issues should be framed as global in scope—not specific to Brazil or even Latin America. For example, the conditions of minority women worldwide, including lower caste women in India, aboriginal women in Australia and African-descendent populations worldwide should be linked to the struggles of Black Brazilian women for equality" (Reichmann 2000, 7). Roland encouraged participants to be aware of the multiple social identities they embody and the existence of pervasive gender prejudices at the Durban Conference, suggesting that they "prepare for conflicts in the international arena— patriarchal groups that will discriminate against us as women" (Reichmann 2000, 8).

By the time of the UN Regional Preparatory Conference of the Americas (Prepcom) in Santiago, Chile, in December 2000, Afro-Brazilian women had a firm grasp of their collective goals, existing and potential allies at the national and regional level, and the communication devices and political strategies required for success at the international level. Nationally, they had established themselves as knowledgeable resources for the Brazilian government from their previous experiences within black and feminist movements and at Latin American Encounters and UN Conferences. Internationally, they had gained significant recognition and exposure within UN circles through their participation in various preparatory forums, including the UN Expert Group

Meeting. This was evidenced when the UN office of Human Rights contacted Roland to write a paper on the condition of African descendants in the Americas for the Regional Prepcom and later appointed her to serve as the General Rapporteur for Durban.

Illustrating the growing trust between civil society organizations and the Brazilian government, Afro-Brazilian women constituted the majority of the Brazilian delegation to the regional Prepcom. The thirty representatives sponsored by the Network represented a diverse mix of newcomers and experienced activists. As Carneiro described in a Network publication: "It is important to note that for many of these women, their participation in Chile was a new experience which, besides constituting a learning space, allowed their inclusion in a space where they could seldom act as protagonists of their situation with the right to speak personally about their condition as a woman and black to other social actors" (2003, 20). For the few long serving activists familiar with this arena, the Regional Prepcom cemented their capacity "to speak policy language, and to negotiate consensus positions among people of diverse backgrounds" (Htun 2004, 78) and in turn to influence the specific recommendations included in Durban's Final Declaration and Plan of Action.

A key example is found in the call for the integration of a racial and gender perspective in regional health care policy by Executive Director of the Women's Health Network and movement activist Fatima Oliveira. An excerpt from her paper to the Durban Conference Committee reads as follows:

> [there is a] need for actions on behalf of the Pan American Health Organization to recognize race/ethnicity and gender in the field of health care along with recommendations to governments for the execution of policies for the health care of black populations (Oliveira 2001, 25).

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Her concerns were clearly translated into Article 111 of the Draft Declaration and Plan of Action of the Regional Prepcom, which "Request[s] the Pan American Health Organization to promote activities for the recognition of the race/ethnic group/gender variant as a significant variable in health matters and to prepare specific projects for prevention, diagnosis and treatment among people of African descent" (UN General Assembly 2000, 20). Parallels with Oliveira's positions are also visible in Article 154 of the Durban Plan of Action which "Encourages the World Health Organization and other relevant international organizations to promote and develop activities for the recognition of the impact of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance as significant social determinants of physical and mental health status […] to ensure equitable heath systems for the victims" (United Nations 2001, 49).

According to Carneiro, Afro-Brazilian women were also instrumental in the creation, inclusion, and approval of paragraphs involving African descendant rights and reparations (2002). Roland asserts that the Plan of Action went further on issues of antiracism and sexism than any of the previous documents emerging from UN Conferences by recognizing the different ways in which racism materializes itself for men and women—what she characterizes as an implicit reference to the complex colonial legacies of Brazil (2007).

Disappointments in Durban

In spite of their recognition of the significance of Durban for shifts in global

discourses of racism and domestic policy frameworks and for the overall cohesiveness of

the Afro-Brazilian women's movement, some participants expressed dismay at the

organizational and power hierarchies they encountered prior to and during the

Conference. One activist not affiliated with a particular organization in the movement

explained that while many independent activists were keen to attend the Conference, the

online registration and extensive accreditation process for NGOs posed insurmountable

obstacles (Sanabria 2007). In her review of the forum, Bentes characterized the

Conference as an organizational disaster, noting the extreme barriers faced by accredited

NGOs to enter and participate in deliberations where major issues were being discussed,

including the Final Declaration and Plan Action (2002). She also speaks of experiencing

"the dictatorship of the English language" (Bentes 2002, 239) throughout the Conference

proceedings as a reflection of the domination of Western governments.

     The difficulty of reconciling the exclusionary practices of the UN with its capacity

to generate increased attention to their plight and to influence domestic policy

frameworks was articulated in the opening statements in *Nos, Mulheres Negras*:

> Let there be no illusions, the UN is not an extension of social movements, nor their natural ally; it is only a "legal forum" that seeks to dilute tensions by negotiating a consensus on some problems. No doubt, the role of the UN system is limited in solving some problems, and its achievements are not very liberating, even when there are some victories. Usually victories mean not allowing situations and long-term adverse situations to become worse.

> On the one hand, we force the UN to adopt a more realistic discourse and, on the other, we have the opportunity to converse with oppressed peoples and groups from all over the world, exchanging experience and coordinating what we say and our struggles. And we will have an International Human Rights Instrument in hand that is specific to each conference and that, when well used in each country, can strengthen people's struggles (2001, 7).

Activists in the movement have also recognized the powerful role played by Durban and its preparatory processes in advancing and legitimizing their struggles against racism and sexism in their country and in defining the parameters and objectives of the movement. Afro-Brazilian activist and Professor Joselina da Silva described the significance of the process of preparation:

> There is a whole process of learning. They [activists] need to understand, they need to learn how to take part in a conference. Some small things make big differences in terms of lobbying, in terms of knowing who to talk to, in terms of knowing the different languages to speak. Black women have been one of the groups that have been getting closer to this process because of their participation in the Group of Seven [UN World Conferences]. They got to the Durban conference understanding all of the mechanisms of taking part (2007).

da Silva suggests that it is the preparation for UN Conferences that has the most powerful influence on the strategies and cohesion of the black women's movement in Brazil. The extensive preparation process for regional meetings and Conferences includes the setting of mobilization goals, selection of movement representatives, and deliberation on the fundamental issues emerging for black women at the local, national, and regional level. This unique dialogue propels the movement forward, encouraging it to coordinate its activities and share its message. Members become more in tune with the concerns and realities of the women they represent in Brazil and prepared to express their demands at the transnational level.

Conclusion

Looking at the historical and political trajectory of black women's mobilization in Brazil, the significant impact of its participation at Beijing and Durban on national, regional, and transnational feminist relations, and on understandings of intersectional identities and oppressions is apparent. Their involvement at both Conferences illustrates the multiple external and contextual factors, including the mandates of political elites and domestic media campaigns, which shape the articulation of race and gender identities. It also reveals the trade-offs that must be made by activists to ensure the broadest communication of movement goals and objectives.

In terms of their experiences within these sites, it is clear that Afro-Brazilian women have struggled with the hegemonic tendencies of UN bodies, but they have also managed to make advances that ensured the inclusion of their concerns in institutional recommendations and in the development of autonomous activist networks and alliances with state actors. The advancements coming out of the Beijing and Durban Conferences and the multiple activist exchanges emerging in the preparatory stages were crucial to the overall development of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement. An intersectional framework continues to be a critical instrument of leverage for the movement within these spaces and thus must remain at the forefront of mobilization platforms and initiatives.

Taking these factors into consideration, the next chapter grapples with how to effectively measure the impact of the movement in the post-Durban era by drawing on existing and alternative measurements. These include subsequent shifts in domestic

public policy frameworks and the creation of sustainable transnational feminist networks.

It questions whether or not these tools of evaluation—touted by IR and transnational

feminist theorists—can effectively capture the historical complexities and strategic

intersections that distinguish this movement.

CHAPTER SIX

TRANSFORMATIONS FROM WITHIN: OUTCOMES OF THE AFRO-BRAZILIAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN THE POST-DURBAN ERA

> As always with conferences convened by the United Nations, it is necessary to transform good intentions into concrete actions that enable the Brazilian government to achieve the gender and racial equality we fought for in Durban and always.

—Sueli Carneiro

Sueli Carneiro's (2002, 213) words speak to the sense of urgency enveloping Afro-Brazilian women activists after their participation in the Durban Conference. What is particularly striking about Carneiro's statement is the ambiguity surrounding the terms "good intentions" and "concrete actions". This characterization leaves the basis for evaluating the objectives and outcomes of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement after the Conference open to interpretation. It begs the question: Given its historical complexities and articulations of identity, what are some useful means for understanding and assessing the impact of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement in the post-Durban era?

Scholars of IR and transnational feminism offer two potential approaches. The former focuses on the ability of non-state actors and networks to influence domestic policy reform and on what instruments they gained from international institutions in their efforts (Cortel and Davis Jr. 2000; Finnemore 1993; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Zippel 2004). The success of these mobilizations is primarily measured in relation to their contribution to the translation of global norms and recommendations into the policy frameworks of individual nation-states. Some theorists, such as Thomas Risse-Kappen,

concentrate on the critical role played by domestic structures in determining "variation[s] in the policy impact of transnational actors" (1995, 25). Even with consideration of specific political environments and conditions, emphasis remains on the capacity of activists to penetrate the policy frameworks of the state and on the different mechanisms they use in the process (i.e., norm promotion, coalition-building, and monitoring strategies). From this perspective, the implementation of affirmative action policies on race by the Brazilian government in the wake of the Durban Conference is both an achievement for the movement and a reflection of their strategic actions at the UN.

Transnational feminist scholars place less emphasis on immediate or gradual policy shifts following the mobilization of feminist activists at transnational forums. These theorists argue that greater consideration must be given to the cross-border and cross-movement dialogues, coalitions, and solidarities emerging from activists' participation at UN Conferences and World Social Forums and their contribution to the democratization of these international spaces (Conway 2007; Desai 2005; Ferree and Tripp 2006; Vargas 2009). From this viewpoint, policy-centered evaluations of transnational feminist action problematically assume that the primary target of social activism is the state or its decision-making processes. In addition, these evaluations minimize the ways in which policy deliberations can result in the co-optation of civil society actors by existing political orders. The inaccuracy of the mainstream assumption was illustrated in the previous chapter, which revealed that Afro-Brazilian women activists participated in UN Conferences not only to bring increased international

attention to "the roots of Brazilian-style racism" (Reis 2007, 38), but also to mobilize and legitimize an intersectional identity stigmatized by state and civil society actors.

Both IR and transnational feminist approaches offer valuable strategies that can be used to examine some of the institutional and non-institutional outcomes of Afro-Brazilian women's mobilization post-Durban and are considered in early stages of this chapter. However, whether these evaluative tools effectively capture the significance of transnational processes for movement dynamics and directions is also questioned. The main argument of this chapter is that the focus on policy responses and the involvement of movement actors in activist networks, while important, provides only a partial view of the ideological and internal changes that have occurred as a result of the mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women activists within and beyond the borders of the state. Attention must also be paid to the articulation and solidification of intersectional movement identities and agendas.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of some of the major racial policy and institutional developments emerging in Brazil following the Durban Conference. Much has been written in the literature on Brazilian race relations on these policy shifts, but very few works have considered the positions taken by those active in the Afro-Brazilian women's movement. It then focuses specifically on the concerns of activists with the singular focus placed on race and racial inequalities in the policy initiatives of the Brazilian government, despite its stated commitment at and following the Conference to integrate intersectional perspectives. The disappointment of activists with the largely symbolic exchanges between state and civil society actors in the government agency

dedicated to the promotion of racial equality is also considered. Examining these concerns and their confrontation provides insight for the next section which examines the obstacles and achievements of movement activists seeking to establish policies oriented towards the intersectional identities and discriminations of Afro-Brazilian women after Durban, specifically in the arena of reproductive health care.

Following the examination of the policy-centered directives of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement, activists' strategic involvement and struggles in regional and transnational activist networks after Durban is addressed. Concentrating on the internal dynamics and frictions in the Afro-Latin American and Caribbean Women's Network, this section reveals the significant barriers encountered by Afro-Brazilian women seeking to facilitate sustainable alliances with feminist and African descendant organizations, such as limited material resources and linguistic differences. The perspectives of activists less inclined to engage in cross-border activist dialogues are also considered. It examines the capacity of these networks to effectively deal with the distinct colonial sources of discrimination in Brazil and their multiple configurations in contemporary society.

The last section considers alternative measures of outcomes of Afro-Brazilian women's national and transnational mobilizations beyond the spheres of public policy and activist networks. It calls for a new contemplation on the impacts of movements to emerge in political science and IR which recognizes the significance of transnational processes for the articulation of intersectional movement identities and agendas. The focus is placed on the increased power and leverage of the Network of Black Brazilian Women's NGOs (AMNB) since Durban. As noted in the previous chapter, the AMNB

was initially created to ensure increased presence of Afro-Brazilian women in the processes of Durban and has since become one of the main voices of the movement. The Network's facilitation of intra-state exchanges and conferences between black women activists and its partnering with other domestic movements and international organizations is highlighted as evidence of some positive outcomes of UN Conference proceedings for the Afro-Brazilian women's movement.

Social Policy Initiatives in Brazil

The implementation of extensive racial affirmative action policies in Brazil since the Durban Conference has been widely heralded by international and domestic observers as a major victory for the Afro-Brazilian women's movement and as a reflection of the Brazilian government's commitment to the incorporation of Durban's victim-centered measures and recommendations. For many, a clear linkage existed between the call in the Conference's Plan of Action for states to develop "Action-oriented policies and action plans, including affirmative action to ensure nondiscrimination, in particular as regards access to social services, employment, housing, education, health care, etc" (United Nations 2001) and the introduction of affirmative action programs by federal and state ministries and private institutions in the months and years following the Conference.[19]

When Luiz Inacio da Silva assumed the presidency in January 2003, he adopted a similar approach to Cardoso, in spite of their markedly different political affiliations. The first president elected from the left-wing Workers' Party (PT) in Brazilian history, da

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[19] For more details on the specific affirmative action policies that have been adopted in the post-Durban context, their positive impacts and limitations, see Tavolaro (2008) and Reiter and Mitchell (2010).

Silva pledged in his inaugural speech to counter "cruelty and discrimination in Brazil" by integrating the recommendations of the UN into domestic policy and legal frameworks. In an effort to situate more blacks in formal politics, he appointed five Afro-Brazilian ministers of state and one Supreme Court justice during the first year of his mandate. Following Article 10 of the Durban Plan of Action which "urges states to promote the full and accurate inclusion of the history and contribution of Africans and people of African descent in the education curriculum" (United Nations 2001, 29), da Silva implemented Law no. 10639 in 2003. This legislation stipulates the inclusion of race-oriented studies and the historical and contemporary contributions of Afro-descendant populations in Brazil in elementary and secondary school courses.

On March 21, 2003, da Silva created the Special Secretariat on Policies to Promote Racial Equality (SEPPIR) and appointed Matilde Ribeiro to serve as the minister of the Secretariat. SEPPIR is charged with assisting the administration in the formulation, planning, and coordination of policies pertaining to the rights and protection of racial and ethnic groups subject to discrimination.

Largely due to his long history of activism within the Brazilian workers movement, Afro-Brazilian women activists were major supporters of Lula's campaign. Their optimistic construction of Lula as a bridge between state and civil society actors was summed up in the words of Lucia Xavier, General Coordinator of *Criola* in a September 2002 newspaper article: "[Lula] certainly represents the best chance of advancement for the black movement. Having a worker in the government would provide an opportunity for all of those who have been systematically excluded and marginalized,

not only blacks, to be heard" (*Inter Press Service, English News Wire* [Rio de Janeiro], 25

September 2002). Over the course of his two-term leadership (2002-2006, 2007-2010),

movement activists recognized the value of Lula's institutional and policy measures for

deconstructing the myth of racial democracy in Brazilian discourse; for increasing the

presence of Afro-Brazilian peoples in positions of higher authority and education; and for

stimulating dialogue on the perpetuation of discrimination in social movement circles.

The latter is exemplified in the words of Natalia, a member of the Brazilian feminist

NGO, *Centro Feminista de Estudos e Assessoria* (The Feminist Center for Studies and

Advisory Services), who described the implementation of racial quotas "as an

anthropological process that has made people more conscious of their racist views"

(2006).

Some prominent organizations within the movement, however, have publicly

expressed concern over the singular focus on racial identities and discriminations.[20] This

was the case at the Period of Sessions held by the Inter-American Commission of Human

Rights (IACHR) in Washington, DC, in July 2007. Representatives from *Criola* and

Geledes petitioned for a thematic hearing on the specific forms of discrimination faced by

black women in the Brazilian context. The IACHR press release describes how, with

representatives of the Brazilian government present, activists outlined the particular ways

in which racism and sexism intersect to place black women in positions of extreme

economic and social vulnerability and "stressed that existing public policies do not

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[20] For a general discussion on the controversies surrounding the identity-based criterion of affirmative
action policies in Brazilian universities, see Rascusen (2010).

effectively address the particular needs of this group of women" (Inter-American

Commission for Human Rights 2007).

Individual activists like Sueli Carneiro and Vilma Reis argue that the concept of

intersectionality, which permeated the discussions and recommendations of the Durban

Conference and continues to occupy a central place in the agendas of the Afro-Brazilian

women's movement, is lost or greatly minimized in these provisions. In her critical

review of the Lula administration's impact on the positioning of Afro-Brazilian women

since 2003, Reis argues that the confrontation of racism as single form of discrimination

in administrative action policies reflects a fundamental misstep and "lack of

understanding" (Reis 2007, 38) on the part of the Brazilian government. From her

perspective, public policies aimed at poverty reduction and economic development in

Brazil must be developed in "an intersectional manner" (Reis 2007, 38) to effectively

meet the needs and concerns of a large cross-section of the country's population.

Carneiro (2004b) writes more extensively about the problem of "focalization" in

affirmative action programs. She argues that racial quotas might be useful in theory, but

in reality these compensatory measures do not fully grapple with the complex identity

constructions and cleavages which have contributed to the economically and socially

marginalized positions of Afro-Brazilian women. These programs fail to sufficiently

address why black women largely remain on the outskirts of Brazilian society or tap into

the systemic stereotypes which contribute to their exclusion. From these perspectives, the

intersecting discriminations against Afro-Brazilian women engrained in Brazil's colonial

accounts and contemporary social discourses remain unchallenged because of the

disregard of other dimensions of identity, such as gender, class, local culture, and geographic region in affirmative action policies.

Executive Coordinator of ActionAid Brasil and movement activist Rosana Heringer suggests that the focus on race is an extension of leftist traditions in Brazil. These mandates have historically adopted a class-centred perspective to address issues of poverty and extreme wealth disparity in Brazil (2007). She explains that, quite simply, race has been substituted for class in affirmative action directives. This singular focus makes it difficult to bring other identity categories and forms of discrimination into policy deliberations. Another plausible explanation is that racial quotas offer a fairly low-cost approach to addressing the problem of racial equality.

Carneiro suggests that "concrete actions of social inclusion, especially for black women, the segment most penalized by discriminatory practices of race and gender" (2004b, 75) must emerge at the state and federal level. She advocates for the development and broader integration of gender-conscious policy measures such as *Project Alvorada*, a federally funded initiative started in 1999. Aimed at poverty reduction, this program provides financial assistance and land titles to low income families in municipalities across the country. Since they represent the majority of household heads, Afro-Brazilian women are the primary beneficiaries of this project. According to Carneiro, such efforts, while existing on a smaller scale than racial quotas and receiving significantly less media and public attention, help to "foster greater equity and prevent crimes that are committed against social inequality on a daily basis" (Carneiro 2004b, 82).

State Machinery on Racial and Gender Equality

It is also clear that the optimism surrounding the nomination and election of Lula, the creation of SEPPIR, and the appointment of Ribeiro initially expressed by movement activists after Durban has significantly waned over the course of the decade. One of the more celebrated aspects of SEPPIR by movement actors had been its major consultative body, the National Council of Racial Equality Promotion (CNPIR). The Council is headed by the minister of the agency and includes civil society representatives from various racial communities, government ministries, and prominent sociocultural bodies in Brazilian society (Paixao 2008). The Afro-Brazilian women's movement is represented through the AMNB and the National Forum of Black Women. Both entities have served multiple terms and are seated on the 2010-2012 council.[21] While recognizing the symbolic value of their presence on this and other consultative bodies, some movement activists realize that because of the ministry's junior status, their participation in these exchanges have resulted in minimal institutional change or the introduction of intersectional policy frameworks. Eliana Custodio, Executive Coordinator of *Geledes* articulates this sense of dissatisfaction:

> I thought it was great when [da Silva] created SEPPIR, a specific Secretariat, because he was trying to say that there is a necessity to create policies with racial consideration in this country. When he put a black woman at the head of the ministry, he was valorizing black women. He was trying to say that black women have the potential and the capacity to assume commanding positions in this country. The only problem I have with SEPPIR is that they have a lack of resources to assist in all of the demands of the population. It is a Secretariat with the status of a ministry, however the resources that are designated to that Secretariat are piecemeal. In reality today, it is more a secretariat of articulations

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[21] For a complete list of civil society organizations seated on the 2010-2012 council and their representatives, see http://www.seppir.gov.br/noticias/ultimas_noticias/2010/11/publicacao-dos-nomes-dos-conselheiros-representantes-das-entidades-selecionadas-para-o-cnpir

by government with civil society than a ministry that can develop big actions for immediate impact on the black population (2007).

Werneck also expresses her disappointment with the inability of both SEPPIR and the Special Secretariat of Policies for Women—also established in 2003—to introduce intersectional measures to strengthen the rights and positioning of black women. Like Custodio, she criticizes the Brazilian state for not providing the resources necessary for either ministry to follow through with their commitments to civil society organizations, especially those brought forth by the Afro-Brazilian women's movement. She asserts:

> In the years of operation by both the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies and SEPPIR, [Afro-Brazilian women activists] can say that their actions were by far insufficient to meet their responsibilities in terms of respecting and incorporating the perspective of intersectionality and to individualize and expand diagnoses, actions and policies towards subject holders and demanders of rights, black women in particular (Werneck 2009, 122).

Werneck points to lack of resources and inferior policy machinery as key reasons for the ineffective integration of intersectional frameworks in public policies and the minimal confrontation of existing inequitable provisions. In her words, "such responsibilities require leadership and negotiation, as well as technical, political and financial support for the dissemination of views and propositions" (Werneck 2009, 121).

There is an underlying assumption in the words of Custodio and Werneck that due to the close proximity between activists and government representatives, if SEPPIR had sufficient resources and greater support from other ministries, an intersectional perspective would likely be introduced into Brazilian policy frameworks on a larger scale. However, this belief is not shared across the movement. Some approach the disregard of intersectional perspectives by SEPPIR and the limited impact of this consultative

mechanism from a different angle. They specifically argue that the problem lies not with

budget constraints or lack of institutional support, but with the overall priorities of the

institution.

Critics within and outside of the movement specifically point to the fact that since

its inception, SEPPIR has primarily concentrated on providing land, economic, and

educational reparations to residents of *quilombolas* (communities inhabited by the

descendants of former slaves). Marcelo Paixao (2006) finds that 41 percent of the

agency's overall budget in 2006 was spent on projects involving these predominantly

rural communities. He also notes that only 58 percent of the total budget allocated to

SEPPIR was utilized that year (Paixao 2008, 6). These findings suggest that even with

funding, SEPPIR has done little to introduce novel ways to conceptualize and counter

racial discrimination, and instead has served as a vessel to usher in policies developed by

the Cardoso administration prior to Durban. Heringer questions the purpose and actual

advancements of the government agency for black women's issues:

> What does SEPPIR do? […] I think that something that they have improved in
> terms of having more on the agenda is quilombolas and policies for quilombola
> communities, more recognition, more resources. But other issues, even the issue
> of having access to higher education, the quotas, it was not started by SEPPIR.
> OK, afterwards [ministry representatives] did behind the scenes work, in terms of
> discussing the ministries and having hearings with Congress, so I would say there
> was political work there with some legitimacy, but it is not because of them
> (2007).

Heringer's words reflect some of the ambivalence felt by activists towards

SEPPIR as the primary institutional mechanism available to translate the black women's

movement's agenda in policy arenas. A significant quandary for the progression of

movement identities and frameworks since Durban is evident here. On the one hand,

activists, like Custodio and Werneck, recognize the ways in which SEPPIR, through its ministerial status and respective bodies like the CPNIR, grant black women's organizations valuable access to policy arenas and deliberations. In their eyes SEPPIR is a vehicle that was formed to strengthen and expand the relationships forged between movement and government representatives during the Durban process. On the other hand, the output of these exchanges cannot be fully realized because the agency lacks significant political weight and legitimacy. This limited power has resulted in SEPPIR occupying, what Tianna Paschel and Mark Sawyer characterize as "a strange and often precarious space between government and civil society, one that has created serious tensions" (2008, 203).

Yet, since Durban this tenuous relationship has not deterred movement actors from attempting to penetrate Brazilian policy machinery. Instead, it has forced activists to recognize the limitations of symbolic politics and singular policies. Afro-Brazilian women have been extremely strategic about where they focus their energies since Durban, drawing again on the political opportunities afforded by their intersectional identities, affiliations with the Brazilian feminist movement, and transnational activist experience. One policy issue that has increasingly been prioritized and integrated in movement mandates is reproductive health care.

Intersectionality in Brazilian Reproductive Health Care Policy

As illustrated in Chapter Four, since the 1980s, the topic of reproductive health care, has received significant attention in the national and transnational directives of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement. Prior to the demands for improved reproductive

rights and health care of black women encapsulated in the Declaration of Itapecerica de Serra for the 1994 UN Conference on Population and Development, several movement activists worked with the Brazilian feminist movement and the Ministry of Health on a variety of women's health initiatives, including the development of the Program for Integrated Women's Health (PAISM) [22] and the National Program for Sickle Cell Anemia (PAF) (Caldwell 2009).

Yet, it was not until the mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women at Durban that the Brazilian government began to make more formal commitments to design policies to address the needs, interests, and major health care problems of the black population (Werneck 2009, 125). These developments include: the creation of the National Policy of Black Population Health in 2006, a program which makes the collection of background information about race/ethnic background in all documents in Brazil's single unified health care system (SUS) compulsory and prioritizes the reduction of racial discriminations in health services and institutions; the revision of PAISM to include race and gender specific measures; and the establishment of the Technical Committee of Black Population Health in the Ministry of Health in 2004. Public health specialist and movement activist Fernanda Lopes describes the Committee, which is composed of civil society leaders, ministry representatives, and researchers on black health issues as providing "the support technically to help ministers formulate, implement, and evaluate public health considering a racial perspective" (2006).

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[22] Developed in 1984, PAISM covers standards of care on a range of women's issues, including pre and post-natal care, the prevention of Sexually Transmitted Diseases, and contraceptive methods.

Two factors were critical to these policy developments. The first was increased

research by activists, health care specialists, and the Brazilian government that brought

attention to the linkage between the health disparities of the black Brazilian population

and intersectional discriminations. It is at this point where IR theorizations on

transnational activism and domestic political structures come into play. As previously

mentioned, IR theorists assert that the extent to which transnationally mobilized actors are

able to shift domestic policy depends on the willingness of domestic institutions to

support movement agendas and the development of coalitions and networks between state

and civil society actors. In post-Durban Brazil, there was evidence of this willingness

with the 2001 publication of *Manual de Doencas Mais Importantes por Razoes Etnicas a*

Populacao Brasileira Afro-Descendentes (Manual of the Major Diseases for the Afro

descendant Brazilian population) and the 2005 publication of *Atencao a Saude das*

Mulheres Negras (Health Care for Black Women) by the Brazilian Ministry of Health.

Both works investigate the precursors of health problems predominant among the black

population at large and black women specifically, including type II diabetes and maternal

mortality. They also stress the necessity of civil society involvement in the development

of appropriate and effective responses.

In December 2001, the UN office in Brazil hosted *O Workshop Interagencial de*

Saude da Populacao Negra (the Interagency Workshop on the Health of the Black

Population) in Brasilia, Brazil. The event brought together experts on race and health

care, social activists, and representatives from the Pan-American Health Organization,

British Ministry of International Development, and the UNDP (Lopes and Werneck 2009,

11). Activists from the Afro-Brazilian women's movement made up the majority of civil

society representatives; attendees included Jurema Werneck, Edna Roland, Luiza Bairros,

and Fatima Oliveira. The workshop produced *Politica Nacional de Saude da Populacao*

Negra: Uma Questao de Equidade (National Policy on the Health of the Black

Population: A Question of Equality), a document which notes the protagonist role of

black activists in the production of race-centred scientific data and the training of health

care professionals in Brazil.[23]

Heavily involved in lobbies to improve health care practices for blacks in Brazil

throughout the 1990s and 2000s, in 2002 Oliveira published *Saude da Populacao Negra*

Brasil, anos 2001 (The Health of the Black Population, 2001) with the Pan American

Health Organization. With data compiled for discussions on gender and racial

discriminations in health services in Durban, Oliveira's publication was one of the first to

offer a panoramic view of black women's health and to draw attention to the links

between the historical and political marginalization of Afro-Brazilian women and high

incidences of maternal death, sterilizations, and HIV/AIDS. In the book Oliveira

emphasizes the importance of creating and strengthening alliances between scientific

researchers, government representatives, and activists to ensure the increased visibility of

black health concerns in policy and non-policy settings.

The second factor was the extensive involvement, expertise, and familiarity of

black women's NGOs with women's healthcare lobbies at the national and transnational

level. Fernanda Lopes describes how, after observing the greater prominence according to

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[23] For a copy of the report, see http://bvsms.saude.gov.br/bvs/publicacoes/saudepopnegra.pdf

intersectional discriminations at the Durban Conference, racism and sexism were specifically presented as macro determinants of inequalities and poverty in lobbies for health care reform by movement actors:

> [Afro-Brazilian women activists] are presenting this [intersectional] perspective in the health sector. For example, thinking about child mortality, maybe Brazil can reach the [Millennium] development goals, but not for the black population, because the inequalities and inequities are so big and if we don't have a different and specific action for this group it would be impossible to reach in a realistic way [...] We are presenting some specific things, some specific consideration, and specific ways of dealing with this problem and so we are presenting different ways to achieve our goals (2006).

Since Durban, black women's organizations have led a large number of campaigns and projects dedicated to the improved physical and mental health of Afro-Brazilian women. One of the most notable is *Mama Africa*, an initiative developed in 2006 by *Criola*. This program educates black women, especially those over the age of forty, on the importance of regular breast self-examinations and mammograms.[24]

The involvement of Afro-Brazilian women with and within the Brazilian feminist movement has served as a key advantage in their frontline work on health issues. Athayde Motta sees the power struggles and information exchanges between black and white activists situated in the feminist movement in the 1980s as providing a unique position and form of leverage for the Afro-Brazilian women's movement in health care policy deliberations post-Durban:

> [Afro-Brazilian women activists] built the knowledge first. And as far as I can tell that was a hard working process because they had to basically build it out of feminist organizations. They had to fight for the right to create knowledge

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[24] Explaining why there was such a significant need for *Mama Africa*, a member of *Criola* noted that in some communities in Southern Brazil, where the organization is located, black women have faced discrimination at the hands of doctors and thus become fearful of medical services in the area.

whereas feminist organizations traditionally were much more reluctant in terms of allowing a black agenda to emerge within the larger issue of women's rights and feminist organizing. So I think that it was a difficult process that at the end of the day was beneficial to them because when they came to the table they came prepared with a body of knowledge that was important (2007).

The influence of Afro-Brazilian women activists in the government's prioritization of health issues specific to the black population in the post-Durban era was a recurring theme in the interviews conducted for this study. Several activists and researchers indicated that the presence of Afro-Brazilian women and the consideration of their concerns by the Ministry of Health have steadily increased since the Conference, more so than in the fields of education or labour. Motta, for example, notes that "Black women in Brazil are not focused on education, they are focused on health and there is much less resistance in health than in education, why I do not know. Health, rather than education, has given the movement a huge space to move forward" (2007). He goes on to discuss their increased access to the ministry: "Basically they can talk to the Ministry of Health anytime they want to. They have the power to call a meeting and to discuss national policy, the issues not only important to black people in general, but to black women in particular, you know, like sexual reproduction" (2007). Heringer similarly asserts that the movement has made major advances "in terms of engaging with the Minister of Health, specifically on the role of gender for the health of black women and the health of black people in general (2007). Neither provides a definitive reason for the heightened access and influence of movement actors in this policy arena since Durban but are nonetheless encouraged by the increase in the number of alliances between movement

and government actors and by the shift towards intersectional approaches in reproductive health care policies.

While notable changes have emerged in the spectrum of health care, it is important not to over exaggerate the policy achievements of Afro-Brazilian women's movement since Durban. As Caldwell notes, one the main frustrations for activists and advocates of intersectional policy reform is the inconsistent follow-through of the Brazilian government. She explains that Brazilians often refer to this delay in policy implementation as "policies not leaving paper" (2009, 129). As evidenced in PAISM and the National Sickle Cell Anemia Program—two initiatives that have received support in individual states, but have yet to be fully implemented nationally—there continues to be a significant delay between stages of policy development and implementation. This problem may be due in part to a decline in momentum following Durban.

While some movement actors have concentrated on the development of intersectional policy measures within the state, others have emphasized the need to build stronger transnational activist networks in the face of slowed domestic change. Yet, as the following section shows that following their mobilization at Durban, Afro-Brazilian women have also struggled to develop sustainable activist alliances that transcend national borders and policy arenas.

Transnational Coalitions and Networks

Of the few published accounts that record the activities of women's movements at Durban, most have emphasized the value of the Conference for increasing knowledge of the congruencies of historical exclusions among activists. Maylei Blackwell and Nadine

Naber's report on the confrontation of intersectional forms of discrimination by transnational feminist coalitions at the Conference notes how, "learning about women's participation in the South Africa landless movement, the Intifada, the Dalit Struggle and indigenous movements often reminded us that […] we are the backbones of our struggles" (2002, 240). In her review of the Durban's significance for the Indian feminist movement, Devaki Jain similarly suggests the Conference solidified the UN "as a space that can in fact bring together the voices of the enslaved (i.e., their descendants)" (2005, 36). Of particular relevance for this study is the work of Keisha Khan-Perry, who describes Durban as "one of the most significant examples of black women traversing Latin American borders to mobilize against racism and sexism" (2009). She asserts that the involvement of black women activists in the preparatory meetings and the Conference went beyond the communication of specific national movement platforms and served as a crucial opportunity to forge regional alliances and diasporic agendas centered on anti-racist and feminist action.

This sentiment is echoed by J. Michael Turner, Co-director of the Global Afro Latino and Caribbean Initiative (GALCI). Turner and Afro-Latino activist and scholar Marta Moreno Vega founded the GALCI in 2000. Its objective is to align NGOs from Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States committed to the education and research of issues dealing with the marginalization of Afro-Latino and Caribbean communities. *Geledes* and the Afro-Latin American and Afro-Caribbean Women's Network (*Red de Mujeres Afrolatinas and Afrocaribeanas*) are listed as members. Turner argues that the preparatory process for Durban, in particular, the Regional Preparatory

meeting in Santiago, Chile, was critical for the development of broader networks between Afro-Latin women activists (2002). He suggests that there are underlying themes, such as high rates of police brutality, imprisonment, and domestic violence that link the marginalized women in Latin American countries and that "in a way it was important for Afro-Brazilians to learn about Afro-Colombians, Afro-Venezuelans, and Afro-Ecuadorians, because it meant that it is not just their problems" (2008).

It cannot be denied that the testimonies and information exchanged in the lead up to and during the Durban Conference shed significant light on the nuances of racism and enabled increased analysis and ideas on the intersections of gender, class, caste, and race at the regional and global level (Jain 2005, 35). However, for some Afro-Brazilian women activists, increased awareness of localized racisms has not led to the formulation of effective cross-cutting strategies since Durban. More specifically, these activists have found that the specific manifestations and definitions of racism in specific locales have accentuated divides between black activist communities and have thus served as a significant barrier to the productivity of transnational anti-racist and feminist networks. Luiza Barrios speaks directly to the obstacle of "modified racism" for cross-border activist coalitions:

> Today, although we have more contacts globally, because we are living in a time where people actually travel—we have black from Brazil visiting other countries visiting Brazil—this era is poor in terms of ideas. Today we have a situation in which racism is really modified which makes it difficult to realize the exact forms of organization that could support that situation in different societies at the same time (2007).

She goes on to discuss her observation of this trend at Durban:

This difficulty was very evident at Durban. You could see, for example, the manner in which racism is treated by African countries is differentiated from the diaspora countries. For African countries, what did it mean to speak of racism? It meant to discuss the question of debt relief, it meant to discuss the violations of patents for medicines against AIDS, it meant to discuss the question of the access and distribution of technology. Meanwhile, in the case of Brazil and other Latin American countries, the racial question was a question more of society, for example, what are the social policies that the governments need to implement to change the situation of black people? So today, we know the situation of black people in several places of the world, but I think of our possibility to exchange specific forms of organization and ideas have decreased (2007).

A concern over the lack of a diasporic perspective on racism and the consequential impact for activist coalitions among black women has also been articulated by Hill Collins. While she argues that "within the broad transnational context, women of African descent have a distinctive, shared legacy", she also acknowledges that "intersecting oppressions have left a path of common challenges that are differently organized and resisted" (2000, 235) in the contemporary realm.

The narratives of Bairros and Hill Collins suggest that while the transnational organization of black women activists, particularly in UN forums, help to illuminate women's struggles against racial exclusion, the distinctive character of these experiences limits the emergence of sustainable cross-border networks and tangible solutions. In other words, conversations on the common sources and experiences of oppression are stimulated in these spaces, but the mandates and organization of individual coalitions often falter once the specificities of local contexts and cultural formations are brought to the forefront in the months and years following the initial meeting. If we return to the arguments of postcolonial feminism introduced in the early chapters of this work, we can

see a clear linkage between these obstacles and the persistence of colonial configurations and structures of oppression.

Blockages in the Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latin American Women's Network

The problem of accounting for cultural and political specificities in transnational activist efforts has not been only limited to networks emerging out of the Durban Conference. The aforementioned Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latin American Women's Network has also faced notable challenges in the development of long-term strategies for African descendant women situated in precarious socioeconomic positions throughout the region. Founded in 1992, its objective is to provide black women with an autonomous forum to combat sexist and racist practices in their countries and across the region. Women from thirty-three countries are represented, including Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Peru, and the United States. Since its inception, regular forums have been held to discuss the impact of neo-liberal economic policies on the cultural, spiritual, and political contexts and how New Left politics and economic mandates affect the livelihood of black women.

The Managua Declaration, which emerged from the preparatory meeting for the Regional Conference of the Americas against Racism in July 2006, affirms the Network's commitment to collective leadership and the incorporation of perspectives of gender, ethnicity, and race in domestic and international policy measures. It also recognizes the importance of creating and expanding new alliances to positively transform the societies in which women of the diaspora reside.

Some of the Afro-Brazilian women activists interviewed noted that the Network

has helped to place Brazilian racial dynamics in dialogue with those in other African

diaspora communities, but were largely unable to pinpoint the specific contributions and

advances of the Network in Brazil. Werneck has been one of the most outspoken critics of

the Network. She suggests that despite proclamations affirming the existence of shared

diasporic identity and the evaluations on the progress of individual states to implement

UN recommendations, it has failed to institute concrete or novel measures to counter the

disproportionate levels of poverty and social injustices faced by African descendant

women. Her highly critical writing on the subject offers a rare glimpse into the difficulties

encountered in facilitating regional dialogue and action:

> This network has not been capable of creating prompt strategies for common
> political actions and agenda-setting, which is verifiable in the unfocused and
> unstable ways in which its members develop their actions to confront racism and
> poverty in the region, to formulate and affirm new models for political action or
> governmental systems, and to promote everyday coalition-building and
> dialoguing. Surprisingly, this network has been incapable of dealing with the
> differences and conflicts stemming from the need to state a more explicit political
> stance in front of the contemporary political and economic contexts imposed by
> the speculative and financial globalization processes in course all over Latin
> America and the Caribbean. Its expansion has occurred in such intensive manner
> that it magnifies and gives new features to the exclusion promoted by racism and
> sexism (2007, 111).

Other problems have impeded the development and utility of cross-border

alliances between Afro-Brazilian women activists and those situated outside of the

Brazilian context. Lucia Xavier suggests that the onset of globalization has increased the

connectedness of organizations and activists, but has also led to greater discursive and

ideological distances between activists. She stresses that funding is the most significant

impediment to the transnational organization of black women in Brazil and elsewhere in

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the region (Franklin 2010). In discussing Criola's ongoing efforts to collaborate with other women's organizations in Latin America and Africa she explains that "They are poor organizations […] connections are still limited and slow […] there is a problem of access. For example, of the twenty-seven organizations we work with, only five have permanent offices. There are limited resources and salaries and this makes it difficult to get to know each other" (2007). Funding for black women's organizations frequently comes from European or U.S. based non-governmental organizations and international agencies focused on social and economic development and human rights.[25] These agencies provide a set amount for a particular time period or program, but often funding is removed or finished prior to achievement of the specified goals.

Activists also expressed their hesitancy to accept funds from certain institutions or governments, especially those based in the United States, for fear their initiatives will be tainted by the underlying political agenda of the grant organization. Some Afro-Brazilian women activists are even reluctant to link themselves with their Afro-American counterparts, believing their situation to be completely different from black women situated in a developed country (Franklin 2010). Linguistic barriers and differing educational backgrounds also widen this divide. In this sense, we can see the reproduction of "geopolitical segregations" (Agathangelou and Turcotte 2010, 45) between the activists in the global North and South and the ways in which, regardless of shared racial identities, these divisions have infringed on the development of transnational feminist coalitions and exchanges. The difficult task for Afro-Brazilian women lies in continuing

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[25] Major Donors include the DFID, InterAmerican Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Kellogg Foundation.

in productive dialogue with activists throughout the diaspora despite barriers created by colonial systems of oppression (Collins 2000, 235).

While cross-border coalitions have not been without financial, structural, and localized obstacles in the ten years since Durban, the Network of Black Brazilian Women's NGOs for the III Conference has amplified its presence. Over the course of the decade, the Network has emerged as the main representative and communicator of the interests and directives of the movement at the national, regional, and transnational level. The following section looks at what accounts for the Network's influence and its significance for the movement post-Durban. It pays close attention to its commitment to an intersectional framework in formal and informal spaces of politics and efforts to stimulate dialogue on the complex character of discriminations between state and non-state actors in Brazil. It also endeavours to bring attention to an emerging area studied by a small number of feminist sociologists and political scientists, including Friedman (1999) and Sperling, Ferree, and Risman (2001) but still largely overlooked in the broader IR literature: the significant outcomes of transnational organizing processes for the internal dynamics and cohesion of national movements.

Internal Movement Dynamics

As noted in the previous chapter, the initial purpose of the Network of Black Brazilian Women's NGOs for the III Conference was to ensure Afro-Brazilian women and their concerns were centrally situated in the organizing processes for Durban. This was achieved through various means, including the extensive participation of activists in the preparatory activities of the Conference and the composition of the comprehensive

publication on Afro-Brazilian women's livelihoods and policy concerns, *Nos, Mulheres Negras*. Although it initially focused on the increased strategic and physical presence of Afro-Brazilian women activists at the transnational level, the Network became a crucial means of fortifying the fragmented Afro-Brazilian women's movement nationally.

In September 2002, the Network for Black Brazilian Women's NGOs for the III Conference officially expanded its area of concentration from the Durban conference, becoming the Network for Black Brazilian Women's NGOs (also known as the Articulation of Brazilian Black Women's NGOs or AMNB). Its objectives post-Durban include the establishment of a decentralized network which works jointly with member organizations and other social movements, the democratic participation of multiple actors in the development of platforms and political strategies, the implementation and monitoring of the recommendations of the Durban Platform for Action in Brazil, and the participation of the Network in all stages of federal, state, and municipal public policy-making, including development, implementation, and monitoring (Carneiro 2003, 21).

Underlying each of the AMNB's stated priorities is an ideological commitment to understanding black women's identities and challenging the various forms of subordination they face through an intersectional framework. This is evidenced in the two themes integrated into every public document produced and distributed by the AMNB: the multidimensional causes of the social subordination of black women and the complex approaches needed to produce significant changes in the quality of life of black women (Werneck 2006, 17). The theorizations and reports of Kimberle Crenshaw on the intersection of gender and racial discrimination prior to and at Durban are also frequently

referenced within these publications. As in its early stages, the AMNB continues to emphasize the detrimental role played by racism in shaping the social positioning and economic livelihood of Afro-Brazilian women, but does not characterize this system of oppression as working in isolation. Their platform argues that gender, class, sexual orientation, disability, age, and other sources of identity and discrimination intersect to reconfigure the character and impact of racism, and thus must also be challenged. Examples of this push for the increased prioritization of intersectional perspectives in activist repertories, public discourse, and policy measures are found in two of the Network's publications in 2007: *Dossie Sobre a Situacao das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras* (A Report on the Situation of Black Brazilian Women) and *Construindo a Equidade: Estrategia para Implementacao de Politicas Publicas para Superacao das Desigualdades de Genero e Raca para Mulheres Negras* (Building Equity: Strategies for the Implementation of Public Policies for Overcoming Race and Gender Inequalities for Black Women). In the latter, the section detailing the requirements for black women to exercise leadership in major political institutions notes:

> Black women active in politics also need tools that qualify their advocacy and policy formulation in public discourses about the intersectionality of racism with sexism, poverty, lesbophobia, the presence of disability and other factors that may produce or increase their vulnerability to inequities (Articulação de Organizações de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras 2007, 8).

This emphasis on intersectionality has also informed the stance of the AMNB on Brazilian affirmative action policies. Like the aforementioned lobbies of Reis and Carneiro, the AMNB calls for measures that are conscious of identity diversities and specificities, and outlines four points that must be met for the development of effective

and inclusive policies. These are the guaranteed representation of black women in formal

and informal spheres of politics; the provision of reparations for individuals to overcome

immediate socioeconomic barriers; the development of actions which enable the

elimination of discriminatory cultural practices and ideologies developed over the course

of centuries; and the individualization of policies for the specific intersectional identities

and discriminations of Afro-Brazilian women and other historically discriminated groups

in Brazilian society (Werneck 2006, 17).

It is the construction of such concrete and specific recommendations, coupled with

experience gained from the Durban process, which has established the AMNB as a

constant fixture in governmental and non-governmental deliberations over racial and

gender equality measures in Brazil. Since 2002, members of the AMNB have served as

representatives of the network on the National Council of Women, the National Health

Council, the President's Council for Economic and Social Development, and the National

Council for Policies on the Promotion of Racial Equality.

Their participation on these governmental councils should not however be

confused with a sense of complacency or satisfaction with the current administration. In

the wake of reports of the possible dissolution of agencies dedicated to issues of racial

and gender equality, including SEPPIR and the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies,

in October 2011 the AMNB penned an open letter to President Dilma Rousseff

expressing their concerns with the impermanent character of these governnment spaces

and their importance for the rights of Afro-Brazilian women:

> The AMNB publicly states that it is in favor of retaining the Special Secretariat of
> Women's Policies, the Ministry of Human Rights, and the Special Secretariat for

Policies to Promote Racial Equality so that Brazil can comply with all protocols, all decisions, all agreements and all the action plans of the conferences that it subscribed to, to effectively promote gender and race equity, and the respect of black women's human rights in Brazil. The AMNB points out that only with the existence of specific governmental spaces, with public policies directed to sectors hitherto excluded, that women, especially black women have access to citizenship (Articulação de Organizações de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras 2011).

Recognizing the fragility of the relationship between social movements and the Brazilian state, the AMNB has also worked on building solid and long-lasting partnerships with other social movements and international organizations. In 2009, they partnered with UNAIDS in Brazil to introduce the *Just Like You* Campaign which draws attention to pervasiveness of human rights violations and social prejudice in Brazil. Two years later, the Network joined twenty-nine other civil society organizations to produce the *Proposal for Political Reform*, a project to encourage citizen participation in the monitoring of government actions to combat corruption in the organs of the state. While the AMNB has succeeded in engaging state and civil society actors in dialogue on intersectional forms of discrimination and adequate policy responses, even those within the Network acknowledge the financial and logistical constraints of this extensive involvement. Werneck specifically notes that the Network's cross-sector participation exposes AMNB members to criticism and attack from patriarchal and racist factions in the Brazilian population. In her words, this widespread exposure and consequential targeting "demands [the AMNB's] tireless confrontation and strategic organization to ensure the maintenance and advancement of network agendas" (Werneck 2006, 132).

While the activities of the AMNB have largely been concentrated at the national level, since 2002 the Network has remained committed to the advancement of the Durban

Platform for Action and the monitoring of its implementation in Brazil. Several of its members participated in the Regional Conference of the Americas held in Brasilia, Brazil, in July 2006. The purpose of the meeting was to review the advancements and setbacks in the implementation of Durban's Plan for Action across the Latin American and Caribbean region. A small victory for the Network came in a formal recommendation made by the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Doudou Diène. In his report on the state of racial discrimination in Brazil, he asserts that "Domestic workers, of which 90 percent are Afro-Brazilian women, should benefit from legal recognition and protection, and be included under the protection of labour legislation" (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2006, 5). At the Conference, Network members voiced their extreme disappointment and frustration with the slow and inconsistent implementation of the Platform in the Brazilian context during the plenary sessions for civil society representatives.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Rodnei Jerico, the Network's delegate at the Durban+10 Conference, a one-day meeting marking the ten-year anniversary of the Durban Platform of Action held in September 2011 in New York City. The Porto Alegre-based black women's organization and AMNB member, *Maria Mulher*, was one of few civil society organizations invited by the UN to give a brief statement at the roundtable discussion on the victims of racism. The following is an excerpt from Jerico's statement on behalf of the organization and the AMNB:

> In the name of Maria Mulher, the Network of Brazilian Black Women's NGOs, and in the name of the several Brazilian civil society organizations present at this

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meeting, we express our deep regret that after 10 years of the approval of the Durban Platform for Action, none or insufficient results have been reached in this period. We black women are the major group of victims of racism in the world. And we still expect the States, the United Nations Secretary General and the High Commissioner of Human Rights to fulfill, as depicted in the Durban Platform for Action their moral obligation to take appropriate and effective measures to halt and reverse the lasting consequences of slavery, the slave trade, the transatlantic slave trade, apartheid, genocide and past tragedies (Secretaria de Politicas para Mulheres do Rio Grande do Sul 2011).

Jerico's statement highlights the significant emphasis placed by the Network upon the persistent legacies of colonial structures and the institution of slavery. From this perspective, until the contemporary manifestations of colonial logics in individual contexts are adequately considered, efforts to challenge intersectional forms of discrimination at the national and international level will continue to be stymied and ineffectual.

Perhaps the most understated outcome of the Network's creation is the sense of cohesiveness it has created among members of the Afro-Brazilian women movement. As the above example illustrates, there is a willingness among AMNB members to place their individual organizations affiliations second to the communication of the overall message of the Network. The AMNB has established several mechanisms to ensure the clear interpretation of its strategies and consistent articulation of its positions. In terms of the former, Network publications provide comprehensive descriptions of the multipronged strategies for the integration of Afro-Brazilian women activists into formal political structures, and the formulation, monitoring, and implementation of Network proposals in public policies.

In terms of the latter, the Network has used a combination of resources to communicate their positions on a variety of issues. Stances on major areas of policy focus, such as reproductive rights and affirmative action, are frequently updated online and published to provide a reference for Network members representing the AMNB across the country and the world. For example, *Platforma das Mulheres Negras para as Conferenias 2011* (the Platform of Black Women at 2011 Conferences) outlines 17 recommendations of the AMNB on various issues ranging from job protection for domestic workers to the reform of Brazil's Social Security System for upcoming National Conferences on Public Health, Food Security and Nutrition, the Rights of the Elderly, LGBT community, and Youth and is accessible through the Network's website (AMNB 2011b).

In addition to these resources, the Network produces information bulletins on upcoming seminars and conferences, new black women's organizations, and on other important events and dates. The AMNB also holds regular forums for activists to discuss the current state of the movement and pressing issues for black women in their individual communities.

For activists situated outside of Brazil's major cities, the impact of these efforts to consolidate the movement and its mandates for Afro-Brazilian women across the country cannot be minimized. Joselina da Silva speaks to the importance of the Network for her activism in the Northern city of Juazeiro do Norte:

> The fact that the AMNB continues to organize activities and continues to bring together women from all over the country, it is very important. Now that I am from outside Rio, I am in a small town, I see how important the AMNB is,

because it is a kind of filter through which women from those distant areas get information and find a way to participate in the national arena (2007).

According to da Silva, the various mechanisms employed by the AMNB to disperse information and their mandate have increased the involvement of young black women in movement discussions on the rights and identities of black women in Brazil. She specifically points to a week-long course entitled *Exchanging Black Women's Initiatives and Experiences* which brought together young scholars and activists across the country as indicative of the AMNB's reach:

> Through [the course], we can see the influence of the AMNB. It is amazing because we receive lots of young people and most of them are activists and related to black women's organizations […] there are things they say that we can say if it weren't for the AMNB, they would have never had access to their information or the opportunity to take part in different national conferences and different moments (2007).

On the other hand, da Silva does not deny the existence of tensions between organizations within the network and those outside of it. These tensions largely stem from the lack of attention received by organizations not affiliated with the Network, which according to her "are doing good work but are not included in the AMNB" (2007). Such frictions reflect the underside of the heightened presence of the AMNB in the aftermath of Durban. Despite displaying an outward commitment to democratic forms of organization and inclusive politics, the Network has often overshadowed or upended the lobbies and accomplishments of Afro-Brazilian women's organizations with fewer resources, inexperienced activists, and minimal connections within government and civil society organizations. Whether or not the AMNB can find ways to work with these organizations, regardless of their affiliations and experience, in the development of novel

mechanisms to counter intersectional forms of discrimination in Brazil will be key point

of interest and contention over the next decade.

Conclusion

This chapter offered three distinct avenues from which to examine the outcomes

of Afro-Brazilian women's mobilization at the Durban Conference: domestic policy

responses, transnational activist coalitions, and dynamics within the movement. The

objective was not only to provide a condensed overview of the major activities,

roadblocks, and strategies of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement over the past decade,

but also to reveal the limited theoretical and analytical instruments available to effectively

comprehend the wide-ranging impact of transnational processes on intersectional forms of

mobilization.

While the Brazilian government has received significant accolades from the

international community for the implementation of affirmative action policies and

creation of agencies geared towards the promotion of racial equality in the wake of the

Durban Conference, the Afro-Brazilian women's movement has remained largely

dissatisfied with these developments. The frustration of activists largely lies in the

singular approach to discrimination asserted within these measures and with the limited

authority and resources of SEPPIR and other government agencies. They continue to

grapple with the symbolic value of these institutions, their presence within them, and the

minimal institutional change they are able to bring about. Small victories have been

achieved in the arena of reproductive health care, where intersectional approaches and

civil society recommendations have been integrated into state-funded research and

initiatives on a number of health-related issues directly affecting the black female population. It is in this arena that the experience gained from long-standing affiliations with the Brazilian feminist movement and from attending UN Conferences over the course of two decades has proven invaluable.

When looking at movement relations outside of the Brazilian context, it is clear that localized forms of knowledge, histories, and oppression have created significant roadblocks to the achievement of sustainable cross-border coalitions. The increased awareness of the specific manifestations of racism and optimism for the creation of transnational solidarities generated by their participation in Durban has not been enough to overcome the common problems associated with transnational organizing, including limited funding, linguistic barriers, and hostilities between activists.

Looking at these two measurements alone, it would seem that the participation of Afro-Brazilian women in the Durban process has yielded somewhat meager results. However, as the final section of this chapter revealed, there is a greater need to turn the focus inward. Examining what the experience of Durban has done for the Afro-Brazilian women's movement as a social movement, particularly in terms of the influence and momentum garnered by the AMNB, draws attention to the ways in which transnational processes can contribute to the strengthening of national movements, to the legitimization of their mandates, and to the empowerment of the individuals within them.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This study was motivated by a keen interest in one "watershed event" in the trajectory of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement: the 2001 UN Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa. By the mid-2000s, several leaders of the movement had written about their heightened participation at the Conference and about how it signalled a turning point for the movement's domestic efforts to challenge intersectional forms of discrimination. Eager to focus on the mobilization of intersectional platforms by activists beyond Brazil's borders, it soon became apparent that a comprehensive understanding of the identity articulations and strategies of Afro-Brazilian women could not emerge in an isolated study of the Durban Conference process and outcomes. An expansion of the study's contextual parameters was therefore essential to grasp the complex sources and dimensions of Afro-Brazilian women's contemporary national and transnational mobilization.

This study began by situating one research question at its center: How have national and transnational processes shaped the articulation and mobilization of race and gender categories by Afro-Brazilian women? This query was purposefully broad to enable the identification and close examination of four distinct processes operating in and outside of Brazil: colonialism; slavery; democratic transition; and the preparations for and proceedings of UN Conferences. For diverging reasons, each process was pertinent to the general trajectory of the movement. Their selection was also driven by the conspicuous

absence of historically contextualized analyses of intersectional social movements operating at the transnational level in IR.

The central positioning of race and gender in the primary and secondary research questions was also intended to push the boundaries of dominant approaches on identity formation and collective mobilization in IR. Long characterizing identity-based discriminations as domestic problems, students of IR have only recently begun to grapple with the significance of race and gender and their interconnected workings in colonial and imperial projects and activist experiences within the international system. By analyzing the racialization and sexualization of African slave women in Brazilian colonial narratives and nation-building ideologies and the strategic use of gender and race by Afro-Brazilian women activists, this study demonstrated the diverse function of these identity categories and thus provides insight into the expanding conceptualizations of identity and difference in IR.

The concentration on race and gender categories in this study also stands in direct opposition to the class-centred analyses which have dominated literature on Brazilian race relations. Discussions of gendered dimensions of racism are often overlooked in favour of explanations that assume a direct linkage between economic hierarchies and the socially disadvantageous positioning of black populations in Brazil. This tendency to disregard or understate race and gender as influential sources of identity and oppression in these scholarly bodies is one of the major reasons that class is not accorded a central position in this study. In addition to recognizing the limitations of addressing multiple and simultaneous intersections, this concentration was adopted because of the significant

emphasis placed on these categories in the personal testimonies, political agendas, and recommendations of Afro-Brazilian women activists.

The placement of Afro-Brazilian women at the forefront of this analysis also served to challenge static representations of non-Western women and their general disregard in many areas of the discipline. The lack of research on women of African descent women not only reflects the Orientialist tendencies of IR, but its failure to acknowledge the significant linkages between transnational processes and intersectional identities and oppressions. The motivations and strategies of Afro-Brazilian women activists documented in this study stand in stark contrast to prevalent portrayals of racialized women as ahistorical and apolitical subjects. Just as transnational processes figure prominently in the identity articulations and narratives of these female activists, their actions work to effectively destabilize dominant and homogenizing IR discourses on the identities, victimization, and political (un)consciousness of historically marginalized peoples.

Connecting Theoretical Explanations

A novel explanatory framework linking perspectives from IR, black feminism, and social movement theory was advanced to elucidate new understandings of the relationship between historically specific and contextual forces and the identity-based mobilization by Afro-Brazilian women. Since individually these theories can only offer partial answers, bringing them together offered a valuable means to analyze the situated nature of Afro-Brazilian women's intersectional activism.

First, an examination of postcolonial feminist perspectives assisted in grounding contemporary anti-racist and feminist mobilizations by problematizing the sources and representations of identity, difference, and oppression in colonized societies. This approach was essential to identifying the ways in which the reproduction of racialized and sexualized colonial logics in nation-building projects and cultural discourse informed the broader treatment of Afro-Brazilian women and their pathways to social mobilization in contemporary society. As Chapter Three and Four illustrated, oppositional representations of the *mae preta* and *mulata* were dependent on the inferiorization of the black woman at the hands of the white Portuguese male and female and were easily reproduced in the Brazilian black and feminist movement. Through this lens we gained insight into the paradox of colonial encounters in spaces of feminist and anti-racist activism and the importance of exclusionary practices for the rediscovery of stigmatized identities and the autonomous mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women.

Second, theories of intersectionality elucidated the complex sites where race and gender intersect, including colonial narratives, individual bodies, and social movements, and the distinct configurations and outcomes of these convergences. The notion of strategic intersectionality specifically delineated the multiple identity categories embodied by Afro-Brazilian women and the privilege and oppression they experienced in processes of collective mobilization. This conceptualization provided a heightened sense of the operation and strategic use of singular identity categorizations by movement actors within what Benita Roth calls "nested boxes of constraint" (2004, 216). A constraining factor of particular relevance to this case was the extreme discomfort of the Brazilian

population at large with outward forms of racial differentiation. As such, gender-centred

mobilizations became integral to the advancement of intersectional frames of action

within activist settings and formal policy arenas.

The third and final component of this study's explanatory framework, the political

process model, offered a unique vantage point from which to examine the constellation of

political opportunity structures that determine the options available to intersectional

groups. While postcolonial feminism identified the inseparability of activists from their

colonial histories and cultural representations and while strategic intersectionality

demonstrated the salience of identity categories, this social movement approach

acknowledged the crucial role of political environments in shaping the decisions and

tactics of Afro-Brazilian women activists. From this perspective, the constraints and

opportunities for the Afro-Brazilian women's movement are as much shaped by the

dominant ideological framework of racial democracy, as are the conditions facilitated by

political actors and institutions on the ground. Through this case we have witnessed the

concerted and interdependent influence of political and intellectual elite agendas in

regime transition, alignments with national and regional feminist movements, and

symbolic events in the UN system on the mobilization of race and gender issues in Brazil.

Key Findings

One of the primary conclusions of this work is that comprehensive theorizations

on the increased transnational mobilization of stigmatized identity groups, like that

undertaken by Afro-Brazilian women at Beijing and Durban, cannot occur without the

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critical interrogation of racial and gender hierarchies within individual societies. In grounding the mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women in colonial legacies, we see that while the colonial presence of the Portuguese Crown and the institution of slavery officially ended in the late 1800s, the logics of these transnational processes of domination continued to structure racial and patriarchal oppressions in Brazil. Their manifestation in contemporary Brazil is very much driven by two oppositional but equally subordinate constructions of black women. On the one hand, dark-skinned Afro-Brazilian women served as the docile caretakers and labourers of the racially diverse population. On the other, racially mixed or light-skinned Afro-Brazilian women were conceived as sexually devious and thus a threat to the moral purity of the nation.

This study suggests that in this context, a key mechanism of (neo)colonial relations of domination is the careful transformation of these subordinated roles into ones of national admiration. Brazilian academics and political elites, most notably Freyre and Vargas, were integral to the reconfiguration of dualistic depictions of Afro-Brazilian women as mothers of the Brazilian nation and its greatest seductress so as to foster a distinctive national identity. The *mulata* figure, in particular, was critical to the configuration of Brazil as a post-racial modern nation. Chapter Three pointed to the erection of commemorative *mae preta* statutes by the Sao Paulo government during the country's deep economic depression in the 1930s and the central placement of *mulata* dancers in tourist advertisements for the country's annual Carnival celebrations as key examples of this deliberate construction and exploitation in cultural imagery. As noted in Chapter Four, even social movements were not immune to these manipulations. In an

attempt to generate a broader support base, black culture organizations readily embraced and reproduced these caricatures.

Such acts demonstrate the repeated usage of the black female figure in Brazilian political and cultural projects to facilitate national cohesion and international acclaim. It should be noted that in this case, the power of the foreigner gaze is both a recurring and important theme. From the transmission of the whitening ideology in the post abolition era to public lobbies against racism at the Durban Conference, the state's clamouring for accolades and distinction from Western political and intellectual powers has consistently undermined race and gender relations in this country.

The long-term ramifications of colonialism and slavery and their national manifestations are still seen in the overwhelming presence of Afro-Brazilian women in precarious forms of employment and living situations in the present day. This study deduces that where intersectional groups figure in colonial histories is of critical importance to their positioning in processes of identity-based consciousness-raising and social mobilization. More specifically, it finds that pervasive colonial constructions infiltrated sites of collective organization in Brazil and directly contributed to the marginalized status of Afro-Brazilian women activists in the Brazilian black and feminist movements. As seen in Chapter Four, in both movements, stigmatized racial and gender identities severely limited the communication of intersectional perspectives and the upward mobility of Afro-Brazilian women because they were often expected to perform menial tasks and remain silent on their experiences and concerns. With the vital contributions of black women activists frequently being overlooked, sexism and

homophobia also served as polarizing mechanisms in the country's largest black movement organization, the MNU. The reluctance of white feminists to acknowledge their own contribution to the historical economic and social subordination of Afro-Brazilian women strained cross and inter-movement relations for much of the 1980s and 1990s.

With the subsequent use of the gender-based discourses and feminist spaces by Afro-Brazilian women activists to initiate their own mobilization in the 1980s, we see the acute awareness of activists of the privileges held by certain identity categories in processes of democratic transition. The strategies of Afro-Brazilian women activists, particularly in the CECF in Sao Paulo, encourage us to expand our thinking on the presentation of intersectional identities in the context of political transition. These activists recognized the limits placed race-based mobilization by the military regime and by the general unwillingness of Brazilians to dismantle the ideology of racial democracy regardless of the country's shift towards democracy. In contrast, gender equality was held up as a fundamental principle of representation of democratic governance. The extensive communication between the Brazilian feminist movement and governmental institutions, creation of Women's Rights Councils and women-only police stations, and the declaration of equality between men and women in the 1988 Constitution were also signs of the viability of gender-oriented policy frameworks and activism in the Brazilian context.

Despite drastic attempts to deny the literal and symbolic entry of Afro-Brazilian women in national and regional feminist spaces—the most notable example found at the

Third Latin American Feminist Encounter in 1985—Afro-Brazilian women's resilient efforts to introduce a racial perspective at these sites reflects their realization that gender as a source of identity and mobilization, yielded greater opportunities than race. This study highlights how race and gender are mobilized in particular historical moments and in relation to broader domestic, regional, and international factors. In short, it is strategic intersectionality at work.

The study further demonstrates that UN Conferences and preparatory processes, especially at Durban, have been critical sites for the mobilization and affirmation of historically marginalized intersectional identities and for the consolidation of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement at the national level. A combination of factors led to the mobilization of movement activists outside their borders, including the exclusion experienced within Brazilian social movement circles and the more nuanced understanding of discrimination facilitated by the UN. In Chapter Five, we gained a greater appreciation of the consideration given by Afro-Brazilian women activists to the domestic and international political landscape and the opportunities afforded by the UN system for the progression of intersectional identities and mobilizations.

The Beijing Conference had several positive consequences for the fledging relationship between white and black Brazilian feminists with the former acknowledging the need to reject homogenizing discourses about Brazilian women's rights and experiences and the latter succeeding in integrating a racial perspective on gender violence in the Conference's preparatory stages. It was not until Durban, however, that internal efforts to prioritize the identities and issues of women of African descent in

Conference proceedings were intensified. For example, each of the recommendations listed in the Network of Black Brazilian Women's NGOs conference report for Durban, *We Black Brazilian Women*, embodied an intersectional perspective. This move not only reflects the commitment of the movement to addressing the complex dimensions of black women's oppression, but it also fell in line with the UN's demand for more comprehensive resolutions to intersectional forms of discrimination in the months leading up to Durban.

If we only drew on the theoretical instruments often used in IR and transnational feminist literature to assess the impact of Afro-Brazilian women's mobilization, it would seem that their emergence in the context of a significant political regime transition and their participation in UN Conference processes have yielded menial results. There has been little shift in terms of the upward social or economic mobility of Afro-Brazilian women as the majority remain situated at the lowest ranks of employment, income, and standards of living. Affirmation action measures adopted in the post-Durban era have largely adhered to a singular comprehension of racial inequalities in the country. With the key exception of reproductive health care, Afro-Brazilian women have not seen any significant inclusion of intersectional perspectives in existing policy frameworks. Further, country-specific remnants of institutions of slavery and colonialism continue to stifle cross-border networks between movement activists and Afro-descendant women in other parts of the world.

The final chapter of this study therefore illustrates the need for an evaluative framework in IR which recognizes the importance of these processes for the internal

cohesion of national movements and the articulation of their agendas. The Network of Black Brazilian Women's NGOs is an example of a movement body that has flourished in the ten years since the Durban Conference. It has built an autonomous black women's network from the communicative strategies, international policy and legal expertise, and momentum gained at the transnational level.

Scholarly Contributions and Directions for Future Research

At the broadest level, this thesis speaks to the significance of intersections in the theorization and practice of identity-based mobilization; intersections between IR and comparative politics, race and gender categories, colonial and postcolonial logics, and multilevel opportunity structures. The above findings force us to move beyond abstract conceptualizations of intersectional mobilizations and to rethink the processes, opportunities, and frictions that underlie and inform the organization of activists within and outside state borders. A key contribution to existing studies of transnational activism is the assertion that the primary objective of individual movements at the transnational level is not only to strategically affect the decisions of states and international organizations, but to advance and legitimize novel understandings of identity and discrimination among state and non-state actors. In specific relation to Afro-Brazilian women activists, these different priorities can be attributed to the dissatisfaction of movement actors with hegemonic discourses of racial exceptionalism and the perpetuation of skewed colonial accounts in Brazil.

Another contribution to this scholarly discourse comes in the illustration that the processes of transnational mobilization do not necessarily begin when activists are met with "blockages" in contemporary domestic political arenas as suggested by Keck and Sikkink (1998) or even in the early stages of the movement's formation. The sources and precursors of Afro-Brazilian women's activism can be traced back to the institutions of colonialism and slavery in Brazil.

By linking social movement theories and intersectionality frameworks, this study offers significant insights into both scholarly discourses. It sheds light on how movements utilize their identities as strategic resources to navigate national and transnational sites of activism and to bring their concerns to the forefront of institutional agendas. This research contributes to existing theorizations by using a synthesis of strategy and identity oriented approaches to examine the complex negotiation of identities by activists embodying multiple identity categories. The analysis of Afro-Brazilian women's creative use of gender in the early stages of mobilization and their emphasis on race to build consensus among movement members in the aftermath of Beijing reveals the deeply political and contextual nature of identity articulations in mobilization processes. In this respect, we gain a sense of the concrete strategies undertaken by movement actors to challenge hegemonic ideologies and 'invisible' identities. By concentrating on the dynamics of the identity formation and activism of Afro-Brazilian women, the study also takes a crucial step towards diversifying the agents and geographical locations of transnational activism examined in both fields.

Future research can use the explanatory framework developed in this work to examine the historical complexities and strategies of other intersectional groups engaged in contemporary transnational organizing. This framework allows for more detailed and sustained analyses of the multiple identities, opportunity structures, and contextual factors that converge in mobilizations at the national and transnational level. Future research could also examine other movements of African descendants in the Latin American and Caribbean region, which have also encountered hostilities within social movement circles and witnessed the unique closures and openings provided by colonial legacies, democratic transitions, and national and international institutions.

Furthermore, opening up the examination of the experiences and strategies of male activists of African descent is necessary to glean a sense of how masculine identities worked singularly or in concert with race to propel or stifle movement efforts. Is the reconstruction and reclamation of a marginalized intersectional identity at the center of their activism? Since there is such a significant void of literatures detailing the specific strategies and experiences of women of African descent, however, increased research on how they have negotiated their identities and confronted long-standing discriminations while remaining conscious of the specificities of colonial histories and political environments is imperative.

Lastly, as we move forward, we must be careful not to narrowly view colonial logics as frozen or insurmountable structures, states as adversaries, international institutions as targets or identities as inconsequential in processes of intersectional social mobilization. Such categorizations would only minimize their complexities. By

expanding our previous conceptualizations we can begin to understand how

intersectional activists, like Afro-Brazilian women, have not only faced exclusions and

opportunities at the nexus of the national and transnational, but have become strategic

players and power holders in their own right.

APPENDIX

Excerpt from Sample Interview Question Template, Afro-Brazilian Women Activists

Before I begin I would like to give you an idea of how the interview will be structured. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will be open-ended. This means that most of the questions will not have yes or no answers, allowing you to expand or elaborate as much as you see fit. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any point without consequence. All the information you provide will remain completely confidential, if you prefer. With your permission, your name or quotations may appear in the thesis that will result from this interview.

At the end of the interview I will give you my contact information so that if you have any questions or further additions that you would like to make or if you wish to obtain information about the results of the study you can contact me. I will also give you the contact information of the McMaster Research and Ethics Board so that if you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant or how the study is conducted you can contact them.

To get a better comprehension of the demographics of Afro-Brazilian women activists, to begin, I will ask you a small number of background questions about yourself.

1. How old are you?
2. Were you born in Brazil? If yes, where?

3. Can you tell me when you first became interested in issues about the treatment and rights of Afro-Brazilian women? What stimulated your interest?

4. Are you currently affiliated with any Afro-Brazilian women's organizations? If so, which ones and how many? If not, why?

5. Please tell me about your involvement in these organizations.

6. What do you see as the major issues that have an impact on the identities and rights of Afro-Brazilian women today? In general, how do Afro-Brazilian women perceive themselves and what domestic and international factors have shaped the construction of their identity construction?

7. How receptive have different groups in and outside of the state been to the agenda of your organization and the Afro-Brazilian women's movement at large since the country's return to democratic rule? In other words, has the regime change made it easier or more challenging to gain widespread support for causes relating to racial and gender equality in Brazil?

8. How important is it for the Afro-Brazilian women activists to mobilize at the transnational level? How useful have UN Conferences and partnerships with other women's organizations, for example in the African diaspora, been for the development and activities of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement? Is more transnational collaboration needed? If yes, how do you think this can occur? If no, why not?

9. Is there anything else you think I need to know about the national and transnational dimensions of Afro-Brazilian women's activism? Do you have any further comments to make or anything else you would like to discuss?

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