The Interface of Race and National Identity in Brazil and South Africa

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Abstract

This paper explores the literature about the interface of race and national identities by comparing Brazil and South Africa in light of the recent and strong transformations in racial orders in both countries. By relying on survey data as well as in-depth interviews, it discusses the interactions of the multiple dimensions of national and racial identities (e.g. public, political, socioeconomic, and cultural) and investigates how Brazilians and South Africans make sense of national racial ideologies while defining their racial and national identifications.

Keywords

Race, National Identity, Brazil, South Africa

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Since DuBois concept of double consciousness, sociologists have acknowledged that ethno-racial minorities — African Americans as the case in point — are able to both: remain faithful to their particular identities while affirming their belonging to the national community. More recent sociological formulations suggest that immigrant ethnic groups develop a shared national identity while ethnic identity is retained (Alba, 2005). These studies also show that immigrants and stigmatized racial groups have to deal with everyday racism and miscategorization — e.g. not being perceived as equal and *legitimate* members of the national culture (Wu, 2002). We still have very little empirical research, however, about how people negotiate their attachment to ethnoracial identities and their national identification, especially outside the United States (for exceptions see (Bickerstaff, 2008; Modood and Ahmad, 2007).

These concerns prompt the research questions that motivate this paper. How the recent and drastic transformations in Brazil and South Africa have influenced the interface of racial and national IDs in these two countries? How do black professionals in Brazil and South Africa construct their racial identification in light of the striking changes in racial order that have affected these two societies during recent decades? And, in return, how do these emergent racial identification processes affect the shape of national identification in these two recently democraticized countries? In order to answer these questions I rely on national surveys to measure socioeconomic and on 60 in-depth interviews with black professionals[1]. In these interviews I explore black professionals' repertoires in talking about race and nationality in Brazil and South Africa.

My study can contribute to the better understanding of the interface of race and national identities in at least two ways. First, in comparing Brazil and South Africa, I challenge assumptions of the macrohistorical literature that has presented these two cases as extreme examples of racial ideologies (Marx, 1998; Ribeiro, 1996). In addition, the recent and strong transformations in racial orders in both countries, allow me to address the issue of change, dialoguing with Sawyer's (2006) racial cycles theory.

Second, by relying on quantitative data as well as in-depth interviews, I can reflect on the interactions of the multiple dimensions of national and racial identities (e.g. public, political, socioeconomic, and cultural). In addition, I explore how actors make sense of national racial ideologies while defining their racial and national identifications, understanding how they give relevance and meaning to their choices.

Comparing Brazil and South Africa: racial cycles and national ideologies

Despite the widespread socioeconomic exclusion of blacks in both countries, Brazil and South Africa have usually been treated as extreme opposites in the comparative race and ethnic relations literature. While Brazil has avoided any type of formal racial classification system since the abolition of slavery in 1888, South Africa maintained a formal apartheid regime until 1990. The usual description presents Brazil as a country in which racial boundaries are blurred, racial residential segregation is low, and interracial marriage is common. In South Africa, racial boundaries are rigid, racial residential segregation is high, and interracial marriage is very uncommon.

According to the 2010 national census, the population in Brazil is racially divided among amarelos [*Asians*], Indigenas [*Indigenous*], pretos [*blacks*], pardos [*browns*] and brancos [*whites*] (less than 1%, less than 1%, 7.6%, 43.1% and 47.7%, respectively). The main color line, however, has always been between whites and non-whites (from now on referred to as blacks)[2]. The distribution among racial groups has changed through time due to high rates of miscegenation and intermarriage or simply by changes in self-classification, making official racial boundaries much more blurred than those of South Africa. Since the end of slavery in 1888, all state policies have been formally color-blind — Brazil never had anything equivalent to either South African apartheid or U.S. Jim Crow segregation. Certainly, discrimination does exist and, as in South Africa and the United States, blacks are overrepresented among the less privileged groups in society and underrepresented in professional occupations and in higher education. The belief in racial democracy, however, has been prevalent in popular culture and most academic works until recently.

In South Africa, the white and the black population (9.6% and 90.4%, respectively) are divided along ethnic and linguistic lines[3]. Whites are broadly divided between native English- and Afrikaans-speaking. Blacks are divided between Indians, Coloreds, and Africans (2.5%, 8.9%, and 79%, respectively)[4]. Within the African population there are several ethnic groups (the largest being the Xhosa and the Zulu) and nine official languages. Once English and Afrikaans are included, South Africa has a total of eleven official languages. During the Apartheid Era (1948-1994), the white National Party officially classified the population into four racial groups (White, African, Indian, and Colored) creating strong racial boundaries in every sphere of social life: residential patterns, occupational distribution, and educational organization. Since the dismantling of apartheid in 1994, blacks — especially Africans — have gained access to political power but remain overrepresented among the less privileged groups in society. Today, most official state data still relies on the four official racial categories in order to measure improvements in racial inclusion.

Comparisons between Brazil and South African race relations have not been as frequent as comparisons between the United States and Brazil or/and South Africa and United States. In recent years, however, the acknowledgment of the existence of racial discrimination in Brazil has encouraged this comparison. Comparative studies, however,

have usually tried to understand the origins of such differences from a macrohistorical perspective. As in the case of most comparative race studies, different systems of slavery and colonization are the usual suspects (Cooper, 1996).

Anthony Marx (1998) brought a more original approach in his comparative study of racial politics in nation-state building in Brazil, South Africa and the United States. His main argument is that the degree of consensus among white elites determined their support to strong or weak racial boundaries. Therefore, while in the United States and South Africa, white elites were highly divided (between North and South, and British and Afrikaner, respectively) and used the racial threat as a way to create white solidarity; in Brazil, the white elite was comfortable in power, and therefore could use more subtle strategies of racial exclusion.

Marx's study, however, has been criticized for not considering the agency of blacks and the importance of black resistance, and for not explaining the changes since independence and Republic (Sawyer, Pena, and Sidanius, 2004). I would add to these shortcomings the fact that this study still defines racial identifications and boundaries as either strong or weak, neglecting other dimensions of identification and social boundaries (Lamont and Bail, 2005). Finally, the study give us few clues on how to understand the recent changes in the racial projects in both countries.

In accordance with Sawyer and Pena's model of racial cycles (2003), different factors explain the recent changes in racial order in Brazil and South Africa, namely state crisis, critical events, transnational politics, state consolidation, and racial ideologies.

State crisis: In the past decades, both countries have experienced state crises that triggered democratization processes together with the transformation of racial order. In Brazil, the first democratic election after the military dictatorship was held 1988. In South Africa, Mandela was elected in the first democratic elections in 1994.

Critical events: The election of social democrat and left wing governments in both countries were critical events to push forward the implementation of policies to decrease racial inequalities — affirmative action in public universities in Brazil and black economic empowerment policies in South Africa. Democratization also opened more space for social movements and organization around racialized identities.

Transnational Politics: As developing countries, both Brazil and South Africa were highly susceptible to the international pressures and transnational politics. International boycott is widely acknowledged partly responsible for the end of South African apartheid. In addition, the influence of the United Nations Third Conference against Racism and Discrimination in 2001 in Durban, South Africa indicates the relevance of transnational politics. The decision to have South Africa host the conference indicates that the world was wondering how the ANC would deal with the astounding racial inequalities inherited from the apartheid regime (Subotzky, 2003). Brazil, on the other hand, sent the largest number of black movement advocacy groups and used the conference to denounce the existence of racial discrimination in Brazil, forcing the Brazilian state to acknowledge it and propose corrective policies. In other words, the existence of this international forum was a key element in the implementation of these policies to redress racial inequalities by allowing Brazilian black movements to pressure the government (Peria, 2004; Telles, 2004).

State Consolidation: Anecdotal evidence indicates a possible backlash in racial politics in Brazil and South Africa. It is possible to identity that the recent changes and racially-targeted policies as reverse discrimination — in a movement similar to the post-civil

rights decades in the United States. Growing white flight from South Africa — mostly in the form of immigration to the UK and Australia — seem to support that perception. In the case of Brazil affirmative action policies have been attacked as un-Brazilian (Kamel, 2006) and as creating "dangerous divisions" in society (Fry and Maggie, 2007). This would support Sawyer's perception that state consolidation together with fiscal pressures might threaten some of the achievements of the past decades. Sawyer argues that "Racial politics are often an arena in which broader anxieties about the direction of society are played out, and state consolidation — the mechanism that follows state crisis — tends to return racial politics to a state of normalcy, or equilibrium" (Sawyer, Pena, and Sidanius, 2004: 10). Sawyer's perception, however, seems to be based in a very static and homogeneous perception of the role of the state — acting always as a conservative force (Powell, 2012; Skrentny, 2002). Once one looks at the different levels of state institutions and forces, this dynamic appears much more complex and racial ideologies — or projects — appear as real competing , dynamic and sometimes conflicting forces.

Racial Ideologies: It is in the sphere of racial ideologies that Brazil and South Africa have been most strongly defined as opposed to each other — while the former country was based on the myth of racial democracy, the latter was constructed in a history of white supremacy and apartheid (Ribeiro, 1996). The recent implementation of affirmative action policies in both contexts, however, challenges this radical opposition and demands a better understanding of the dynamics of racial ideologies and national myths in these two contexts (Silva, 2006).

Racial Cycles theory defines ideology, as well as the State, as a conservative force. But the authors do not discuss how these ideologies may change, as seem to be the case in Brazil and South Africa in recent years. Despite the lack of empirical data, the widespread belief is that until the 1980s the dominant racial ideology in Brazil was racial democracy. The idea of racial democracy emerged as a racial ideology during the 1930s in Brazil[5], and is considered one of the pillars of the nation-building (and nationalistic) project implemented in the "New" Brazilian Republic[6]. This belief, however, has proven to be too simplistic, since the discourse of racial democracy has always been strongly challenged as a reality.

Today, surveys results show that the majority of Brazilians acknowledge the existence of racism, even if they believe that race relations in Brazil are better than in other countries (Bailey, 2002) and reject and/or ignore racial diversity as a positive value (Silva, 2006).

The implementation of racial quotas in Brazilian public and highly prestigious universities was a critical event that complicated this picture. If black movement mobilization was key in the implementation process (Paschell, 2011), surveys show not only a general agreement with the existence of racial discrimination in the country, but also a wide support for affirmative action policies for blacks in higher education and job hiring. Differently from the United States, support to affirmative action is mostly related to class, rather than race identities — i.e. those with higher education (mostly white) largely opposed these policies, while in all other educational levels, there was strong support for racial quotas, across racial lines (Telles and Bailey, 2002). In addition, support seems to have increased since the initial implementation of these policies (Guimarães, 2007).

It is also true, however, that the opposition to racial quotas has also been visible. Scholars, who had historically denounced the existence of racial discrimination in the country, have showed strong opposition to these policies on the grounds that they are inadequate to the Brazilian blurred racial boundaries (Fry and Maggie, 2007). In a manifesto published

in the main Brazilian newspapers on June 30th, 2006, a small group of well-known artists, scholars, and public intellectuals presented three main arguments to reject the implementation of quotas and other race-conscious policies in Brazil. First, Brazil is a Republic, which since the end of slavery had not relied on race classification for any social policy. In other words, Brazil is a color-blind nation-state, with a Republican model of citizenship. Second, exclusion of blacks from university education is not a problem of race discrimination — since the criterion for university access has always been color blind — but a problem of socioeconomic inequality and low quality public education. Third, using race as a criterion for distribution of resources will intensify racial antagonism in Brazil.

It is important to note, however, that both groups — those for and against racial quotas — accept the existence of racial inequalities and discrimination in Brazilian society. Their disagreement is about the best way to approach this inequality and the impact of different approaches on the Brazilian nation-state model. These debates bring to surface the tension between different racial projects for Brazil: one closer to the melting pot model, while the other defends a more multicultural approach (Silva, 2007).

Since its independence, South Africa's nation-building strategy was strongly based on an elite reliance on white supremacy and apartheid ideologies. However, it is fair to say that this ideology has always been strongly objected by the majority of the population. The two strongest ideological positions against apartheid were non-racialism and black consciousness. The Freedom Charter is highly representative of the dominant non-racial ideology in the ANC. Written in 1955, the Charter stated a non-racial ideology: "South Africa belongs to all those who live in it, white and black."[7] Non racialism meant rejecting all official racial categorization and racial segregation, and at the same time advancing integration through a united struggle to build a democratic society in which racial divisions would be swept away by a common South African identity (Taylor and Foster, 1999: 328). Non-racialism was a different option from the 1948 ANCYL Garveyte Slogan "Africa for Africans," an ideology that saw no space for whites in Africa. It was also different from the black consciousness movements of the 1970s, which defended black political organization, rather than multiracial movements to oppose apartheid — fearing white dominance even in resistance movements. But there was little debate about the type of nation that South Africa would be with the end of apartheid. Even Biko — a central leader of the black consciousness movement — assumed that South Africa would become a society based on Republican citizenship and universal rights (Biko and Stubbs, 2004)[8]. It was assumed that a democratic state would create a racially united nation (Chipkin, 2007).

With the democratic transition, the so-called national question became central to the definition of the New South Africa. The national question may be defined as the challenge to the project of cultivating "a sense of nationhood out of the diverse ethnic, racial, regional, class and gender identities that pervade the country" (Boyce, 1999: 232). These challenges became clearer once different racial projects for the new South Africa appeared: namely, Non-racialism, Afrocentrism, and the Rainbow Nation. While old school ANC leaders (represented by Mandela) still seem to believe in the historical non-racialism approach, others have argued that new leadership in the ANC (represented by Mandela's successor Mbeki) were pushing for a more African-centered identity. Chipkin (2007) defined this as the debate about the definition of the legitimate members of the South African polity: democratic citizens versus authentic national subjects. While the first choice focused on a civic model of nation-state, the latter relied on a more ethnic perspective — one in which black Africans are defined as more legitimate citizens of South Africa.

The idea of the rainbow nation appears as a more multicultural approach to the new South Africa — an essentially pluralist notion which emphasizes ethnicity as the defining experience of all South Africans. The image of the rainbow, however, still implies that all South Africans can agree on the directions of the nation (like the colors of rainbow, they can remain separate, but all go into the same direction). The rainbow has been criticize, however, for rendering the ethnic and racial criteria as permanent and being in opposition to the ANC historical commitment to nonracialism (Boyce, 1999: 235-236). Neville Alexander (2003), for example, criticizes the rainbow nation model for easily accepting constructs such as race and ethnicity and proposes instead the Gariep Nation — blending of many colors, languages, and cultures. This idea is closer to the melting pot, but ideally, without a hegemonic culture.

Those who defend a Republican citizenship model have denounced racialism as an integral part of the three racial projects in South Africa — even non-racialism would still rely on race solidarity (assuming the idea of race nations) therefore strengthening racial solidarities over national attachment (MacDonald, 2006; Mare, 1999). These scholars argue that South Africa should not even try to build a unified nation — it should simply rely on a civic, democratic culture, a state citizenship.

As in the case of Brazil, different racial projects seem to be competing in the definition of the new South Africa. Predictions on which model is (and will be) hegemonic in both countries, however, are still largely based on theoretical assumptions and anecdotal evidence. In other words, a lot is assumed but not much is known about the ways Brazilian and South Africans articulate their ethnoracial and national identities and how do different strategies relate to competing racial projects available in these countries.

Race and national identifications in Brazil and South Africa — previous studies

Interest in the interface between racial and national identities is recent in Brazil and South Africa, and has very different underlying motivations. As already discussed, in the case of Brazil, it is related to the recent implementation of affirmative action policies. In the case of South Africa, it is pushed by the need to evaluate the successes and failures of post-apartheid nation-building. Below I present the general findings of these studies — which point out to strong national attachment, although with different salience and meaning.

In Brazil, there has been very little empirical research about the interface between national and racial identities. A 1998 national survey on Metropolitan areas, however, asked people about their color/racial identification and "origins" (Schwartzman, 1999)[9]. The results showed that when asked about origins 86.6% of the respondents identified their origin as Brazilian. Those who self define racially (and/or color-wise) as *pretos* [blacks] (88.62%) and *pardos* [browns] (93.9%) have the highest frequency of Brazilian identification, but not significantly different from whites (83.11%) and indigenous (75.67%). Only those who self-classify as yellow (i.e. Asians) have lower scores in identification with Brazilian origin (44.79%), identifying mostly as having Japanese origin (70.79%).

These results show the salience and relevance of the Brazilian identity across national groups — even without being asked about national identity explicitly, this identification appeared spontaneously as the most prominent origin of respondents. A more recent study, the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA, 2010) confirmed these results asking respondents directly which identity is more important, the racial or national: 93.6% of respondents answered that the national identity is more than the racial. The difference between whites and blacks here is small and not significant.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that the racial identity is irrelevant, 83.3% of respondents state they are proud of the racial id, and 66% say racial identity is determinant in their lives. Among those who identify as black (*pretos*), according to the Census categories, pride (92.7%) and determination (75%) of the racial id are higher than among those who identity as browns (*pardos*) or whites (*brancos*). Together, these results show that both racial and national identification are relevant to Brazilians.

Since the democratic transition, surveys on racial and national identification in South Africa have been much more frequent than in Brazil. As in the case of the United States, however, the results have been mixed — while some authors have pointed to the persistence of race, others stress the growing importance of nationality and class. In addition, opinions seem to be changing fast since 1990.

Generally, South Africans spontaneously stress their racial, ethnic, and to a lesser extent language identities over their national ones. Both, in open-ended and multiple choice questions, only a small number of South Africans take the opportunity to call themselves South African (Grossberg, Struwig, and Pillay, 2006; Mattes, 1999; Roefs, 2006). For example, results from the 2001 HSRC survey show that when asked to rate different types of collective identities, significantly more South Africans chose race/ethnicity over nationality (22% vs. 8%)[10]. In addition, racial identification is stronger among Africans (ethnoracial identity appears as the strongest within this group — 25%) and Coloreds (25%, appearing after family attachment which was mentioned by 31%). Significantly less whites and Indians mentioned their racial identity as the most important collective identification (7% and 11%, respectively), and both groups chose occupation first (50% and 39%, respectively). National identification ranked equally low across all racial groups.

Roefs (2006), however, shows that many South Africans (44%) will choose a dual identity if given that option — stressing the relevance of race and national identity in the way they define themselves: "national identity and sub-group identities can coexist without impeding one another." In addition, national identity seems to be growing stronger: the proportion of South Africans with a strong national identification increased by 10 percent per year between 1998 and 2000[11].

Interestingly, despite its lack of salience, national identity seems to be positive and relevant for the great majority of South Africans. Afrobarometer data show that among all racial groups approximately 80% of respondents state they are proud (or very proud) to be South Africans. However, the rates have decreased among whites, Coloreds and Indians between 1995 — right after transition, when all racial groups showed a similar rate of approximately 90% — and 2000, when whites (75%,) Coloreds (87%), and Indians (84%) showed decline, while 94% of Africans remained proud of their South African identity (Burgess, 2002).

Analyzing the 2003 HSRC national survey, Grossberg, Struwig, and Pillay (2006) also showed that South Africans use multiple criteria to define true South Africaness: from objective characteristics as having South African citizenship (94%), being born in South Africa (92%), speak at least one language (90%) to more subjective standards like "feeling South African" (89%).

The survey results in Brazil and South Africa raise many questions about the meanings and dimensions of national and ethnoracial identities: e.g. How black Brazilians negotiate the pride in their racial identity with the centrality of national identification? How South African interviewees negotiate the salience of their ethnoracial identities with the pride in their national identification? Do respondents see contradictions in the way they

define their national and ethnoracial identifications? Some authors have argued that it is the content of national and racial identities that will be determinant to the interface between racial and national identity (Jung, 2000; Mattes, 1999). While cultural diversity can co-exist with strong national attachment across racial lines, diverse (and divergent) political identities are a more serious threat to democracy and nation building. I am able to address some of these questions in my in-depth interviews.

Meanings and contexts of racial and national attachment: in-depth interviews with black professionals in Brazil and South Africa

In my interviews with black professionals in Brazil and South Africa, I explored the multiple dimensions of racial and national identities and their impacts on citizenship. Although focusing on professionals does not give me a representative sample, my choice is highly relevant in at least three ways. First, by now it is well established in the literature on democratic transitions that a professional middle class plays a vital role in democratic transition processes. The reasons provided for the importance of the middle class range from their economic stake in supporting the new democratic order (Haggard and Kaufman,1995), their moderating force in politics (Lipset, 1981), to their role in bolstering civil society (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, 1994). Based on these studies, it is possible to argue that professionals, and especially black professionals, are in a position to be active players in the re-negotiation of a new racial order in Brazil and South Africa. Ethnic and racial differentiation within the middle class, however, has rarely been investigated in this literature.

Second, studying black professionals in Brazil and South Africa allows a dialogue with the recent and emerging literature on the experiences of the black middle class in the United States (Bowser, 2007; Collins, 1997; Feagin and Sikes, 1994; Lacy, 2007; Lamont and Fleming, 2005; Massey, 2003; Patterson, 1998; Pattillo, 2007). The American middle class has been used as proof of both, the success (due to their existence) and the failure (due to their pessimistic views on American society) of the multicultural project in the United States. American studies comparing the opinions of the black middle class to those of the white middle class and black working class have pointed out specific ways of political and social participation and distinct forms of alienation within this group that might be similarly present in Brazil and South Africa (Hochschild, 1995).

Finally, studying black professionals provides an angle that reframes the traditional race-class debates in Brazil and South Africa by partly isolating the effects of class exclusion and seeking to understand the experiences of those who have managed to enter historically white environments, segregated *de jure* in the latter and *de facto* in the former (Ribeiro 2006; Seekings and Nattrass 2005).

Findings from my qualitative interviews confirm the specificity of the black middle class experience in Brazil and South Africa — in both contexts, interviewees are aware of the contradictory structural position. On the other hand, my results reject any type of simple typology like national identity trumps racial identity in Brazil, and racial trumps national identity in South Africa. Despite different salience, both national and racial identities are important to the interviewees in both countries. However, definitions and contexts of salience are indeed different in both contexts.

Most of my interviewees had a strong and stated racial identity. In the case of Brazilian interviewees, most defined themselves as *negros* — the politicized term for blacks. South

Africans relied largely on the traditional apartheid classification to define themselves (African, Colored, and Indian) — only a few relied on the anti-apartheid black political identity. Interviewees stated almost unanimously being proud of their racial identity.

Brazilian interviewees, however, had a harder time explaining what it means to be black. With the exception of narratives and opinions about affirmative action, there was no clearly defined script to talk about race. When asked about the meaning of being black, class and race were usually conflated in the answer. Blackness rarely came up spontaneously in the interviews — it would usually come up in questions about unfairness, or discrimination. In general, blacks were seen as equal to whites normatively and cognitively — cultural differences came up very rarely. Miscegenation was commonly cited as the explanation for equality and sameness among all races. Interestingly, miscegenation was valued even by those interviewees with strong racial identities as *negros*.

In South Africa, racial identities were much more salient, coming up spontaneously when interviewees talked about their life-stories. The script to talk about race was much more related to South African history, which often presented as the basis for racial identity. Black identity means not only historical disadvantage but also cultural difference. When asked if blacks and whites are equal or different, most interviewees tended to stress differences over equality and sameness. Interviewees usually referred to their children (or future generations) as being less "obsessed" about race and more open to racial interactions[12]. Many interviewees still hoped, however, for their children to marry people from background similar to their own — this preference was justified not in racial, but in cultural terms. In other words, miscegenation and intermarriage were rarely presented as values to be pursued in the new South Africa.

Racial discrimination was perceived as being strong in both countries. But once again, the context, incidents and explanations for discrimination were very different in both contexts. In Brazil, the experience of discrimination was the most cited shared experience and/or characteristic of all blacks. Public spaces and interactions were mostly cited: interactions with doormen, shop clerks, and with strangers. Universities and schools were rarely mentioned, as well as the interaction with co-workers[13].

In South Africa, discrimination is seen as still strong and mostly racial. It was also largely defined as product of group-threat strategies, i.e. whites want to maintain their apartheid privileges. Although discrimination in the public spaces was also mentioned, the workplace and the university were much more often presented as racialized spaces. In other words, racism is highly perceived as happening in personal and private interactions in South Africa, while in Brazil, racism happens mostly in public spaces (Silva and Reis, 2011).

Anti-racism and equalization strategies also have different dynamics in Brazil and South Africa. On one hand, individual strategies of mobility (studying and working hard) were the most common strategies spontaneously mentioned by interviewees in both countries. On the other hand, while Brazilian interviewees showed mixed feelings about black movements and affirmative action policies, South Africans were much more supportive of racially-targeted policies, although with a few criticisms to their implementation. In addition, South Africans conflated racial and national politics much more often. But maybe the most important difference is between the equalization strategies in the two countries: once again, blacks in Brazil tended to emphasize sameness and mixing, while South Africans stressed normative equality (all men are equal) versus cognitive and cultural differences.

These understandings of sameness and difference are also directly related to the meaning of national identity in the two contexts. While Brazilians rely on the affective attachment and sameness definitions of national identity, South Africans have much more political, rationalized, and cognitive definitions of what does it mean to be South African.
In the case of Brazil, most respondents agree with positive government slogans like "the best thing about Brazil are Brazilians," and believe that one of the best thing about Brazil is that people get along, without civil wars or ethnoracial conflicts. Cultural and racial miscegenation were usually referred to as positive and central contributions to the nation (Silva and Reis, 2012). Interestingly, this is not seen as being in contradiction with the existence of racism and discrimination. Racism seen as products of history, very resistant to change, but dealt with in much better ways in Brazil than in other racially stratified societies — the usual comparative case being the United States. Most professional interviewees admire the existence of a black middle class in the United States, despite rejecting what they see as a racial segregation of the groups.

South African interviewees also overwhelmingly believe that race relations in South Africa are better than in the United States, but for different reasons. Generally, they argue that South Africa deals more openly with issues of discrimination and racism, while Americans are caught off in political correctness, not addressing the root causes and motivations of racism. This belief that South Africa is a country that acknowledges its strong differences is central to the definitions of the national identity — conflict is understood as part of the process of nation-building. The political transition (or miracle, as many South African interviewees called it) was often presented as the best thing about the country, together with its diversity.

In sum, despite the acknowledgement of racial discrimination in both countries, Brazilian national identities rely much more on what can be seen as a melting pot perspective, while South Africans seem to be investing a new model of multicultural identity — that brings together civic belonging with racial and cultural differences. While in the first model, mixing and sameness are strongly valued and presented as the pillars of the nation, in the latter model, acknowledgement of difference and political dialogue are seen as the only possible way for nation-building.

Identifying these differences in national myths (and their contradictions) is central to the understanding of the contemporary dynamics of racial politics and policies in each country.

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1. Most of the Brazilian data is available at the homepage Consórcio de Informações Sociais (CIS) from the Universidade de São Paulo, but some comes from the Pesquisa de Etnicidade e Raça na América Latina, coordinated by Edwards Telles from Princeton University in 2010. The South African data also comes from public surveys, mostly published by the Human Science Research Council. The in-depth interviews were conducted by me in 2007 and 2008 with male and female black professionals aged between 20 and 65 in Rio de Janeiro and Cape Town. I defined black professionals as individuals with higher education, occupying professional occupations, who in Brazil identify as preto and pardo, and in South Africa as *Black African* or *Coloured*, according to the census categories in each country.

2. The percentages were taken from the 2010 Brazilian Census. In most Brazilian racial relation studies blacks (*pretos*) and browns (*pardos*) are joined and classified as blacks (*negros*). This is justified in the literature by the similar socioeconomic characteristics of these two groups, especially when compared to whites and by the historical stigma of self-defining as black. I will also use race and color as synonyms. In Brazil until 1991, the Census question was "what is your color." Since 1990 the question became "what is your color and/or race?" and five options are given: *branco* [white], *pardo* [brown], *preto* [black], *amarelo* [yellow], and *indigena* [indigenous]. When in 1998 a National survey asked "open-ended" race/color questions, almost 200 different categories were registered, but most people fall into the three traditional categories (whites, browns and blacks), used by the government since 1870. Schwartzman, Simon. 1999. "Fora de foco: diversidade e identidades etnicas no Brasil." *Novos Estudos CEBRAP* 55:83-96.

3. Percentages for this paragraph were taken from 2001 South African Census.

4. The use of blacks to include these three groups comes from anti-apartheid political. Throughout the paper I will refer as blacks to the three groups and as Africans to the black African group.

5. The concept, however, was only created much later by Gilberto Freyre.

6. Brazil became independent in 1889 (one year after the abolishment of slavery), but only became a Republic in the 1920s — the old Republic. In 1930, Getulio Vargas was elected president, starting what is known as the Second and New Republic.

7. The Freedom Charter is a document collectively written. African National Congress (ANC) members went around the country collecting opinions and suggestions of "common people" for the future of the country. In reality, however, the Charter was largely designed by the ANC leadership.

8. In one of his last interviews Biko stated: "We see [South Africa as] a completely non-racial society. We don't believe, for instance, in the so-called guarantees for minority rights, because guaranteeing minority rights implies the recognition of portions of the community on a race

basis. We believe that in our country there shall be no minority, there shall be no majority, just the people. And those people will have the same status before the law and they will have the same political rights before the law. So in a sense it will be a completely non-racial egalitarian society." (Biko 2004: 170).

9. The question was "what origin do you consider to have?[*"qual a origem que o senhor(a) considera ter?"*] with no specification to the meaning of the term origin. It was asked as pre-coded/multiple choice and as an open-ended question. In both cases Brazilian was the most frequent choice — 86.6% in the first case, and 67.81% in the second. The main problem with this question is that people interpreted it according to very different criteria. For those who come from recent migration, this referred to the country of origins of grandparents or parents (therefore Italian, Portuguese as the first terms to appear in the open-ended question, after Brazilian). To the black population, this sometimes meant the link to an African past. But the results show that most people understood the question as being about national identification (Schwartzman 1999).

10. When asked to rate collective identity, SA put family first (29%), then race/ethnic (22%), the current occupation (17%), then gender (10%), then nationality (8%), then religion (6%), then region (4%), age (3%), class (1%); party/political movement (0%). Race is stronger among Africans (25% vs. 24% for family), then for Colored (25% but 31% for family). Occupation is the strongest for Indians (39%, then family 30%, than race 11%), and family for whites (50%, then 17% occupation, and 7% race).

11. Identification increased among all racial groups, but there were significant variations: for example, whites with weak national identities are still double from blacks.

12. One interesting point however, is that younger interviewees (in their early 20s) were much less optimistic than older interviewees. In addition, most examples of color-blind interactions referred to children rather than teenagers or young adults,

13. Impersonal job-searching and work interactions with people from outside work (who were not aware of the job position of the interviewee) were presented as frequent arenas of discrimination.

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