

DIPLOMA OF WHITENESS

RACE AND SOCIAL POLICY IN BRAZIL, 1917-1945



JERRY DÁVILA

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments, ix

Introduction, i

1 Building the “Brazilian Man,” 21

2 Educating Brazil, 52

3 What Happened to Rio’s Teachers of Color?, 90

4 Elementary Education, 125

5 Escola Nova no Estado Novo: The New School in the New State, 155

6 Behaving White: Rio’s Secondary Schools, 192

Epilogue: The Enduring Brazilian Fascination with Race, 233

List of Abbreviations, 244

Notes, 247

Bibliography, 271

Index, 287

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INTRODUCTION

In 1944, at the height of the Estado Novo dictatorship and Brazil's participation in the war against fascism in Europe, a young girl of indigenous descent named Jacyra became the center of a public debate on the nature of racism in Brazil. Her adoptive parents had tried to enroll her in the school of the Sisters of Notre Dame. When the nuns running the school refused her admission because she was not white, her angry parents and their supporters took their indignation to the media. According to a letter to one of the main Rio de Janeiro dailies, the *Diario Carioca*, when the parents met with one of the (supposedly) German nuns who ran the school about matriculating their daughter, they asked whether she might face discrimination at the school. The nun asked to see the girl, and in the words of the letter writer, "said she could not accept the little Indian . . . because at the school there were only white students."¹

The author of the letter, medical school professor Mauricio de Medeiros, attributed the act of racism to the fact that the nuns were of German descent—"countrywomen of Hitler." He argued that "in our country there has never been prejudice of this type. . . . Descendants of Indians have reached positions of distinction and respect in our country, including . . . [army Field Marshal Candido] Rondon." He added that when, among the mixture of races that characterizes Brazil, the indigenous traits are more visible, "it is with a certain pride that we call the person *caboclo*."²

A few days later, a Catholic supporter of the Sisters of Notre Dame, H. So-

bral Pinto, replied to Medeiros's charges. Sobral Pinto explained that the nuns were not German but Polish, and that they had fled nazism and therefore abhorred racism. And, because they are not racists, he added, the nuns "are saddened by these values of Brazilian and North American parents." In his view the nuns did not discriminate against the girl but were afraid that the white children at the school would: "The religious women make no distinction by color or race. Still, as regards the students of the school, they cannot guarantee the same." They asked for the girl to appear before the Brazilian headmistress, who weighed her appearance against the "prejudices existent in many sectors of our society." To "protect" the girl, the school denied her admission and offered to enroll her in another school run by the nuns "where girls of all colors are received."³

Sobral Pinto inverted Medeiros's argument that the foreign nuns were introducing accusations of racism into a Brazilian society that many claimed was a racial democracy, free of intolerance and discrimination. Instead, he suggested that the nuns were trying to negotiate the racism already present in Brazilian society; racism that he equated with racial intolerance in the United States. Furthermore, Sobral Pinto suggested that Medeiros should be more sensitive to "exalted nationalism," because Medeiros himself had been a victim of intolerance when he was arrested during the anticommunist crackdown of 1936 by the regime still in power. Sobral Pinto reminded readers that Medeiros was singled out as a "direct agent of doctrines disrespectful of Brazil's historical personality," was jailed, and "unjustly" lost his professorship at the Rio de Janeiro School of Medicine.

The story became a press sensation. Coverage spread across the city newspapers, from the *Diário Carioca* to the *Diário de Notícias*, the *Folha Carioca*, the *Jornal de Comércio*, and *O Globo*.⁴ What is more, these newspapers began reprinting the letters to the editor that appeared on their competitors' pages. At stake was not simply the question of whether Jacyra had been the victim of discrimination, but whether racism was a foreign or native entity—were Brazilians racists? Letter writers like Dr. Doraci de Souza added their opinions, criticizing the nuns for hiding behind the image of their racist students: "The function of a school, especially a Catholic school, is to educate their children with Christian principles . . . [what they have] admitted is that the school is unable to educate its students."⁵

This debate about the nature of racism alarmed the censors at the federal Department of Press and Propaganda (DIP), who on 18 March prohibited any further coverage of the Jacyra incident. Sobral Pinto was outraged that the censors had robbed him of the chance to defend the nuns against the latest series of attacks in the press. He asked the archbishop of Rio, Jaime de Barros Câmara, to use his influence to lift the silence imposed over the incident, because it would reflect poorly on the nuns and turn public opinion against the Church. He argued that the DIP's censorship "challenged the most legitimate rights of cultural thought of the Brazilian Nation."⁶

Archbishop Câmara took up the matter with Minister of Education and Health Gustavo Capanema, a longtime ally of the Catholic Church and of the conservative Catholic activists who had supported the regime.⁷ Capanema declared discussion of the incident closed, stating only that "racial prejudice absolutely does not exist in this case" and that the facts point to "the hypothesis of a misunderstanding . . . between two well-meaning parties."⁸

While Jacyra's experience involved admission to a private school, this incident and debate reflect the paradoxical role of race in Brazilian schools. The leaders of public education in Brazil in the first half of the twentieth century did not block students of color from attending their schools. To the contrary, between 1917 and 1945 they engaged in a succession of school-system expansion and reform projects aimed at bringing public schools within the reach of poor and nonwhite Brazilians who at the turn of the century were largely excluded from school. These educators sought to "perfect the race"—to create a healthy, culturally European, physically fit and nationalistic "Brazilian race."⁹ Between the world wars, Brazilians built school systems capable of extending near-universal elementary education.

Brazilian elites of the first half of the twentieth century tended to believe that the poor and the nonwhite were overwhelmingly degenerate.¹⁰ By defining this state of degeneracy in medical, scientific, and social scientific terms, they claimed for themselves the power to remedy it and they assumed jurisdiction over public education. They treated schools as clinics wherein the national maladies they associated with Brazil's mix of races could be cured. Their beliefs provided a powerful motive for the construction of schools, and shaped both the ways these schools would work and the lessons they would provide. This volume analyzes ways in which an emerging white medical,

social scientific, and intellectual elite turned their assumptions about race in Brazil into educational policies. These policies not only reflected elite views about degeneracy, they projected them into Brazilian society in ways that typically worked to the disadvantage of poor and nonwhite Brazilians, denying them equitable access to the programs, institutions, and social rewards that educational policies conferred. Because these policies were steeped in medical and social scientific logic, they did not on the surface seem to handicap any individual or group. Consequently, these policies not only placed new obstacles in the way of social and racial integration in Brazil but they left only scant evidence of their effects, limiting the ability of Afro-Brazilians to challenge their inherent inequity.

This study focuses on the work of education reformers in Rio de Janeiro between 1917 and 1945. Rio de Janeiro was then Brazil's largest city, and as the federal capital it drew the energies of education reformers from across the nation. The reformist period began with two events in 1917. First, a team of doctors involved in the country's public health and hygiene movement set off on an "expedition" to chart health conditions in the interior of the country. When they returned from the field, doctors Arthur Neiva and Belissário Penna published a report calling for the creation of a federal ministry of education and health.¹¹ Second, Afrânio Peixoto, a doctor who was the leading Brazilian exponent of legal medicine (he believed some individuals were hereditarily inclined toward crime) and a student of the relationships between race, climate, and degeneracy in the tropics, assumed the directorship of the city of Rio's Department of Education. He entered his post with a broad mandate to reform the city's schools to reflect the growing consensus that racial degeneracy could be reversed through scientific improvements in health and education.

When progressive white intellectuals and public officials began to establish universal public education in Brazil in the first half of the twentieth century, their motives and actions were influenced by racial ideology in three general ways. First, they built on centuries of domination by a caste of white European colonists and their descendants, who lorded over slaves, indigenous peoples, and individuals of mixed ancestry. For centuries, this white elite also turned to Europe to borrow culture, ideas, and self-definition. Second, although these intellectuals and policymakers became increasingly critical of

that legacy (going so far as to celebrate racial mixture), they invariably came from the white elite and remained enmeshed in social values that, after centuries of colonialism and racial domination, continued to associate whiteness with strength, health, and virtue—values that were preserved and reinforced through the deprecation of other groups. Third, as they created educational policies in pursuit of a utopian dream of a modern, developed, and democratic Brazil, their vision was influenced by the meanings race held for them.

Brazil's self-styled educational pioneers turned the emerging public schools into spaces where centuries of white European supremacy was re-scripted in the languages of science, merit, and modernity. The schools they created were designed to imprint their white, elite vision of an ideal Brazilian nation on those mostly poor and nonwhite children who were to be the substance of that ideal. The role of race within this process resembles Ann Stoler's description of race in European colonies, where

the cultivation of a European self . . . was affirmed in the proliferating discourses around pedagogy, parenting, children's sexuality, servants, and tropical hygiene: micro-sites where "character," "good breeding," and proper rearing were implicitly raced. These discourses do more than prescribe suitable behavior; they locate how fundamentally bourgeois identity has been tied to notions of being "European" and being "white" and how sexual prescriptions served to secure and delineate the authentic, first-class citizens of the nation-state.¹²

In the societies analyzed by Stoler, whiteness was a threatened commodity and colonial officials preoccupied themselves with the task of shoring it up. For Brazilian elites, the problem was even more urgent—they believed their racially mixed nation already lacked the whiteness it needed to sustain its vitality. The task at hand, then, was to find new ways of creating whiteness. Thus, endowed with a commitment to forge a more European Brazil, and bound by a sense of modernity equated with whiteness, these educators built schools in which most every action and practice established racialized norms and meted out or withheld rewards based on them.

For Brazilian educators and their intellectual generation, race was not a biological fact. It was a metaphor that extended to describe the past, present, and future of the Brazilian nation. At one extreme, blackness signified the

past. Blackness was cast in Freudian language as primitive, prelogical, and childlike. More broadly, white elites equated blackness with unhealthiness, laziness, and criminality. Racial mixture symbolized historical process, envisioned as a trajectory from blackness to whiteness and from the past to the future. In the 1930s, white Brazilians could safely celebrate race mixture because they saw it as an inevitable step in the nation's evolution. Whiteness embodied the desired virtues of health, culture, science, and modernity. Educators ranging from federal Minister of Education and Health Gustavo Capanema to child psychologist Manoel Lourenço Filho, composer Heitor Villa-Lobos, history textbook author Jonathas Serrano, and anthropologist Arthur Ramos all explicitly embraced this vision of race. Naturally, for them Brazil's future was white.

For these educators, race also worked as a social (rather than biological) category.¹³ Because of the color of their skin or their ethnic origins, individuals might have been more likely to fit into a given racial category, but these categories were elastic. At the turn of the century, Brazilian elites, following the vogue of racial determinism in Europe, readily adopted the scientific racist belief that whites were superior and that those of black and mixed ancestry were degenerate. But by the second decade of the twentieth century these elites began to seek escape from the determinist trap that tied Brazil to perpetual backwardness because of its large nonwhite population. Instead, they embraced a notion that degeneracy was an acquired—and therefore remediable—condition. Blackness still held all of its pejorative connotations, but individuals could escape the social category of blackness through improvement of their health, level of education and culture, or their social class. Conversely, whites could degenerate through their exposure to poverty, vices, and disease. In other words, money, education, celebrity status, and other forms of social ascension increased whiteness.¹⁴

These elites, and Brazil's education reformers in particular, defined whiteness through both positive and negative affirmation. Whiteness was a way of affirming Europeaness, which in turn bore all the trappings of modernity—from urbanization to industrialization, rationalism, science, and civic virtue. In addition, whiteness conveyed a racial sense of healthiness, vigor, and Darwinian superiority. Whiteness was also, however, the absence of blackness, which was a negative affirmation of racial virtue similar to that developed in

the United States and exemplified by Malcolm X's assertion that " 'white man' as commonly used, means complexion only secondarily; primarily it described attitudes and actions. In America 'white men' meant specific attitudes and actions toward the black man, and toward all other non-white men."¹⁵

Studies by David Roediger, George Lipsitz, and others have explored the ways blackness and whiteness in the United States have been exclusive in mutually reinforcing ways. Citing Ralph Ellison, Roediger argues that whiteness only acquired meaning because of the existence of blackness: "Southern whites cannot walk, talk, sing, conceive of laws or justice, think of sex, love, the family or freedom without responding to the presence of Negroes."¹⁶ Yet, while Brazilian educators, scientists, and intellectuals affirmed the significance of whiteness through a discourse that associated degeneracy with blackness, there was a crucial difference between their vision and the vision developed in the United States. Using an elastic definition of degeneracy, white Brazilian elites did not see blackness and whiteness as mutually exclusive. Poor whites could be degenerate, and some Brazilians of color could escape degeneracy by whitening through social ascension. It is this crucial detail that infused Brazilian public education with its special significance.

The possibility of hastening Brazil's modernization by increasing the number of people of color who no longer fit into the social category of black drove intellectuals, scientists, doctors, anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists into a sustained, concerted campaign to build state institutions attending to public health and education. The title of this volume, *Diploma of Whiteness*, is drawn from a December 2000 cover story in the Brazilian news magazine *Veja*, which explored the possibility of individuals being effectively white despite their skin color.¹⁷ This phrase conveys what public education meant to the leaders of the school reform movement between the world wars: schools would provide the resources of basic health and culture that could earn children, regardless of their color, the social category of white. Educators, social scientists, and policymakers spared little energy or expense in building a state role in mediating Brazil's escape from the determinist trap of blackness and degeneracy.

The principles of public education established by these interwar elites remained in place throughout the twentieth century. As recently as 1996, the Brazilian congress continued to approve educational legislation based on

interwar reforms. What has changed is not public education but rather popular perceptions of that education. Since the 1960s, the most visible division in public education has been based on social class: poor children would attend public school, those who could afford to do so would attend private school. Still, the patterns of racial inequality in Brazilian education have remained and have transcended social class barriers. Nelson do Valle Silva and Carlos Hasenbalg have demonstrated that patterns of educational attainment remain unequal even when social class is eliminated as a factor: whites of the same social class have higher literacy rates and remain more likely to attend school, to stay in school longer, to be advanced through school more rapidly, and to secure better-paying jobs given the same educational qualifications. Silva and Hasenbalg conclude that “white children’s rates of school advancement are significantly more rapid than those of *pardo* [mixed] and *preto* [black] children. These differences result in profound educational inequalities that separate whites and nonwhites in Brazilian society.”¹⁸

In part, these enduring racial inequalities have resulted from the fusion of educational reform movements and racial thought in the decades between the world wars. The rise of public education coincided with a wave of publications in Brazil that detailed scientific and social scientific studies to disprove the perceived inferiority of nonwhite Brazilians and to celebrate race mixture as a positive national characteristic. These texts included Gilberto Freyre’s *The Masters and the Slaves* (1933), *The Mansions and the Shanties* (1936), and *The Northeast* (1937); Sérgio Buarque de Holanda’s *The Roots of Brazil* (1938); and Arthur Ramos’s *The Negro in Brazil* (1938) and *African Folklore in Brazil* (1942). These writers permanently transformed the mainstream understanding of race and the role of descendants of African slaves in Brazilian society. Their work reshaped popular thinking about race by taking the argument that blackness and race mixture were less significant than environment and culture as determinants of fitness and turning it into a mythology about Brazil’s historic social evolution, which in turn served to comprehensively explain a Brazilian national experience.

Gilberto Freyre became the principal exponent of the idea that Brazil’s racial diversity was a strength rather than a weakness by decentering that weakness from race and ascribing it to poor health and culture. In one clear example of this argument, Freyre prefaced *The Masters and the Slaves* by describ-

ing a scene he witnessed in New York. He watched Brazilian sailors—“mulattoes and cafusos”—descending from their battleship onto the soft snow of the Brooklyn naval yard. He reflected that, “I ought to have had some one tell me then what Roquette Pinto had told the Aryanizers of the Brazilian Eugenics Conference in 1929: that these individuals whom I looked upon as representative of Brazil were not simply mulattoes or cafusos but sickly ones.”¹⁹

Edgar Roquette Pinto was, at the time, Brazil’s leading anthropologist and director of the National Museum of Anthropology. Endorsing Roquette Pinto’s ascription of black and mixed Brazilian’s deficiencies to environment rather than race, Freyre then gave the nod to the science of eugenics as a way of managing racial conditions. He explained that “it is [Columbia University anthropologist] Franz Boas who, admitting the possibility that eugenics may be able to eliminate the undesirable elements of society, reminds us that eugenic selection should concern itself with suppressing the conditions responsible for the creation of poverty-stricken proletarians, sickly and ill-nourished.”²⁰

Eugenics was a scientific endeavor to “perfect” a human population through the improvement of hereditary traits—a notion that was popular throughout Europe and the Americas between the world wars. Scientists turned to eugenics as a catchall science that combined different theories about race, heredity, culture, and environmental influences into practices and prescriptions typically aimed at “improving” a national population. A “hard” eugenics based on removing individuals who possessed undesired traits from the reproductive pool through sterilization or genocide was practiced to varying degrees in countries such as Nazi Germany, Britain, and the United States. Much of Latin America and some parts of Europe adopted a “soft” eugenics that maintained that pre- and neonatal care, public health and hygiene, and an attention to psychology and to general culture and fitness would gradually improve the eugenic fitness of a population.²¹

This strain of eugenics fit well with the ideas about race held by Brazilian elites, who presumed the inferiority of both the poor and the nonwhite yet also sought the possibility of rescuing that population, and thus the nation. For the Brazilians who embraced it, eugenics was not a means for improving specific individuals or groups. It was a way of overcoming what they perceived to be the shortcomings of the nation by applying a range of scientific diagnoses and solutions. It was eugenic nationalism, and it brought together

doctors, sociologists, psychologists, hygienists, and anthropologists. These scientific authorities sought avenues through public policies and institutions to apply their healing hands to a national population that they commonly regarded in gentle contempt. They banded together, across both scientific disciplines and geographic regions, to create public health and education programs that would be the sites where they could carry out their redemptive intervention.

The leading education reformers who built or expanded public school systems around Brazil between the world wars were not just pedagogues. Indeed, few had pedagogical training. They were doctors and social scientists drawn to public education as an arena for social action. These reformers established a vision of social value that privileged a white, middle-class appearance, demeanor, habits, and values. They made the school system into an engine that in ways both deliberate (furnishing poor and nonwhite Brazilians with the tools of whiteness) and unwitting (establishing barriers by reifying their narrow values) created a racial hierarchy in the school system that mirrored their own vision of social worth. Their hierarchy was particularly stable, effective, and longstanding because it relied on unimpeachable values of science and merit.

The schools these men built (although the overwhelming majority of teachers were women, all of the leading education policymakers were men) provided elementary education heavily infused with notions of nationalism, health, hygiene, physical fitness, and prevocational training. The leading reforms were conducted in city school systems in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, although they were echoed by reforms by the states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Pernambuco, Ceará, Amazonas, Pará, Bahia, Espírito Santo, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, and Sergipe. Their reforms consisted of revised curricular content, renewed administrative procedures and professional standards, and an expanded reach for the school systems. Especially after the Revolution of 1930 created increased political and administrative openings for education reformers to carry out their goals, school systems expanded dramatically. This expansion brought public schools, along with their eugenic, whitening, and nationalist message, to poor and racially mixed neighborhoods.

Education reforms began to take root in the second decade of the twentieth

century as nationalists began to adopt eugenic ideas about degeneracy and contemplated the possibilities for regenerating the vast racial and social underclass. By the 1920s, this movement had gained cohesion and national visibility. Education reformers began working with a common sense of purpose across their disciplines and across Brazil, although their energies were concentrated on the showcase school systems of the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The Revolution of 1930, which brought Getúlio Vargas to power, led to the almost immediate creation of a federal Ministry of Education and Public Health (later Ministry of Education and Health, or *MES*), as well as a changing of the political guard across the country that hastened the consolidation of reforms and drove the expansion of school systems.

The 1930s were a golden age for education reformers, who gained unprecedented opportunities to put their ideas into practice. Their reforms during this decade, both in Rio de Janeiro and in the states, were remarkable for the extent of school system expansion and depth of institutional reforms. Educators availed themselves not only of the sciences allied to eugenics, but they also embraced practices of systematic rationalization increasingly applied in Brazilian industry. The link between industry and education was more than casual and extended far beyond the sphere of vocational education. Many educators, such as Fernando de Azevedo and Manoel Lourenço Filho also participated in projects aimed at rationalizing the industrial workforce. Indeed, progressive educators and forward-thinking industrialists had much in common. Both shared a vision of a modern Brazil that would be created by applying rational and scientific paradigms to the organization of society. Both educators and industrialists believed this new society would be created through the reformed attitudes and behavior of the popular classes. Even more important, both educators and industrialists believed that these reformed attitudes would come not from the popular classes themselves but from technicians who would be capable of functioning as social engineers.

Barbara Weinstein's study of this social vision developed by São Paulo industrialists illustrates just how much educators and industrialists shared in a vision of a modern society rationalized by science. Although Weinstein focuses on the emergence and implementation of an industrialist discourse about the working class, she recognized a role for race within the industrialists' social project that is substantially similar to the role race played within

educational policy. According to Weinstein, “most industrialist spokesmen eagerly adopted the view that Brazil was a ‘racial democracy’ and would not have regarded their unflattering construction of the Brazilian worker as related in any way to racial prejudice. In a narrow sense, it was probably not. But their very notion of the working class as morally and culturally inferior without ever resorting to explicit racial references . . . [and] the resemblance of this view to earlier stereotypes about immigrant versus ‘national’ (that is, non-white) workers cannot be dismissed as coincidental.”²²

Although there are substantial parallels between the social projects of industrialists described by Weinstein and the reforms of educators (while Weinstein describes engineers as educators, the pages that follow show educators acting as self-proclaimed engineers), the economic and political autonomy of industrialists resulted in a divergence of paths in the mid-1930s.²³ As the Getúlio Vargas presidency drifted toward the fascist-minded *Estado Novo* (the “New State,” 1937–1945) dictatorship, many prominent educators were forced from their posts by conservative Catholics who opposed the reformers’ resistance to religious education in the schools. Still, the struggle between progressive educators and the conservative Catholic activists who increasingly gained influence in the Vargas regime did little to change the course of public education.

While this study begins with the emergence of an elite consensus about race, medicine, and education, it ends with the *Estado Novo*, when the Rio de Janeiro school system came to be administered by military officers. Although the conflict between the progressive reformers and the Catholics was dramatic, the heyday of reactionary authoritarianism did little to alter the racially coded educational policies enacted in previous administrations. To the contrary, the *Estado Novo*’s military educators continued and expanded the programs and practices that most directly dealt with race. The *Estado Novo* period illustrates that despite the political fractiousness that emerged in Brazilian national politics after 1930 and that continues to the present, an uncritical consensus about the meanings of race and degeneracy, along with the prescriptions for treating that degeneracy, remained intact.

Why study Brazilian race relations through education? The public school system was one of the principal areas of social action for those individuals

most active in examining the significance of race in Brazilian society and most engaged in the pursuit of a socially and culturally white nation. Because education is an area of public policy, it reveals ways in which racial thinkers turned their ideas and assumptions into practice. What is more, during the period studied these practices were experienced by hundreds of thousands of people within the city of Rio de Janeiro, and millions across Brazil. Thus, not only does public education provide the historical resources for studying patterns of racial inequality in Brazil, it also provides the source for a different kind of reading that showcases some of the most significant and yet analytically elusive aspects of race relations in the nation: its ambivalence (the fact that race was meaningful yet that meaning was diffused into a broader medical and scientific discourse of degeneracy); its elasticity (that the meaning of race and of one's social race could change, and as a source of social prestige education mediated that elasticity); and especially its ambiguity (that school systems generally addressed race only indirectly, using coded medical and social scientific language).

Jacyra's story illustrates the analytical opportunities and methodological challenges this study confronts. There are a number of ways of interpreting the significance of Jacyra's exclusion. One way is to look at racist values among Brazilian elites or among immigrant communities like that of the nuns, as well as strategies of resistance to racism as shown in the outrage that erupted in the city's newspapers.²⁴ Jacyra's story could also be read as an example of the social inequalities faced by nonwhite Brazilians.²⁵ Perhaps more provocatively, the story could be read as one of frustration at not being able to "pass for white," in that the combination of white adopted parents, wealth, and supporters among the city's elite was not enough for Jacyra to overcome obstacles based on her color.²⁶

The concern is to show how policymakers and educators formulated racial values and applied them as racialized practices. In other words, how did values of race and social place work when they did not erupt into the type of rare public debate that surrounded Jacyra's experience? In this analysis there is no dialectic between oppressors and resisters, and no dichotomy between specific discussions of racialized actions and more general discussions of the Rio de Janeiro educational system. This is not a study of social behavior nor of the clash of ideas. This text deals with the often ephemeral ways in which

educators turned a discourse about race and nationhood into everyday practices wherein race was not commonly evident but always significant. A belief central to this analysis is that racial ideology is a metanarrative, meaning a complex of values and conceptual categories that guided the ways educators designed institutions and practices.²⁷

The metanarrative of race in public education naturally influenced and was influenced by the metanarratives of gender, sexuality, social class, and nationhood. For example, as the hiring of teachers by the Rio school system became a gendered process, the favoring of female candidates over male ones placed teaching out of the reach of candidates of color who were male. Moreover, efforts by education reformers to define teaching as women's work were part of a broader process of professionalization that also made it harder for women who were of color or were poor to meet the criteria for becoming teachers. Similarly, efforts to teach children the meaning of being Brazilian, or of deciding to promote a child from the first to the second grade, were practices within which elite perceptions of the social roles of race, gender, and class all played an active role. This study analyzes the ways in which concepts of class, gender, sexuality, nation, and race influenced and reinforced each other, because these relationships generated many of the interactions through which race influenced social policy, and through which the metanarrative of race in Brazil can best be understood.

This volume returns to the years when the idea of a "racial democracy" took root and flourished, and it analyzes the ways in which educators' explicit views on race disappeared from view once they turned into policies. The idea of a "racial democracy" was embraced with great ease by individuals who had full faith that their public institutions were meritocratic, technical, and rational. Where could there be space for race within these modern institutions? By looking at the rare moments when discussions of race surfaced and, even more important, the more common experiences where no one spoke of race, this study reveals ways in which racial assumptions shaped the intentions and outcomes of public education. In other words, institutions and practices seemingly devoid of racial ideology were commonly those places where race played the greatest role. The reformers studied here wove the assumptions they held about race into the practices they created. Consequently, public

policies tended to work to the disadvantage of the growing numbers of Brazilians of color who came into contact with them.

By its very nature, this is a difficult process to demonstrate. One way to conceive of the analytical framework employed here is to think of the waves of education reform and the rising tide of public education as forming a sea whose surface conceals the reefs of racial values and racialized practices. These reefs of racial values formed over a long period of time, and although invisible from the surface they remained firmly in place and shaped the currents of policy that surround them. This study adopts two strategies for mapping the often-hidden contours of race in public policy. First, by looking for those rare instances of turbulence on the surface of educational practices it identifies the racialized issues that lie sometimes quite close to the surface, as in Jacyra's case. Second, by following the rising tide of educational reform places can be seen where the seamlessness of educational policy has not yet washed over and concealed a question of race. By looking at moments in this rising tide of reform, such as the introduction of intelligence testing in schools, we see how new practices first confronted questions of race, revealing in remarkable clarity the ways in which white, elite responses to issues of race guided policies around these shoals.

The ways educators wove race into public policy meant that on the surface not much seemed to happen. Yet below the surface, and at the margins of educational policy, lay places where educators might be uncharacteristically open in their discussions about the meanings race held for them and the ways those meanings shaped their educational projects. At least as they were recorded these encounters were rare, but when they are analyzed within the broader context of institution building they become meaningful. In some ways very little happened here and yet everything happened: this is not a study of events but of the sets of meanings that events assumed for the privileged cadre of white men of science who forged the national model of education. Something as simple and as intimate as eating, brushing one's teeth, or washing one's hands—activities repeated over and again in the private space of homes—became the subject of public policies developed to stem the nation's racial degeneracy and save Brazil.

Each chapter of this volume is a vignette that illustrates the ways educators

dealt with questions of race in different aspects of public education. While these snapshots build on each other, they are intended to stand as separate episodes. This is done in order to avoid giving the impression that this is a history of education reform, or of Brazilians of color in the school system. Just as the analytical lens of this text seeks to reveal a systematic vision of race within elements of public policy, the narrative structure of the text avoids replacing the vision of public policy as racially neutral with a new model defining a specific role for race within policies. Instead, each chapter shows a facet of the many ways in which race shaped public space.

This book begins with an episode in the creation of the foremost institution of public education, the federal Ministry of Education and Health. This episode, a debate over the appearance of the statue of the “Brazilian Man” that would be placed to greet visitors to the new ministry building, encompassed the debate over race and whitening through education. The chapter on the “Brazilian Man” traces the emergence of a discourse on degeneracy and the process by which an educational elite comprised of physicians, scientists, and social scientists coalesced around the belief that public education could resolve the nation’s racial ills. “Educating Brazil,” expands on the links between race, the emerging nationalism, science, and the state within the context of the new statistics-gathering and interpreting institutions created after 1930. Although the “statistical reality” produced by the Brazilian government provided a way of “seeing” Brazil that reflected the vision held by nationalists and social scientists, the data the new agencies generated also permit an analysis of the social, geographic, racial, and economic dimensions of the city of Rio de Janeiro during the period covered by this study.

“What Happened to Rio’s Teachers of Color?” shows that the expansion of the role of the state in Brazilian society through the creation and expansion of social policies did not mean a proportionate degree of integration for afro-descendants within public institutions. To the contrary, a significant increase in the sophistication of the means of racial exclusion took place. Looking behind the processes of professionalization of the teacher corps, this chapter shows that policies for selecting and training teachers created subtle obstacles based on values of race, class, and gender. Education reformers sought a teacher corps that was modern, professional, scientific, and representative of a middle-class ideal. Their policies succeeded at producing the teacher corps

that education reformers imagined, and this teacher corps was almost exclusively white.

“Elementary Education,” examines the principal reform of the Rio de Janeiro school system, which was carried out by Anísio Teixeira between 1931 and 1935. Teixeira not only gave full expression to the reform currents underway over the past decades, his reform became the lasting blueprint for public education in Brazil. This reform combined the major scientific trends governing social policy: eugenic nationalism, systematic rationalization, and professionalization. “The New School in the New State,” follows Anísio Teixeira’s reform in the decade after he was purged from the school system by Catholic conservative opponents. In the years of increased authoritarianism culminating with the *Estado Novo*, public education in Rio de Janeiro was directed by military officers and fell under the influence of the Catholic Church. This chapter shows that despite the dramatic and at times violent politics surrounding public education during these authoritarian years, the technical side of public education remained untouched. Despite the breakdown of consensus over some aspects of educational policy, the ways in which elites of the Left and Right saw education and race and science and the nation continued to coincide.

“Behaving White: Rio’s Secondary Schools,” examines two facets of public secondary education in Rio de Janeiro. Despite the efforts of Teixeira and other reformers, public education scarcely surpassed the boundaries of the elementary school. Most children abandoned their schools after the third grade, and even those who completed their elementary studies had few city-funded opportunities to attend high school. Consequently, secondary education was a form of training for a narrow elite whose dreams of social mobility, and the process they underwent to realize them, were shaped by values of whiteness. A case study of the federal model high school, Colégio Pedro II, shows that students at the most prestigious public school in Brazil embraced the language of eugenic nationalism and behaved accordingly.

A NOTE ON THE LANGUAGE OF RACE

One of the consistent methodological challenges faced by scholarship on race in Brazil is developing a language for discussing racial categories. In this

study the challenge is twofold because it analyzes racial discourse from the interwar period as well as the presence of Brazilians of color within educational institutions. Thus two methods are employed for describing racial categories: one that preserves the original language of race used by educators and the other to describe individuals within the school system.

When discussing school system policies or the rhetoric of educators, this study follows the original language as closely as possible. Educators and other agents of the state worked with a clearly delineated set of racial categories. Beginning in 1940, the Brazilian census employed four color categories: *branco*, *pardo*, *preto*, and *amarelo* (white, brown, black, and yellow).²⁸ *Pardo* was an especially elastic term because it was used to describe anyone of mixed African, indigenous, or European ancestry. While educators generally adhered to this set of categories, they at times substituted *pardo* with *mulatto*. Although educators believed that the link between degeneracy and race was contingent, they were clear in their belief that race existed and could be quantified. Moreover, while they seldom had reason to turn to scientific definitions of racial categories, when they did they commonly referred to the framework developed by anthropologist Edgar Roquette Pinto, who established a system of color gradations based on three main categories: *leucodermo*, *faiodermo*, and *melanodermo* (white skin, brown skin, and black skin).²⁹ Generally, these technical categories were employed to assess the progress of the physical whitening of the Brazilian population through the dilution of those racially mixed.

These categories were far removed from the ways in which individuals within the school system would have classified themselves. The self-classification of individuals and the ways in which they might have identified themselves or others varied considerably. This is especially true for teachers and other professionals within the school system because their level of education and social prestige could influence their sense of racial identity.³⁰ The sources employed in this study seldom provide sufficient information about individuals' self-identification to be able to make definitive statements about their identity. Consequently, this study cautiously employs the terms "white," "nonwhite," "of color," and "afrodescendant" to describe individuals. "White" and "of color" were two terms that individuals from the period would have been likely to use to describe themselves. "Of color" was an inclusive category that could be used to describe individuals of any degree of