

**Race and identity of Brazilians in South Africa:  
an ethnographic study on racialization, habitus, and intersectionality**

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**COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Despite recurrent academic interest in the study of race in both South Africa and in Brazil, little work has been done in Anthropology about the two countries of the Global South in relation to each other. This thesis is situated in that gap and presents an ethnographic study about the racialised experiences of Brazilian migrants in South Africa, in order to explore the different processes of racialization that occur in South Africa and Brazil. The first part of the investigation focuses on the conflictual encounter between informants' internalized racial habitus as learned in Brazil with the one they encounter in South Africa. The second part examines the impact that such racialization has on the racial identity of Brazilian individuals. Informants found themselves in situations of racial ambiguity in which they did not fit perfectly in any of the local racial categories, and were classified by South Africans in different (and sometimes multiple) racial categories from their previous one in Brazil. I use the theoretical lens of intersectionality to explore informants' reflections on 'what they are' as they socially adapted to South African racial categorisations and habitus.

Key words: Race, identity, Brazil, South Africa, racial habitus, racialization, intersectionality, simultaneity, racism, Racial Democracy Myth, Rainbow Nation, colonialism

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## INTRODUCTION

When I was 28 years old I decided that I was a *mulher negra*: literally, a ‘black woman’, used to signify an afro-descendent woman in Latin-America. The verb ‘decided’ may sound strange in this sentence, but it was like that. As my racial classification was not an obvious thing to address in my home country, Brazil, I made a political decision to define my racial identity. In so doing, I noticed that my racial identity was contextual, situational, negotiated and fluid.

In Brazil, to talk politically about race outside black movements is taboo (Nascimento and Nascimento, 2001); considered radical, it makes many people uncomfortable. This contributes to the lack of racial identity awareness that is a common phenomenon among Brazilians<sup>1</sup>. In the country where an ideological myth of racial democracy was used to promote whiteness, I chose to exert my blackness.

When I moved to South Africa, this identity shifted once more. Here, race is a topic present in South Africans’ everyday life, and I found it impossible not to reflect on and reconsider my identity. If I see myself through the eyes of South Africans, my classification gets very confusing. As in Brazil, there is no consensus on ‘what’ am I. However, the fact that most people in South Africa did not see me as a *negra*, black, or coloured woman, was quite problematic for me. I spent almost three decades of my life without a clear racial identity, and when I finally defined it, my change of country and context destabilized it anew.

In South Africa, I found many Latin-Americans going through a similar process, struggling to understand the South African racial classifications and anxious to define themselves. For those reasons, I decided to investigate how racial identities operate in South Africa through the eyes of immigrants, in this case Brazilians. This thesis contributes to anthropological debates about race and identity through an intellectual transnational dialogue (Matory, 2005) between both countries from the global South.

Thus, my main research question is *do Brazilian immigrants experience racialised identities differently in South Africa? If so, how?*

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<sup>1</sup> This can be exemplified by the results of the Census 1980, in which Brazilians offered 136 different colours and racial labels to describe themselves in an open question about their race/colour (Johnson and Crook, 1999:4). However, the landscape of racial awareness and conversations has been gradually changing due to a positive impact of affirmative policies in the last 15 years and black movements’ actions (Duarte, 2011).

My research investigated the impact of South African racialised experiences and racial classifications on Brazilians' racial identities, contrasting these with their prior understandings. It thus assesses similarities and differences of racial habitus in both countries. By analysing Brazilian informants' narratives, it becomes possible to understand how their racial identities are affected, shift, and are renegotiated in their everyday lives in South Africa.

## CONCEPTUALIZING RACIAL IDENTITY

Ideas of race, ethnicity, and identity have gained different meanings over time within societies. According to Quijano (2007), Erasmus (2008), and Hall (1996), the reasoning that lies behind the main racial categories in the world today (white, black, Asian, Indian, for example) was a product of European modernity. This modern rationality, created to justify and sustain domination over non-Europeans by colonizers, was based on scientific knowledge production of the time, which divided the world population into civilized and primitive, superior and inferior, nature and culture. Origin and skin colour became a mark in the evolutionist theories, in which white Europeans placed themselves at the top of the hierarchy, and all 'others' layered underneath reaching to the bottom. Early Anthropology and Ethnology played a significant role in developing these ideas: humans were divided into races with particular biological phenotype and an essentialist notion of culture attributed to them – races that would be determinant in a linear evolutionist model of a social group from 'savage' to 'civilized'.

In the last century, social sciences developed theories in which race, racial classifications and identities were viewed as a social construct and not determined by biology. It is in this sense that I use race in this thesis: as a social concept “which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies. (...) Racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process” and is formed by beliefs which are “central to everyone's identity and understanding of the social world” (Omi and Winant, 2001:123-124).

Race and racial formation are experienced by individuals and social groups through processes of racialization. Goldberg and Essed (2001:6) note that Franz Fanon first fashioned the “notion of 'racializing' conditions and expressions, contrasting them significantly with 'humanizing' ones to suggest the ways in which racial conceptions and structural conditions order lives and delimited human possibilities”. These structural conditions affect internalised identities, such that, in Mafeje's words, “all ontological categorizations produce essentialist

systems of classification which become impossible to transcend in thought” (Mafeje, 1996:35).

Contemporary social scientists acknowledge identity’s complex fluidity, contradicting social essentialist beliefs that posit racial categories as fixed, objective, inherited, and bounded. According to Hall (1996)

“identity is formed through the interaction between self and society. The subject still has an inner core or essence that is "the real me," but this is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds "outside" and the identities which they offer. [...] It is historically, not biologically, defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent "self". [...] Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with - at least temporarily” (Hall, 1996: 597-598).

Despite these changes in social theory, notions of race as biological have not disappeared. According to Erasmus (2008) there are two main approaches to race taken in contemporary South Africa: while the constructionist approach sees “race as a social construct, embedded in history and politics, with fluid and changing rather than fixed and given meanings” (Erasmus, 2008:174), there is also a view that essentialises race by conflating it with culture, such that “racial and cultural identities are timeless, given essences that can be found among those assumed to ‘have’ rather live blackness” (Erasmus, 2008:175).

There is a challenge for the researcher in studying racial identities without reinforcing racial categorizations. This study makes use of racial terms as they were used by my respondents, such as black, white, coloured, people of colour, multi-racial, mixed-race, and miscegenation. Where I use such terms, however, I am aware of their historical construction. ‘Miscegenation’ is used as it is a term freely used by Brazilians; I do not treat it as biological, but rather as the mixture and hybridism of socially constructed races. Even knowing how problematic those terms are, so far there is no better option available to write about race and critically engage its study (Renn, 2004). However, there is a distinction between “we the researchers who know that race is a social construct [who] have no choice but to use those categories” from “they, the people in the society who believe in these categories” (Ferber, 1995:160, in Renn, 2004:8). It is important to remain mindful and aware of the danger of racial essentialism when researching and reading studies since it is a learned practice of people’s

socialization, and even if believing in race as a social construct, essentialism can be used unconsciously as a biased tool to read the world.

In this thesis, notions of race and racial identity are understood as social constructs for grouping individuals who have similar characteristics on phenotype, language, cultural practices, origin, among others; constructs that were and are formed through interactions between individuals and social groups and institutions, which have influenced and have been influenced by events in history's and the present days' hierarchical structures of societies, access to different kinds of capital and resources, and formed imagined communities. At the same time that recognizes the real impact that previous and current understandings of bounded and fixed racial categorizations have on the material and inter-subjective lives of individuals and groups, race and racial identities are here seen as an ongoing process of continuous transformation and re-signification, internally and socially, with no fixed boundaries, not deterministic by any means but negotiable through agency of all individuals, influenced by many aspects of social contexts, highly mutable, multi-dimensional, intersectional<sup>2</sup>, non-exclusionary, complex, and fluid.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Brazil and South Africa**

South Africa and Brazil are two countries with great similarities. Both were colonized by Europeans, went through a period of slavery and exploitation of indigenous populations and foreigners 'imported' to work in the fields and cities, and went through a modernization period last century, building themselves as nation-states in accordance to the first world nations' liberal agenda (Marx, 1998; Fredrickson, 2001). The division of people into racial categories was used in both countries as a means of maintaining the social, economic and political power of the colonizer, and later, of the oligarchies in force. Many of those dynamics, ideologies, imaginaries, and identities based on race are still permeating the structure of these societies today. In another words, Brazil and South Africa "developed at an early stage a color-code to determine status" in the social hierarchy that would "persist after these colonial regimes became independent states and after each of them abolished slavery [or regimes of servitude] before or after achieving nationhood" (Fredrickson, 2001: 2).

### **Brazilian Racial Formation, Project, Categories, and Inequalities**

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<sup>2</sup> More about Intersectionality, see Crenshaw (1989) and Collins (2000).

Of the Americas, Brazil received the largest number of Africans during slavery<sup>3</sup> (Beckles, 2002). This fact is reflected in the current racial demographics, in which officially more than 50% of Brazilians are afro-descendants<sup>4</sup>. Racial mixing in Brazil was significant, and the boundaries between races were blurred, with reduced notions of racial and ethnic purity (Fredrickson, 2001:4). As in South Africa, “there were three or more official categories in Latin-America – usually black, mulatto, and white”, but even with a significant prejudice “those who were of mixed but mostly European descent could, at least in the Iberian societies, hope to be incorporated into the white status group despite acknowledged African ancestry” (Fredrickson, 2001:4).

After the end of slavery in 1888 and the proclamation of the Republic in 1889, Brazil started to establish itself as a nation-state. In this period, “miscegenation and efforts to ‘whiten’ the population were deliberately promoted” (Huntley, 2001:xii). One of the state ‘whitening’ policies was to attract white immigrants, especially Europeans – considered developed and superior people – to become land owners and workers in agriculture, cattle ranching, and business, displacing the then black labour force. In this moment, ideas of racial miscegenation were disseminated as part of the ‘whitening’ project: interracial marriage between people of colour and whites were stimulated in order to whiten future Brazilian generations. From the 1930s to the 1980s, nationalist politicians celebrated racial mixing as the main symbol of Brazilian society. Campaigns on the strength of the friendly union between white, indigenous and black people – ‘the Brazilians’ – for the great ‘giant’ nation full of forests, gold, and industrial progress, rich and diverse in cultural expressions, a football champion – were all over the media and in the educational system. Brazil was advertised internally and internationally as a core example of a racial democracy. This discourse was backed up by intellectuals, based on the sociological treatise by Gilberto Freyre (1933), *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*. This influential work which was later criticized for not acknowledging power imbalances, served as the foundation for a myth about race relations in Brazil.

Since 2000, in the Demographic Census, Brazil uses five official classificatory categories based on Colour or Race: *branca* (white), *preta* (black), *amarela* (literally yellow,

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<sup>3</sup> “Between 1502 and 1870, Brazil, was the largest single importer of slaves by virtue of the size of its sugar industry, accounting for 38% of the total. The British and French Caribbean, for the same reason, each took 17%, and the marginal Dutch, Danish and Swedish colonies received 6%. Spanish America took 17%, with the British colonies that became the United States taking a mere 6%” (Beckles, 2002:61).

<sup>4</sup> The unofficial estimate is 80% *negros* (afro-descendants) as millions of people of colour declare themselves as white in Census (Fredrickson, 2001).

meaning Asian-descendent), *parda* (literally brown) and *indigena* (indigenous) (Petruccelli and Saboia, 2013:24). Afro-descendants, in Brazil named *negros*, are the sum of *preto* and *parda* population (Nascimento and Nascimento, 2001:8-9). Since 2010, those who self-identify as *indigena* were asked about their mother tongue and ethnicity (Petruccelli and Saboia, 2013:24).

In numbers, the last demographic Census 2010 showed that 0.42% self-declared as *indigena*, 1.1% as *amarelo*, 7.52% as *preto*, 43.42% as *parda*, and 47.51% as *branco*. In comparison to the Census 2000, the number of *negros* (*pretos* and *pardos*) has grown and the number of whites has reduced, and for the first time *negros* are statistically the majority in Brazil. Specialists<sup>5</sup> agree that this was a direct effect of policies of black racial valorisation reported in media and through affirmative actions. Historically, “‘White’ and ‘Pardo’ categories are notoriously inflated, and the ‘Preto’ diminished, by the tendency of African-descended interviewees to classify themselves as White or mulatto (Mortara, 1970)” (Nascimento and Nascimento, 2001: pp8-9). In this sense, in the last Census it is possible to see an opposite ‘migration’ of *parda* people from the white category, and *preto* people from the *parda* category. The shift is significant given the low status that is historically attributed to the black population, which translates in societal terms into lower earning potential for those classified by society as Black (Nascimento and Nascimento, 2001: 10-11).

### **South African Racial Formation, Project, Categories, and Inequalities**

The European colonisation of South Africa caused to African indigenous population massive displacement and exploitation. According to Mamdani (2001:494), the last 350 years of colonial rule made use of two distinct notions: race and ethnicity, which were carried though and further consolidated by the apartheid regime. “Race was an identity that united beneficiaries: Afrikaners, Dutch, English, Portuguese, Greeks, Germans, all were united into a common identity called ‘white’. Ethnicity, in contrast, fragmented the victims of apartheid.

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<sup>5</sup> For Marcelo Paixao, coordinator of the Laboratório de Análises das Relações Raciais da UFRJ [free translation - Laboratory of Racial Relations Analyses at Federal University of Rio de Janeiro], the growth of the *negro* category “is a result of a process of ethnic valorisation, that have been gaining more visibility through *negros* actors and personalities, and also through affirmative actions. Because the statistical increase of *pretos* and *pardos* are seen among the age groups of the middle (adults) and not only among children, so we definitely can see an actual change of behaviour”. This is a free translation of the original quote: “*É fruto de um processo de valorização étnica, que vem de visibilidade maior tanto de atores e personalidades negros quanto de temas como cotas. Como o aumento de pretos e pardos foi também nas faixas etárias intermediárias, não só dos que nascem, por exemplo, podemos ver, sim, mudança comportamental*” (Duarte, 2011).

For the victims were not brought together under a single identity called ‘black’; instead, they were fragmented into so many ethnic identities – Xhosa, Zulu, Venda, Pedi, and so on” (Mamdani, 2001:494).

During the long period of colonisation, groups were differently integrated in the political economy and labour process of the country (Alexander, 2001), such that:

“the core elements of the European ancestors of the present white Afrikaans-speaking population came to South Africa as merchants or as soldiers, servants of the mercantile Dutch East India Company. As colonial conquerors or, later, as settlers, they were destined to serve in administrative, commercial, and security capacities. Most of the forebears of people now labelled ‘Indian’ were brought from India after 1860 as indentured labourers in order to work the sugar plantations of Natal. Most of those now labelled ‘black’, or sometimes ‘African’, after conquest, were integrated into the colonial capitalist economy as labour tenants or as migrant workers. And those now labelled ‘coloured’ are in the main descendent from aboriginal African peoples such as the Khoi, the San, and the amaXhosa as well from African and East Indian slaves.”  
(Alexander, 2001:472)

The apartheid government continued the colonial trend and developed strict legislation in which the functions, duties, and rights were mainly determined by race; South African social formation “came to be structured as a racial caste system, one where class, language, and other social markers were less salient than ‘race’ or colour” (Alexander, 2001:472). According to Wolpe, such stringent racial classification existed within capitalism, such “Apartheid is the attempt of the capitalist class to meet the expanding demand for cheap African labour in the era of industrial manufacturing capital” (Wolpe, 1972:291).

The heritage of colonial and apartheid racial policies can still be seen today. Spaces, social groups, customs, hierarchies, and privilege are still divided by race. Inequality between whites and blacks is patent; the black middle class is a minority as is a group termed ‘poor whites’. Interracial marriage is not common in comparison to countries such as Brazil. However, in stark contrast to Brazil, the struggle against apartheid intensified the black consciousness of the population, and racial debates are still part of many South Africans’ daily lives.

The racial classifications and racialization are still very marked in South Africa nowadays, and unlike Brazil, most South Africans have no doubt on what racial category they

belong; “the use of these categories is unavoidable given the fixity that they have come to acquire both in popular consciousness and official business” (James and Lever, 2001:44). But for Alexander (2001: 483) “the struggle over the definition of identities in South Africa has only just begun”, given the fact that the racial categories created by the apartheid government does not represent a large number of people’s racial and cultural identity, inserted into nowadays racial politics and disputes for resources. Such disputes are mainly generated through the popular and intellectual understanding on how racial identities and categories influence the racial politics and governmental policies for each group, since the racial inequalities in the country has still been extremely strong. According to the South African Census 2011 (StatsSA, 2012:21), the population is classified as Black African (79.2%), Coloured (8.9%), White (8.9%), Indian or Asian (2.5%), and Other (0.5%). However, the average annual income for each population group shows clearly the racial inequality (along many other inequality indicators): such that on average, a white household head has six times more income per year than the average of a black household head per year, and three and a half more than a coloured household head per year.

### **Racial debates in Contemporary Brazil**

In Brazil, since the 1980s, Brazilian scholars and activists critiqued the racial project implanted the country. They considered racial democracy in Brazil a myth that was hiding racial inequalities and the whitening project (Nascimento and Nascimento, 2001; Fernandes, 1980; Guimarães, 2006). The so-called Myth of Racial Democracy was then exposed. Intellectual production on the topic showed that racial relations in Brazil were never pacific, and the black population suffered from a violent racism in all areas of their lives. Whilst on a structural level, racial inequalities were comparable to worldly-known racist societies such as United States and South Africa, the Myth of Racial Democracy was and still is strongly internalized by Brazilians, which has led to a lack of racial debates within society. Inequalities tended to be justified only by class (Johnson and Crook, 1999:3). Cases of poverty among whites and class mobility of black individuals were and are used as a tool to stop any kind of discourse that tags Brazil as a racist country, even when statistics clearly demonstrate that those cases are an exception and white privilege in political, social and economic spheres are patent (Nascimento and Nascimento, 2001).

Therefore, the Myth of Racial Democracy has been utilised to silence the racialised reality of Brazilian society, making black population’s issues and racism invisible, and

impeding development of actions for racial equality. In the last fifteen years, racial debates increased after the execution of affirmative actions, and the number of people who categorise themselves as negroes is increasing, but such debates and racial affirmations are still limited if compared to South Africa.

### **Racial debates in Contemporary South Africa**

The end of apartheid and the democratization of South Africa in 1994 brought to this society the opportunity to reformulate its racial project. The desire for racial equality, true democracy, end of oppression and racial conflicts were goals formulated by political leaders and a social pact was made with their voters. In this moment, a non-racial democracy became an attractive idea in which many South Africans believed to be possible of putting into practice in the political and social levels (Alexander, 2001). Ideas of non-racialism forged a symbol for a multicultural and multiracial South African society: the Rainbow Nation was then celebrated by many who thought that racial oppression would be dissolved by the new governmental politics and social groups in the post-apartheid era.

However, racism, discrimination, and racial inequalities are persistent in the country, and the racial hierarchies did not change considerably in most social spheres, institutions and people's daily lives. A great frustration with this lack of change pushed social movements to denounce the incoherence of non-racialism and keep fighting against white privilege. The Rainbow Nation was then seen as a myth. In this moment, social movements such as the student's movements (of which my research participants had a chance to interact with) came to denounce the persistent heritage of colonialism (and apartheid) that still oppresses people of colour. Those movements evoke Black Consciousness and Pan-Africanist movements' ideas as influenced by Steve Biko and Franz Fanon, and introduced decolonial theorists from South America into national debates around race and colonialism. According to Pillay (2015) and Mangcu (2015), in many recent academic articles non-racialism and black consciousness discourses are put into opposition. On one side, non-racialism is criticized because it can suppress the present racial inequalities that must be recognized, racialised and addressed, therefore, it is seen an utopian idea impossible to be established while extreme racial inequality persists (Mamdani, 2001). On the other side, black consciousness is considered important for reaching black empowerment and addressing white privileged, however criticized for reinforcing a racially divisive discourse of black/white. For Pillay (2015) a third alternative is still to be developed. Through this present research I argue that, theoretically, transnational

studies, feminist theories on intersectionality, and simultaneous and multiple identities can provide important insights in order to (re)formulate an alternative way of understanding race and racial identities and that neither ignore nor reinforce racial difference and alterity.

### **Discourses and societies**

Both countries also have two different and conflicting discourses on race within their national population: a 'colour-blind' and an essentialist approach. In the paper *Race*, Erasmus (2008) explains these key approaches on race. Although the author analyses post-apartheid South Africa to build this theory, those discourses can also be found in the Brazilian society. The first is an essentialist approach, linked with colonialism and apartheid ideas, which "sees race as everything and everywhere" and "uses race as *the* predetermining and all-determining element of social life and self. Accordingly, race predetermines everything we do, are and can be" (Erasmus, 2008:175). The second goes in the opposite direction; it is 'colour-blind' and relies on scientific ideas that "race as a biological concept is invalid, an illusion, and hence should be dropped completely"; it argues that "race is no longer politically significant" (Erasmus, 2008:173), and it positions its proponents against equity policies and affirmative actions because they would be understood as a racist practice.

In Brazil colour-blindness is the prominent social approach given the high influence of the Racial Democracy myth in the culture of that society (Fredrickson, 2001; Huntley, 2001). Such a tendency contrasts strongly with South Africa where one often encounters the idea of 'race everywhere'. According to Huntley (2001), even though in Brazil "on the surface, social relations appear to be more "cordial" than in the United States or South Africa. [...] the people and government of Brazil are just beginning to publicize that appearance on racism contribute to the nation's color-coded power hierarchy and help to sustain disparities and inequality" (Huntley, 2001:xii). In other words, racialism in South Africa and its tensions and conflicts are more visible than they are in Brazil, since the impact of the past official racial segregation and its denouncing are still part of the daily lives of many South African citizens.

In South Africa, because the apartheid system established a strict code of racialization and racial categorization, even nowadays it is more likely that one 'knows' her/his own race and how to classify other people's race, in opposition to what happens in Brazil. In this sense, racial categories have been questioned by activists and intellectuals who agree that the desirable South African non-racial future (Alexander, 2001, 2006) cannot be reached if the apartheid's racial categories are perpetuated and the structural racism continues to operate in

the society. In this sense, Mamdani (2001) argues that “as long as the legacy of apartheid is not addressed, the core identities created by apartheid will be reproduced” (Mamdani, 2001:496). For Alexander (2010), race is used as shorthand for not addressing the realities of structural discrimination, and if South Africans continue to think with a racial habitus (reproduction of the apartheid racial categories), the big structural changes that need to happen for promoting racial equality will not materialize.

In Brazil, colour-blindness can also affect the recognition of racism and discrimination, but also of their own racial identity. According to Ribeiro (2010) and Bicudo (1945), it is common that many Brazilians do not know to which racial category they fit or belong, especially if they are considered *pardos*. Another manifestation of the same phenomenon is the ‘confused’ identity, in which *negros* might believe they are white and vice-versa<sup>6</sup>. However, as in South Africa, racialization and classification are part of daily lives, it is likely that Brazilians in South Africa would have to go through a process of adaptation to this new context – one of the points this research investigates.

To understand the differences, similarities, and nodes of their past and present racialised experiences in Brazil and South Africa, and the ‘past-in-present’ of their racial understandings (Collins, 2005, in Sallaz, 2010), this study makes use of Bourdieu’s theories on habitus, although directly applied to race<sup>7</sup> (and race linked to class). According to the author, habitus is

“The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them.[...] The habitus, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices - more history - in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action.[...] the conditioned and conditional freedom it provides is as remote from creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical

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<sup>6</sup> Bicudo (1945) and Fanon’s (1952) theories about racial identity displacement still reflect the reality today in Brazil, showing how strong and persistent the effects of the Myth of Racial Democracy are in the country.

<sup>7</sup> More about Bourdieu’s habitus theory to analyse race relations in Sallaz (2010:295-296).

reproduction of the original conditioning.[...] The habitus is embodied history, internalized as second nature and so forgotten as history” (Bourdieu, 1990:53-56).

In this sense, this research investigates if and how Brazilian immigrants, with their own racial habitus, encountered a different racial habitus with its cultural capital, embodiment and reproduction performed by the South African population. This study contributes to a gap in the literature: while the number of academic studies in the humanities on race and racial identities in Brazil and South Africa, separately, is vast, there are not many articles with an in-depth direct dialogue or comparative perspective between South Africa and Brazil. This study explores the process in which Brazilians, if so, understand and adapt to the new racial habitus, possibly embodying and reproducing it – with the expected conflictive internal and social challenges.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Identity**

Besides the theories on habitus mentioned above, this research will make use of theories of identity found in transnational studies combined with feminist theories on intersectionality<sup>8</sup>, border thinking, and simultaneous identities in order to comprehend the possible fluidity and shifts of my informant’s racial identities in South Africa.

According to Evangelina Holvino (2012:161), “three major forces are changing the meanings and models of identity in the twenty-first century”. One is an intense globalization, in which transnational migrants, cultures, goods, and information cross borders challenging notions of one-dimensional identities. The second and the third are intellectual and political. On the one hand, postmodernism inserts the importance of discourse and language into the formation of realities such that “identity is contextual, multiple, malleable, and always in the process of creation” (Calás and Smircich, 2006; Hall and DuGay, 1996, in Holvino 2012:162). On the other hand, feminist theories bring other complexities to bear when arguing that even though all women share the same gender, the ways they experience realities does not only

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<sup>8</sup> It is important to say that the relevance of the study of identities through the feminist and gender studies perspective transcend gender studies itself. I believe the theories on identity formulated by women intellectuals, scholars, and activists in search of understanding of the complexities and intersectional experiences of women worldwide, especially women of colour, are extremely important to analyse other identities besides gender and sexuality.

differ from men, but among themselves because of their race, religion, nationality, cultures, among others. For Holvino (2012: 180), “the major shifts in these conceptualizations of identity relate first to moving from a focus on unitary, one-dimensional, and coherent frameworks on identity to a focus on differences as the kernel from which identities (plural) are constantly constructed by the individual and his or her society”. In short, Holvino (2012) uses transnational feminist perspective on identity and traces in her article the historical development of identity models “from one-dimensional to intersectional to simultaneous” (Holvino, 2012:162).

Intersectionality was term attributed to Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) and studied by many “black and women of colour scholars who posited that race and gender overlapped and changed the experience of gender, which white feminists presented as a universal experience in the first wave of feminism in the nineteenth century” (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Holvino, 2010, Hull et al., 1982, in Holvino, 2012: 169-170). With the notion of intersectionality, one can see that an individual identity is formed by many other identities, and this combination changes the way she/he perceives reality, interacts, and is affected by macro and micro social structures.

Intersectionality presents a complexified notion of an identity formed by a multiplicity of identities, in which gender, race, ethnicity, class, origin, and cultural aspects intersect. But rather than a sum of independent layers, an identity is whole with all identities operating at once. This ‘whole’ challenges fixed categories and provokes the idea of border-crossings (Anzaldua, 1987).

In order to understand the complex identities as expressed by my informants I thus make use of ideas of intersectionality and simultaneity. Holvino (2012) argues that “more than intersecting circles, social identity is constructed by a number of coexisting identity-forming systems of difference always in interaction and transaction with each other at the same time. [...] Simultaneity thus means the simultaneous process of identity, institutional and social practice, which operate concurrently and together to construct people’s identities and shape their experiences, opportunities, and constraints” (Holvino, 2010, in Holvino, 2012: 173). It is this stance on identity that I take in this thesis.

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Therefore, the argument made in this study is that when people move transnationally, their experiences in the host country can make visible previously unconscious racialised

conceptions and habitus. Such awareness and new racialised engagements produce a disruption of their previous understandings on race and identity, opening space for a more critical, nuanced, and in-depth (re)learning process in which their own knowledge on race, racism, racial relations, identities, privilege, and inequality is refined.

For that reason, transnational migration is a fertile site to understand more on how race is made and how it can be re-shaped and transformed through the interplay between society, institutions, groups, and individuals from different backgrounds.

# **METHODOLOGY, FIELDWORK, PARTICIPANTS and ETHICS**

## **Fieldwork: participants, location, and duration**

In order to understand the racialised experiences of Brazilians in South Africa, I conducted extensive and in-depth research with three core groups of participants. Firstly, I worked with three informants for ten months with constant and intense dialogue and participant-observation (key informants group). Secondly, another six informants participated in the study, using the same methods, for a shorter period from two to four months (secondary informants group). Many other Brazilians, South Africans, and other foreigners contributed indirectly to the study; they became participants in my auto-ethnographic engagements with the topic, in-person or virtually on Brazilian's community pages on Social Media (extended informants group).

All key informants were based in South Africa for more than a year, and the secondary informants were in Cape Town short-term, either as tourists, for temporary work, or studying English. I have been experiencing and thinking about race since I arrived in South Africa in 2013, prior to this study, and my reflections have intensified through the research process.

I invited all Brazilians I had a chance to meet in South Africa, around fifteen people to take part in the study, of which three agreed, who became the key informants. The other participants I gathered through the use of the Snowballing method, so the sample was built through contact from other participants (Browne, 2005). I also posted a public invitation on Brazilian community pages on Facebook to participate in the study and although I received more than twenty answers, only two committed to meet me and became participants.

My sample was thus selected through Purposive Sampling, in which the sample of the participants was chosen in accordance to my own knowledge of the population, its elements, and my research questions (Babbie, 1990), followed by Snowballing. I tried to balance the sample of participants according to gender and had an even number of people from each of the main Brazilian official racial categories. In relation to socioeconomic background, all my participants – migrants and travellers who chose to come to South Africa without any form of necessity – were considered middle or higher class in Brazil and in this country. Nevertheless, there were three groups of Brazilians which I would like to have had as participants, but it was not possible. Firstly, people in an economically disadvantaged situation in South Africa, which

I did not find, I believe because of the high price of air tickets and regulations of Home Affairs that demand visa candidates prove their good financial standing. Secondly, people who had a strong colour-blind approach and were convinced that there are 'no races, only the human race'. Those Brazilians I knew who thought this way did not agree to participate of this research. Thirdly, Brazilians who perform Brazilian afro-diasporic cultural activities in South Africa. I invited people who teach Capoeira in Cape Town, an afro-Brazilian dance and martial art, however they did not agree on participating in this research as they were too busy.

I also aimed to combine participants who just arrived in South Africa with those who had been here for a longer period, in order to consider a possible influence that time has on adaptation, acceptance, adoption and embodiment of South African notions of race and racial identities. However, it became clear that people who had just arrived were not in a position to answer my questions; as such, most of my data came through those who had been in South Africa for a longer period in the country and, as such, had more racialised experiences and deeper reflections on them.

### **Reflexivity and Relationships**

Throughout the whole study I exercised reflexivity. As a Brazilian researching Brazilians, I am considered an 'insider' anthropologist (Narayan, 1993). Therefore, I had to keep myself aware of the influence that my history may have when analysing my participants' data, as to not take for granted some of their experiences because of our similar background. In this sense, when it was necessary to reach a deeper level of conversation, I used my personal trajectory of struggle on understanding and adapting to this country, which created empathy between my participants and me.

Another important point was to acknowledge my own racial identity and the impact that it might have had on the research. I had a strong concern on how my race and colour would matter in my interaction with my participants, positively and negatively. I realized that those participants who identified themselves racially with me had similar trajectories in the country and felt comfortable to tackle some sensitive issues (Narayan, 1993). Conversely, I expected that those who differ from me would feel intimidated to provide information that might sound racist or 'politically incorrect'. However, I believe that the relationship of mutual trust between me, as a researcher, and my informants was very good, and I think that they felt safe enough to be open and honest about those issues. Fortunately, I did not encounter situations of explicit

racist declarations or attitudes by my informants. In other words, I would say that the level of openness and trust between my informants and me was excellent and I could gather quality data thanks to this.

## **Methods**

The present study took a qualitative approach using anthropological ethnographic methods. The methodology was divided into complementary techniques, with the purpose of triangulating the information in order to have a holistic understanding about participants. Therefore, the research made use of the following instruments: participant-observation, in-depth interviews, (spontaneous) focus groups, and auto-ethnography.

Participant-observation is an ethnographic method in which the researcher immerses her/himself in the activities of their participants and their communities over a long-lasting period of time (Madison, 2011; Crowley-Henry, 2009; Sangasubana, 2011) in order to reach enough data for a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973). Whilst I did conduct participant observation where it was possible (see below), my experience showed that most of their personal experiences on race and identity were not ‘facts’ which could be clearly observed. Instead, most of my data came from narratives on experiences participants had in South Africa and in Brazil, and their thoughts and feelings about it. I also used the data from participant-observation of my personal experience as a participant (auto-ethnography, as discussed below).

In this study, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with all of the study’s participants (MacDonald and Headlam, 2008). The first part of the interviews was a free narrative about life stories related to racial identities and racialised experiences in Brazil and in South Africa. Furthermore, I had a sample of questions prepared according to the themes I wanted to explore, but also allowed the conversation to flow in the direction my participants lead. As an insider, I also provided some of my own experience of reflection on identities during our conversation, which created empathy and stimulated their reflections and memories. During interviews, many unplanned questions were made in order to deepen topics raised by them. In this process, for example, I realized that many participants were mentioning the protests that were happening at universities and how those events were affecting their own identities and reflections on race in South Africa. In these moments, I improvised questions, and followed up with them in further encounters.

Some interviews were made by appointment, where we sat together with a recorder. But most of the interviews happened while we were moving, walking, driving, and those ones were mostly unstructured. I noticed that excellent data came from those kinds of interviews, and I attribute that to pauses. When I did not have a question ready to be made, as I always had during semi-structured interviews, there was a pause in our dialogue. During this empty moment, we would be in movement and looking the landscape, people, and places. After this pause, they would come up telling me what was in their mind, a memory or reflection, and usually I found those very deep reflections, and sometimes emotional experiences. I realized that those pauses brought our conversation to profound levels of engagement and exposure of intimate feelings, experiences, and reflections.

Besides the interviews, some events of their daily lives were an opportunity to raise reflections on race. I had the chance to spend part of days with them, visiting their homes, work, places where they spend free time, meeting their friends and acquaintances, having dinners, and going to events together. Those events, such as South African art and film exhibitions, student's movement events, music concerts, and public lectures, were very important moments to bring up reflections on race, which I used as a platform for connecting, through questions, their reflections to their personal experiences in the country. For example, an informant and I went to the Black Filmmakers Festival, an exhibition of African films. After the screening, I spent time with him to talk about the film but connecting with his own experiences in the country, relating the film characters with him. The same happened after public lectures of intellectuals in which racial, colonialism, and democracy issues were raised, such as David Theo Goldberg, Gayatri Spivak, Achille Mbembe, Maldonado-Torres, Walter D. Mignolo, Judith Butler, Wendy Brown, among others, when I heard my participants making sense of the lectures with their personal experiences and perspectives of South Africa.

During fieldwork, I could also 'walk in the city' with participants (De Certeau, 1984), in order to observe social interactions, to hear their histories, perspective, opinions, and thoughts when transiting through public and private spaces in Cape Town, a city highly marked by heritage of the apartheid's racial segregation. I walked with participants in places where they usually transit, but also drove them to other spaces with which they were not so familiar, or those that contrasted with spaces they were used to be. These practices raised different kinds of observations, social interactions and reflections about race and class. Much of our conversations on segregated spaces, racial and class discrimination came from 'walking in the city'.

At the start I tried to form focus groups in order to create spaces for participants to share their reflections on racial experiences and identities in Brazil and South Africa. However, the formal focus groups meetings did not happen. I noticed that people who I invited said they were available, but when I marked the date they did not answer anymore. Instead, I relied on other spontaneous encounters during fieldwork, such as dinners. During those moments, I realized that participant observation was providing me with less formal, more relaxed ‘focus groups’. The dynamic was spontaneous and topics involving race were raised and debated. This enabled me both to collect data and served as a confirmation that the research topic was part of their own lives, a topic that occupied significance in their personal experiences and social interactions. In all those spontaneous encounters people were aware that I was collecting data, and I reminded them of that by asking their permission during the event.

During those spontaneous focus groups with Brazilians, Latin-Americans and Africans, it was possible to perform what Nader (2013) has termed a ‘loose comparison’ research approach. For her, there are "different kinds of comparison – controlled, crosscultural, or comparison used as a discovery tool, something we might call loose comparison" (Nader, 2013:5). The benefit of such comparative practice is to avoid “study a people as if there were boundaries” in Anthropology (Nader, 2013:5). In this sense, one must acknowledge the possibility that some racialised experiences in South Africa may be a common experience among not only Brazilians, but also South Africans and people from other Latin-American and African countries (and even beyond). Thus, the idea is to expand the conversation and promote a contrasting exchange of experiences, questions, and personal knowledge on the topic among this multi-national, cross-racial and cross-cultural sample of participants. Therefore, it is in the spirit of a loose comparison that I see those dinners as fruitful moments to understand links, differences, and similarities on racialised experiences in South Africa.

Finally, I drew on auto-ethnography. The topic of this research arose from my own experiences and reflections on racial identities. As a “native” anthropologist, I believe that my auto-ethnographic method combined with the ethnography made with my participants has deepened the analyses on their culture and racialised experiences in South Africa.

According to Reed-Danahay, auto-ethnography addresses “the research process (graphy), culture (ethnos), and self (auto)” (1997:2). O’Byrne (2007) argues that there are many variations of auto-ethnography, of which I used two types: personal auto-ethnography and reflexive auto-ethnography. In the first, “the researcher uses the same methods of ethnographic inquiry that are employed in traditional ethnography but applies them to a

personal experience. The researcher then uses the exploratory process and its findings to infer typical (or possible) reactions by other members of his or her culture” (O’Byrne, 2007:1383, in Ellis and Bochner, 2003). On reflexive auto-ethnography, “the researcher capitalizes on personal experiences, reactions, emotions, and thoughts as they relate to his or her own or a foreign culture. The results of this auto-ethnography arise from the researcher focusing on why, how, where, and in what context, and so on, he or she experienced a particular sensation, and uses these insights into his or her reactions as the basis for understanding the culture under study” (O’Byrne, 2007:1383, in Ellis and Bochner, 2003).

Therefore, besides the reflexive process throughout the fieldwork and writing, some of the methods applied to my participants were used on myself, such as participation of the spontaneous focus groups, interviews (I answered some of the questions that I applied to my participants), self-observation on a daily basis, walks in the city, and social interactions. I created a diary with my experiences as a researcher and my experiences as a participant were written or recorded. And as mentioned before, I exposed some of my personal experiences as a research participant, in dialogues between me and research informants, which deepened topics of my research questions. All of these are used as sources of data in this thesis.

## **Ethics**

This research was done in accordance with Anthropology Southern Africa’s (ASA) *Ethical Guidelines and Principles of Conduct for Anthropologists* (2005), and with the permission of the Social Anthropology Department of University of Cape Town (UCT).

The first ethical concern was for the well-being of participants because of the potential to raise traumas from experiences of racism or xenophobia. I was prepared in case some of the participants or I would feel any kind of emotional effects, to make use of contact list with psychologists, but fortunately it was not necessary. There was no episode of blatant racial discrimination or violence during fieldwork.

Our ‘walks on the city’ and visit to public and private spaces during the participant-observation phase were held in places that were unlikely to put the participants in physical danger through violence.

All informants consented to participate of the research, orally (audio recorded) or through a consent form. All data collected in interviews and participant-observation was used only after gaining their consent, and I reinforced often they could withdraw from the study at

any time. Anonymity is their right and my participants are mentioned in this research through pseudonyms. Information from which they could be easily identified, was omitted. I asked their permission to record interviews, and only I had access to the data. During all encounters and participant-observation, I kept reminding them that I was there in the researcher role, and any sensitive information about their lives I double-checked if they permitted it to be used as data.

All my research participants were in a privileged economic situation. As a contribution towards their time and effort, I offered to give them car rides or pay their coffee or food during our meetings, which some refused and others accepted.

My experience with my informants confirmed something I suspected: they felt an urge to talk about racial issues. They easily exposed their feelings, experiences, and confused thoughts to another Brazilian, even those who I just met. I had the impression that those conversations were a desired moment of relief, an attempt to understand racial experiences through dialogue and release some of their frustrations and positive findings. Most of them also liked having other Brazilians around to talk about food, politics, sports, the cultural differences between both countries, the things they were longing from their homeland.

My racial identity *negra* (afro-descendent) and my political view on racial issues (activism and work experience for racial equality, and academic knowledge with the topic) could also influence my perception and also my participants' response. I reminded myself of how I used to think and feel when having racialised experiences before my racial identity became *negra* (since the racial identities of Brazilians are not always given, see Introduction) and before I got in touch with politicized racial perspectives. This helped me to understand my participants who engaged with racial issues differently from how I personally engage and interpret now. I was open when informants asked about my positionality and opinions, however I did not express myself deeply and extensively about my political point of views and my academic knowledge with non-academic participants. I believe that academicism in other arenas can be an oppressive mechanism and inputs a hierarchy of knowledge and power that I wanted to avoid in this research process. In summary, as a researcher I showed my political position only when it was asked for and necessary, and I did not use scientific terms because I wanted a horizontal environment, free of judgment and intimidation as much as possible. Besides that, I tried to make them more comfortable by stating that 'all plurality of racialised experiences, what they think and feel, and how they position themselves are shared by many people, and that is exactly why their individual experiences for the study of our society are

important'. Our interactions were based in dialogue, which I tried to maintain a personal level as a research participant, and when we had many politicized conversations, instead of making strong statements I tried to rephrase beliefs into questions, focusing then on their points-of-view.

I believe my gender did not work as a barrier. I felt they were very open, possibly due to a cultural aspect of Brazil in which most urban communities do not see female researchers making inquiries as problematic.

In order to produce an ethnography in a more collaborative way, I made exploratory questions and engaged in a dialogue on what they believed was important to analyse in research about racial issues. I shared my research goals, heard feedback, and stimulated suggestions of methods and analyses. I kept myself open to any kind of orientation during the whole fieldwork period. I received good suggestions from some of my participants, which I incorporated in the process.

I informed participants that the final thesis would be available online, and that I also hoped to publish work from it in academic journals and news articles. As such, I have retained their anonymity. I aim to translate the thesis into Portuguese, and to distribute it to social organizations who work with popular and intellectual debates on racial issues, in both countries. I am confident that this study was harmless to South African and Brazilian relations; on the contrary, I believe that it has the potential to facilitate mutual understanding.

# CHAPTER 1

## Encountering Race in South Africa

The experiences of Brazilians in South Africa bring to the surface a country that is racially divided. Race and the cultural and socioeconomic differences between racialised groups became each day more present in the lives and reflections of Brazilians. Coming to South Africa, my key informants found out that race matters here. My research showed that race became one of the main puzzles that Brazilians tried to decipher. The more they paid attention to it, the more it became a daily issue to think about and the lens through which they read South African society. In the following sections, some of those experiences will be described and analysed through the conceptual framework developed in the Introductory Chapter: namely, the social construction of a habitus of race and its link to colonialism.

### **Racialization, classification and divided populations in South Africa**

For all informants, South Africa had stronger racial and cultural divisions, and segregation, than they expected. Nine out of ten informants reported a great deal of difficulty in adapting to what they perceived as a highly racialised South Africa, which they had not expected. Much of their surprise was caused by wrong expectations of how South African society would be. Eight out of ten of my informants did not expect to encounter such strong conflictive racial relations. The following narrative exemplifies the encounter of a participant with many layers in which the social construction of race is forged in South Africa. It also shows the contrast between how race is constructed here and in Brazil. In other words, it presents the new racialised habitus, entangled with culture and class, which my participants have come to learn in South Africa. In what follows I explore these ideas in dialogue with data from other participants' narratives.

My first encounter with Tiago was September 2015, in an event at the University of Cape Town (UCT), a screening of the film *Cartas para Angola* [Letters to Angola], about the origins of Brazilian Capoeira in Angola, followed by a debate with the film makers. In this event, the filmmakers explored the urge that Brazilians have on searching for the origins of afro-Brazilian traditions in Africa. When I went outside, I saw Tiago interacting with a person

and I recognized his Brazilian accent. We started to chat about the exhibition and he told me that it was his first week in Cape Town, and he was having enormous trouble understanding South African society. He was an academic with a scholarship to study the South African context for a year. I offered him a ride to his shared flat in District Six, and we spoke a bit more about his experiences in South Africa. In May 2016, I invited him to be one of my research participants, to which he agreed.

Tiago identifies himself as a white person in Brazil and in South Africa. He spoke about his move to Gardens, “a white neighborhood”, and his first weeks in Cape Town – how “most of the times (he) was the only white” in the commuter taxi to university, and that people warned him that he must not take the van after five pm because it was dangerous for a white person. He mentioned that in his first week he noticed that the gay clubs he frequented were racially segregated, such that there was a “majoritarian white club”, and a “majoritarian black club”. He also mentioned how the city is racially divided in relation to shops. “One thing that called my attention: in Brazil we have supermarkets divided by class. Here it is also by race. The Woolworths is for whites, Pick’n Pay is for everybody, and Shoprite is for blacks, you don’t see whites in Shoprite. It was very marked, this is something that shocked me: wow, there is a different supermarket for different races. There is the club. Probably there is even the bank, I’m not sure. The university! UCT is whiter than UWC<sup>9</sup>.”

Tiago reinforced that “Here it is too divided. I have difficulty dealing with that. For example, you go to have lunch at UCT, you seat at the stairs at Jammie Hall, and you see that the black will be with blacks, the white will be with whites. The white of the rugby team will be with other whites of the rugby team, but he interacts with other whites outside this group, but he won’t interact with the Indian.” I then asked him if he knew or expected that when he came to South Africa, and he answered that “I knew about this diversity, but I expected a bit of that idea of the Rainbow Nation.” Sounding like he is finding out in that moment, he went on: “Funny... I think that deep inside, logically, I expected racial issues, but I also had an idea of the miscegenation, as it is in Brazil, that [in Brazil] will generate other factors and problems, other forms of racism. But racism here is still based on separation. This is when we speak: the apartheid is not over. The apartheid as a document doesn’t exist anymore, but... There is a street near my place, Maynard Street, that divided where a black person could or could not enter [without a pass during apartheid]. Today a black person can walk there [without a pass],

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<sup>9</sup> Historically, the apartheid segregationist laws defined the University of Cape Town (UCT) for white people only, and University of Western Cape (UWC) for coloured people.

but he won't have a house in Gardens. This was something that shocked me a lot when I arrived.”

I asked what were the things that most impressed him when he arrived in South Africa. He promptly said “the racial divisions with no doubt. The issue of the [classificatory] terms ‘coloured’, ‘white’...”

Like Tiago, the South Africa which most of my participants expected was less racially hostile than the reality. In exploring their imaginaries of South Africa, before they arrived, seven participants mentioned the maternal and welcoming figure of ‘Mama Africa’. Others emphasized the idea of a multicultural country in which apartheid’s white supremacist ideologies were overcome by most people, who constructed a truly democratic society – as Tiago emphasized, he expected to encounter a Rainbow Nation. This idea can be attributed to the image that South Africa gained in the media world-wide through the figure of a pacifist Nelson Mandela and the country’s promotion of the Rainbow Nation as symbol of a post-apartheid order. As explained by Alexander (2001: 471), in post-apartheid South Africa “(...) it remains the case that most of leadership of the country is committed, at least rhetorically, to the building of a nonracial democracy, a ‘rainbow nation’ in which both unity and diversity will obtain.” But as Tiago’s narrative above shows, what they encountered was something different. The disparity between such expectations and the high racialization that my participants found here created frustration, and challenges of understanding and adaptation.

All ten research participants went through a process of learning local racial categories, which differed from the Brazilian ones. This was not a smooth process for any of them and they found it confusing to understand a similar but different classification. For eight informants, to racialize and classify people – as they noticed South Africans doing – was something they did not like to do because they connected this practice with racism. Nonetheless, they found it inevitable if they wanted to adapt to this country’s social interactions.

For example, racial divisions and classificatory terms are one of the things that most impressed Tiago when he arrived in South Africa. In another moment of our conversation, he said,

“The context here is completely classist and racialised. We experience in Brazil the difference of races in another level, right? According to this logic, the miscegenation logic, the logic that everybody has [many racial identities]... that thing ‘ah, I am black as well’, that end up raising other factors. But here no, the thing is very divided. This is a very complicated thing. The first time

that I saw some guys saying ‘I am coloured’... What a bizarre category, right? (...) And suddenly you see yourself saying ‘that one there is coloured’. And it is so strong because you come from the Olympus (those debates about race in the university), then suddenly you come to a place like this and your first reaction is like ‘what an absurd characterization!’. The coloured is this package that incorporates everyone who isn’t black and white in South Africa. It is crazy, what category is that? What umbrella term is that? And suddenly you’re using ‘that one there is coloured’, then you start to create patterns that allows you to recognize. Then I was going, understanding the social dynamic here as well: the issue of the coloured speaking Afrikaans that helps to identify. It is so strong and so bizarre to understand that there still exists a thing very racially clear that prevails in this society because *they* use it.”

Tiago’s experience can be seen through the point of view of Bourdieu’s habitus theory. Habitus is "embodied history, internalized as second nature and so forgotten as history" (Bourdieu, 1990:56). It is enacted through practice, such that “the objective homogenizing of group or class habitus that results from homogeneity of conditions of existence is what enables practices to be objectively harmonized without any calculation or conscious reference to a norm and mutually adjusted in the absence of any direct interaction or, a fortiori, explicit co-ordination” (Bourdieu, 1990:58-59).

As a foreigner, Tiago did not share the same past conditions, embodied history, and internalised second nature of South Africans. Similarly to nine out of ten research participants, Tiago was not used to racially classifying others, and his actual actions on racializing people were not unconscious or unnoticed by himself. The fact that racial categories in South Africa differ, carrying new meanings, makes this process even more disharmonic and conflictive. Bourdieu explained that

“Constructing the notion of habitus as a system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment or as classificatory principles as well as being the organizing principles of action meant constituting the social agent in his true role as the practical operator of the construction of objects.” (Bourdieu, 1990b:12-13).

Being socialized in a different context, participants did not have the same categories of perceptions, assessments, and classificatory principles. For example, one informant who I interviewed at the beginning of their stay in South Africa complained that “first you see the

race, then you see the rest. I hate that”; while another said that “I had a hard time understanding all the racial variations, it’s too confusing, I don’t even know what I am here.” From a third: “it is impossible to not think about race all the time because South Africans are obsessed with it. Five minutes talking to them you can see that they need to know what race was the person you mentioned, what race you are, what race is the guy you’re dating, if the party will be black or white”, while another participant said that “to have to classify people makes me tired, in Brazil we don’t care about that all the time like people here”. The discomfort Tiago and the other participants felt may indicate that not only the categories are different, but the practice of racializing people explicitly might not be part of the Brazilian racial habitus.

However, Tiago’s and the other participants collected new experiences within South Africa which allowed them to adapt to the local racial habitus. Participants learnt the local racial categories and began to reproduce the practice of racialization as South Africans do, to the best of their abilities. For instance, the same informants mentioned above who were uncomfortable racializing people upon their arrival, later began to tell their stories to me (and to other people) with racialization of people in their content, making use of the South African racial categories. For example, in my first encounter with Kelly, she told me stories involving people she met here, but she would not say the race of the person. In our second encounter, she asked many questions of me and my friend who was with us, a Xhosa South African, in order to understand the racial groups in this country, because people she met in Cape Town told her she was coloured, and for her she was undoubtedly black. She said “oh my god, too much classification, in Brazil Zulu, Xhosa, Coloured, Indian would be all *negros*, much simpler, it doesn’t matter what language, culture, mother and father you have. This is too much, unnecessary. It is interesting but does not matter because I’m not from here.” But sometime later, she had shifted to a South African racialization habitus, in that she would tell me stories and point to people on the street by always including the subject’s racial identity: “I bought the coffee there, where that coloured girl with red dress is,” (when there was no other person with red clothing around), or “I met an interesting guy, he is Zulu, from Durban”. In other moments, when she was not sure, she asked: “I was talking to a woman at the mall, it was a nice conversation, I think she was coloured because she was Muslim. Or Indian, are there Indian Muslims? I must know”.

Bourdieu argued that habitus works to produce “a common-sense world, whose immediate self-evidence is accompanied by the objectivity provided by consensus on the meaning of practices” (Bourdieu, 1990:58). For Brazilians in South Africa, the learnt racialization and classification become an unconscious and unintentional practice that

produced, in Bourdieu's terminology, objectified meaning harmonized with the collective consensus and common-sense world and, therefore, reinforced and validated the structures that induced the practice. In other words, they acquired the local habitus of racializing people in everyday life, accordingly to the local racial categories they came to learn in the country. This was seen in numerous other examples, such as where I told a story to my partner about selling a fridge; he listened and then, at the end, asked for the race of the family I'd sold the fridge to. I hadn't thought it relevant, but realized that I had not performed the racialised habitus the way I was meant to, which resulted in questions.

My research participants and I learned fast that race matters in this society. Through that understanding, race became a lens through which they analyzed life events, and read people, spaces, information, politics, and relationships.

The habitus of racializing people works then as a constant reminder that race matters, that without the racial lens a story of an experience is incomplete. Having this in mind, it becomes hard work for colour-blindness to become a hegemonic discourse, because in South Africa it disputes heavily with essentialist racial discourses and its racialised everyday practices, that takes race as the central social fact (Erasmus, 2008) – and many people are vocal about it. In this aspect South Africa differs from Brazil. There, colour-blindness is the prevalent discourse, practiced in most social relations and political views, as a consequence of the alienating “culture of ‘racial democracy’” (Nascimento and Nascimento, 2001:7). I argue that in South Africa, the racialization is so evident (learned fast even by foreigners) and persistent that colour-blindness works in a different level than the Brazilian one. While in Brazil colour-blindness can even impede people from seeing and acknowledging their own race and the race of most people of their social circle<sup>10</sup>, in South Africa this would be unlikely because of the constant racialization of people and situations. Colour-blindness here then works, in practical terms, as a way of not engaging in reflection or seeing expressions of racism and discrimination, racial privilege, oppression, and inequalities (Erasmus, 2008), rather than not seeing the racial difference of people and not classifying them racially at all. Therefore, putting both colour-blind dynamics in comparison, it is possible to say that there are two different stages of colour-blindness. In Brazil it can be considered deeper because most of the times it affects the conscious perception of racial difference. In South Africa the everyday racial

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<sup>10</sup> Certainly there are exceptions, since Brazil is a pigmentocracy (Nascimento and Nascimento, 2001). My experience in Brazil showed that being racially different from the majority in a certain space will not pass unnoticed, especially if one has darker skin, voluminous afro hair, or very blond hair and white skin. Often activists from black movements say (ironically) to those who defend that in Brazil ‘there is no race because everybody is mixed’: that the police is not colour-blind at all: they know exactly who is black and who is not.

classification of people is stronger, and because of that the 'full colour-blind approach' cannot be reached. Nonetheless, being colour-blind in South Africa would be a matter of seeing racial difference, but by principle and political views it would be denied, ignored, or not allowed a rational engagement with it.

Whatever the practical level of colour-blindness, this approach might also consider the acknowledgment of people's race an expression of racism, according to Erasmus (2008). In this sense, for five out of ten participants, starting the process of classifying people was not easy and made them feel uncomfortable in the beginning. Informants reported "this race thing in South Africa is too much, everything is about race, in Brazil you don't even think about it and there we learned since we were kids that to point out somebody's race is a racist thing to do,"; or "how do we want to end racism by saying people are these or that [race]? We should stop that and treat as everyone as the same, humans". Another participant noted that "in my family we don't say 'he is black' or 'she is white' if we don't need to, because it is discrimination. But here you have to say it and I don't like so much, it is strange to me, but I'm getting used to it"; and "I went to Brazil in summer and did that [racialised people] there, and my friends looked at me in a strange way as if I was being racist. Then I remembered that in Brazil people are not used to that." In South Africa, as all ten participants noticed, race is spoken everywhere and racialization is part of many South Africans everyday lives. This fact contributed to their quick learning of the local habitus, and consequently they reported that the idea that links racism to racialization was dissolved in few months.

### **Categories and Self-Identification**

All ten participants had to make efforts to understand the local categories, since the Brazilian and South African racial categories did not match. Much of this process of deciphering worked not only to classify others, but also helped participants to understand their own identity in this new context. And for that, a great part of confusion was caused due to an external racial ascription (classifications made by others) that differed from their self-classification and identity.

For example, my conversation with Ayo, a self-identified *preta* Brazilian woman from São Paulo who came to Cape Town for a three months English course, happened when she was in the city already for two months. She mentioned how she got confused when some of the people she met told her that here she was not black, but she would be considered coloured instead. She was really surprised by this information, since she believed herself to be obviously

black because of her dark skin, afro hair, and other physical features. When she asked why, they said it was because she had a black skin slightly lighter than black South Africans and she did not have black African culture and language.

Another participant Rosa, also a *preta* woman from São Paulo and a black activist there, who came to study English and research African head-wraps, told me about an interaction she had with a homeless person in her first weeks. In their conversation, she said ‘...because us blacks’ and he corrected her saying that he was not black, he was coloured. She then asked “why aren’t you black? We are the same, look at our skin, it is the same [black] colour!” and she put her arm next to his to show him how they had the same colour. “Then he took off his beanie and showed his hair, saying that my hair was African, and his hair was straighter so he was coloured.” In such ways were participants taught the South African taxonomy of race.

Once I went to a free music concert at Green Market Square, which was advertised as a celebration of racial consciousness. While there I saw two black people (in my perception), a man and a woman, having a loud argument. I could not understand why they were fighting, but he was shouting “You are umlungu<sup>11</sup>!” and she was shouting back “I’m not umlungu, I am black”. This scene made me wonder why that man was saying that black woman was white.

Through interactions, Tiago learnt how to better identify people considered coloured through listening their common language (or their accent) Afrikaans. Ayo learned that to be black, one has to have a skin tone similar to the majority of black South Africans and have their culture and language. Rosa learned that hair type differentiates some coloureds from blacks. I learned that black people can also be considered ‘white/whitened’ by their group, or named in terms I learned in South Africa such as ‘coconut’, meaning that one can have black skin but is culturally white; and also that my hair, physiognomy, and skin colour is similar to many of so-called coloureds in South Africa, however I am not recognized as one because I do not have their culture, language and ancestry. All these examples show how the racialization of people and their categorizations takes into account many aspects, and for my participants this was a confusing issue present in the country.

These ethnographic examples, among many others reported by all informants, demonstrate that the South African racial categories, official and non-official, are very present and complex. The research showed that the Brazilian informants learned such taxonomy through their own experiences, observations, and conversations involving South Africans, who

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<sup>11</sup> Umlungu in isiXhosa means white person. When I asked several Xhosa people in South Africa about the term, some said that it carries a pejorative connotation, and others said that it does not and it is purely descriptive.

express 'racial lessons' in their daily racial habitus, being either covert or overt (Sallaz, 2010) manifestations.

During my interviews with my informants, it was made clear that through daily interaction with South Africans, they are able to make assumptions about local racial identities, that will be further confirmed or dismissed by repetition of events, through questioning South Africans about it, or when a South African make a spontaneous clear statement. This confirmation or clear attitudes are then overt, as it was for Rosa, for example, that a person explained clearly about the hair types that differentiate black and coloured people. The exact same lesson that Rosa learnt in an overt way, I learned but in a covert way. Nobody explained that to me but I had this assumption when I saw many groups of women (that I believed to be classified as coloureds in the country) arriving at the beach with straight hair and leaving the water with curly hair. I realized then, through the 'informal sample' at the beach, that probably a great part of coloureds have natural curly hair and I did not know that. I previously thought their Asian (Malaysian) ancestry was responsible for the straight hair. Then I imagined that the effort of straightening their hairs could be connected to a matter of distancing themselves from African blackness, as it happens in Brazil. Rosa's experience then confirmed my assumption. Another example of overt was when I was talking to two white South Africans women about curly hair products. We were talking only about hair, we did not mention race, but one of them told us spontaneously: "Because of my curls I was confused with a coloured a few times. But I can't be coloured, I don't even have purple gums" and she laughed. In this moment, I learned something completely new: that the colour of gums in the mouth can be an element for racial distinction in South Africa. In this moment I was wondering what colour were mine, as I have never paid attention to it. And I felt instantly tired, I thought that from now on I will probably see everyone's gum colour. In case this practice keeps being reinforced, once a mark of distinction is incorporated in the habitus it might become second nature (Bourdieu, 1990).

But the process of learning was long, and none of my informants yet had the confidence and conviction of knowing for sure how race works in South Africa. They indicated that that South African categories have more elements and 'requirements of belonging' than the Brazilian ones. Race has many details in differentiation and also relies on a conflation with many cultures, language, ethnicity, origin, ancestry, and location (Erasmus, 2008).

This stronger segmentation of South African taxonomy of race, in comparison to Brazil, could be explained by their specific and/or common colonialist heritage. As mentioned in the introduction, both countries had white supremacist ideologies and exploitation of people of colour's labour through slavery and regimes of servitude at the core of its racial projects.

However, the Brazilian diverse indigenous population was largely decimated due to colonialism, declining from an estimated 2,5 million indigenous prior to colonization to less than 10 per cent a hundred years after it (Churchill, 2000). The colonial power also succeeded in homogenizing the language in the country to Portuguese and imposing the Catholic religion. The racial and cultural mixing was encouraged by the State, in order to promote a gradual whitening of the population. Mostly enslaved people brought from Africa, instead of indigenous population from Brazil, were used by colonialism system as main source of labour exploitation. In South Africa, the indigenous population and enslaved foreigner people were used as cheap labour (Wolpe, 1972). Here, instead of miscegenation, ideologies of racial purity were encouraged, racial miscegenation prohibited, mobility restricted, and people were spatially divided, all by law. One can say that despite both countries being highly culturally diverse, the barriers and rules that delimit, divide, and maintain culture and the taxonomy of race are stronger in South Africa, since only after 1994 were the apartheid segregationist laws struck down. Surely the maintenance of cultural traditions linked to race cannot be only explained by segregation or political views on cultural appropriation, but the lack of intense racial inter-relations and valuing purity or authenticity contributes as barriers for a fluid racial-cultural exchange. In Brazil, it is common to see cultural elements attributed originally to black, indigenous, or white people have been performed by people from all races, and the notion of cultural appropriation is largely refuted by most of the population. However, cultural appropriation ideas have been gaining strength in the last decade mostly due to the popularization and increase of this debate on various social media led by afro-descendants and indigenous people. In this sense Brazilian society differs from the South African one: in South Africa specific cultural expressions are very connected to the respective racial identities, while in Brazil race is still not broadly seen as the foremost link to a culture; in a Brazil marked by racial miscegenation, colour-blindness, and cultural appropriation, some cultural traditions can be connected to race as much as it is the place of origin, of living, affinity, or family tradition (which can be a multiracial family). Also, there is a significant erasure of the historical link between a cultural tradition and a racial identity, and so its cultural protagonists negros and indigenous. In short, it is common and problematic that Brazilians, especially if they are urban white people, feel entitled perform, appropriate, and to see themselves as protagonists of all culture that is produced in the country (black and indigenous traditions included), justifying themselves as having mixed heritage, and in disregard with populations who claim this act as disrespectful (Goncalves, 2017).

Therefore, the link between race, ethnicity, and culture in South Africa and the rigid barriers between them are a differential for Brazilians, and the research showed that my informants, either agreeing or not with these divisions, had to make a great effort to understand and adapt to this new racial habitus.

### **Segregated Spaces and Segregated People**

The second main challenge for Brazilians adapting to South African society is the visible and evident racial segregation of spaces and people, a major problematic issue for all ten participants. Tiago was surprised when he observed his ‘white neighborhood’, that he was the only white in the taxis he took, the racially divided gay clubs, and the ways people used supermarkets, shops, banks, and universities. Adding to that, in ‘racially mixed’ spaces he also noticed that many people would group themselves with people from the same race, as he described in his observations at a university square.

Facing this context in which racially mixed groups are the exception and the formation of same-race groups of people and same-race spaces is the standard, all my participants rapidly attributed those facts to apartheid history. However, they were surprised that segregation and maintenance of racial difference is still blatant even after the end of official segregationist laws, demonstrating that the South African racial paradigm constructed during apartheid remains. According to Boonzaier (1989),

“The ideology of apartheid and its associated legislation were clearly based upon the assumption that the South African population consisted of a number of discrete and unassimilable groups. Indeed, it was the legislation that ossified these populations and rigidified the boundaries between them, so that the statutory groupings and the resultant very real differences in income and status, simply served to reinforce basic assumptions about the existence of racial groups and innate differences.” (Boonzaier, 1989:63-64)

For my informants, these strong racial divisions had been hard to picture prior to their arrival, even if they were intellectually a possibility. Once they encountered the divisions on arrival, they found difficult to deal with on a personal level, causing a great degree of confusion, insecurity, disappointment, and reflection on race in the country. Tiago, similarly to all other participants’ observations, thus commented “racism in South Africa is still much based on separation. (...) The apartheid is not over”. These kinds of conclusions drawn by all ten

informants led them to engage critically about the spatial racial segregation in South Africa; spatial segregation that, in their perspectives, also enables same-race groups formation.

Therefore, my informants' declarations about spatial segregation and its consequence of reinforcing the conviviality of same-race social groups, demonstrated an understanding of segregation as an expression of systemic and structural racism. In the quote above, Boonzaier (1989) explained that the racial paradigm was used by white South Africans to justify difference of power and wealth, and I would include 'racial segregation of spaces'. Some of my informants are self-declared white in Brazil, yet they were critical about racial spatial segregation in South Africa. The distinct acceptance/tolerance of segregation between white South Africans and my white Brazilian informants can indicate that segregation is part of the local racial paradigm and, as foreigners, participants have not taken it for granted and therefore could engage critically against it. However, this fact does not mean that in their homeland they were critical of the Brazilian mode of racial segregation, since they were used to the Brazilian racial habitus and paradigms, which have a 'colour-blind' strong tendency. For this reason, I argue that my informants' racialised experiences in South Africa promoted an improvement of their critical thinking on racial issues. I will return to this topic, comparing their observations in South Africa to the Brazilian context, in Chapters 2.

The acknowledgment of spatial segregation affected my participants on a deeper and emotional level, especially those who felt unwanted in certain spaces, such as Paulo. Paulo was in his mid-twenties, from Sao Paulo, and came to South Africa as an academic postgrad student. His racial identity is ambiguous and he is in the process of determining it, but after coming to South Africa he started to see himself as a person of colour. Paulo and I were chatting in a café in Sea Point, Cape Town. He was telling me that he did not feel comfortable in 'white spaces' because sometimes he saw people staring at him, so he felt like an undesirable person. When I asked him why he believed people were staring at him, he responded that it was probably because of his colour. I could relate to Paulo's impressions, and together we wondered if we read people looking at us as racism in South Africa because it really is, or because we know we are in a place where racism is blatant so we interpret this kind of action as discrimination – that may or may not be true. In other words, it is hard to say to what extent the feeling of being 'othered' or undesired in a certain space is connected to an actual real experience of discrimination (a person is really staring at you because of your race), or it is a fear and an expectation based on previous experiences and knowledge on racism, racial habitus, and how people react with 'racial others'. In this sense, we concluded that one will never know for sure since those kinds of experiences are unspoken between the actors. I then asked Paulo if he felt

people staring at him in Brazil and how he interpreted it. He said that a few times he had this feeling of people staring, but he thought it was because he is gay and has body-movements considered feminine. However, in South Africa he had the impression the othering was because of his race. In my case, in Brazil I used to interpret such 'staring' as a class issue, my clothing style, or the volume of hair. I exposed my personal experience on that and told him that for me this impression in South Africa is a feeling accompanied by a quick thought/internal voice that explains the experience as racial discrimination. It is not heavily analytical and based on rational and conscious observation and elements. He agreed. Because of that, he and I could not explain this feeling/impression rationally. Nonetheless, we both experienced race and racism as covert in this particular way.

Paulo told me about his strategies of gaining access and social tolerance in segregated spaces in which he would be considered other/undesired person. One thing he noticed is that to be accompanied by a white person in a 'white space' facilitates his presence there, a phenomenon that he named 'racial credentials'.

In my auto-ethnography exercise, I noticed that I also feel more comfortable to be with my white partner in South Africa in order to not feel awkward in 'white spaces', and I have the impression that when I am with him, I will have more chances of been integrated and white people will be more open to speak to me, without staring at me and rejecting my presence with their eyes. Other participants reported a similar unease in racially segregated situations. For example, Ayo spoke of her experiences at a rock concert. She is an attractive woman, when we walked around Cape Town CBD I could see that she received a lot of attention from people. However, in the rock concert, which Ayo described as "ninety nine percent white", "it was like I was invisible, nobody even looked at me. I felt uncomfortable and the music was not good, so chose to leave." Ayo's experiences demonstrated another form of communicating that a person is not wanted in a space: through indifference. When I shared about this feeling of racialization in 'white spaces' to white friends, the responses I received tended to imply that I was exaggerating. However, with friends of colour from South Africa, this feeling was fully understood when I shared it. Every time I started telling a person of colour about a situation that happened with me, they immediately came with the racist 'episodes' they had encountered that week, showing solidarity, empathy and understanding. This fact demonstrated how white privilege operates in terms of blinding many white people to recognize racial discrimination against people of colour (POC), and because they do not see, some feel entitled to dismiss the experience of POC by creating other explanations, or just see the whole experience and complaint as misinterpretation or exaggeration.

Therefore, the segregation of spaces and people in South Africa through racial habitus is a socially constructed mechanism that preserves the racial divided structure in the country and reduces multiracial conviviality.

In addition, participants reported on cultural social behavior differences they perceived within racial groups divisions. Tiago, for example, told a story of how the social behavior of white and black people on public transportation was different to each other, in his point of view. While black women were chatting and laughing loud, white people were sitting quietly. Tiago connected the behavior of black people to his Brazilian environment, in that it brought memories from Rio de Janeiro so he felt at home and emotionally and socially connected to those women. On the other hand, he was critical of how white people acted in that situation, demonstrated through his tone of sarcasm when he said that the white man would not act like the black women, because “he is well behaved, well educated.” For Tiago, the fact that they did not speak isiXhosa was not the real barrier, but rather the difference of cultural expressions between white and black people in terms of social interactions and moral values. Tiago also had the impression that a person considered coloured would “stay in the middle”, sometimes performing like black and sometimes like white people.

According to Erasmus (2008), race and culture became entangled in South Africa, and one of the effects of apartheid was to instill in people the essentialist idea that they not only have inherent biological differences, but also inherent social differences too, and such ideas still persist in South Africa.

In this vein, Teppo (2004) affirms that the apartheid government and white communities’ institutions defined a social code on how white people should behave in order to correspond to white supremacist ideology. They set clear codes of behavior and policing mechanisms, and developed rehabilitation centres that would ‘educate’ white poor people to live as expected of a ‘superior race’ and avoid conviviality in equal terms of social relations with the working class of colour. Hygiene, appearance of the house, garden, clothing, going to church, and what they consider as polite and superior behaviors were then controlled.

The difference of behavior between people can also be linked to the spatial settings of each community, racially segregated by apartheid. According to Ross (2010:62), “different modes of occupying space imply different modalities of sociality and sociability”. In short, the city spaces in which each population occupied historically was radically different; while white people mostly lived in spacious household units with clear boundaries and green area between each unit, people of colour were forcibly removed to many settlements areas with high density

and closeness to each other, increasing social dynamics of constant interaction and reducing individualistic possibilities.

In summary, in post-apartheid South Africa, even after the government segregationist laws were dismantled, the socio-economic and spatial structure did not change substantially to a point of promoting significant cultural exchange neither reducing cultural distances or differences. In the relational level, it is possible to say high racialization and racism still operates largely in the country. The racial habitus in South Africa continue to reproduce difference and segregation of spaces and people, through social mechanisms and embodied messages that communicate that one is a desired or undesired person in a certain space and/or for a certain interaction. The racial 'other' receives the message, whether subtle or obvious. When Brazilian participants in this research project entered these spaces, they were able to notice and/or learnt elements of the South African habitus.

### **Internalized non-racial discourses and reflections on the Rainbow Nation and Racial Democracy myth**

Fredrickson (2001) argued that the Racial Democracy myth was strongly internalized by Brazilians, and nowadays established as part of people's culture and mindset. I tend to agree that my informants' perceptions are influenced by the discrepancies between what I believe to be an internalized Brazilian notion of miscegenation – a fundamental notion promoted by the Racial Democracy myth – and the expectations of a like situation in the Rainbow Nation of South Africa. Therefore, for Brazilians the Racial Democracy myth would be more than an ideological position, but an internalized discourse through which they evaluated and engaged with South African society.

The main divergent point between the Racial Democracy myth in Brazil and the Rainbow Nation in South Africa is the aspect of racial miscegenation. For example, all my ten informants noticed that families are mostly composed of the same race individuals, and interracial relationships are rare besides the predominant grouping of same race people in social conviviality and the segregated spaces in South Africa. In Brazil the contrary occurs; most of the families are racially mixed which has originated a great deal of multiracial individuals. They said "...because Brazil is different [from South Africa], we have all kinds of races in our families: all together and mixed!", "you go to a restaurant here, and you see a family having dinner and everybody have the same colour", "I went to a braai [barbecue] in Wynberg park, and I saw there coloured families, Indian families, black families, and none mixed families.

The barbecues in Brazil are that mess, all kinds of people of the same family, friends, neighbors”, and “when I say to South Africans that I have a blond sister, a black father, a *morena* mother, a white grandmother, and so on, people say ‘wow!’. Racism here is worse, because of apartheid I think, they don’t like each other enough to mix, it is so strange”. Therefore, since colonization, and then reinforced by the Racial Democracy myth, racial miscegenation was its core idea that implicated the racial formation and changed racial habitus of the Brazilian population. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that celebrating mixed spaces and miscegenation in a given society where racism, racial inequalities, and hierarchies still structure that society is not only politically pointless: it can harm the anti-racism struggle by creating an illusion that ‘if we are friends, all is well’, and consequently maintaining the oppression against people of colour.

What participants found in South Africa was a highly racially divided society which would then contradict the idea of a Rainbow Nation and a racial democracy. For example, it was common to hear my informants invalidate the idea of Rainbow Nation and post-apartheid saying “this can’t be Rainbow Nation, it’s too segregated”, “only white people in high class places, and black workers serving them, so this is just like it was in apartheid”, “we are in Africa, the majority is black, but if you go to some neighborhoods you’ll see only white people like in Europe. Rainbow Nation is such a lie!”, “apartheid is not over, people do not mix with each other, racism is still too strong”. However, the Rainbow Nation idea does not explicitly stimulate racial miscegenation as the Brazilian racial project that created the Racial Democracy myth. In this case, the Brazilian racial habitus clearly contrasted with the South African one. My conversations with my participants showed that they had difficulty in conceptualizing and accepting the possibility of a post-apartheid, non-racial, non-racist, post-colonial, or/and racially equal society that is not miscegenated. I could deduce that for them, without miscegenation and mixed conviviality, a society cannot be racially equal and, therefore, it would be racist.

For example, at the end of my conversation with Tiago, we discussed whether miscegenation is an essential step for a true racial democracy. We did not find the answer then, or later. But he stated that Brazil is just as racially violent as South Africa, and is also segregated, yet “Why here in South Africa do I feel more violently bothered about it? I think the crucial point is the miscegenation, which is problematic but makes Brazilians have more contact with the diversity of races than South Africans.” He also connected racial divisions with colonialism, saying,

“And it was funny because then I came to Cape Town which broke a large part of my preconceived ideas that I had in relation to understand Cape Town in a post-colonial concept. In my perception and experience – and this is not a theoretical thing – the post-colonial issue here is completely different from the one in Brazil, especially because of race division. There are contexts in Cape Town in which you are inserted that is nothing post-colonial, they are completely colonizing. That gave me lots of problematizations and problems, both at the same time, I guess. Actually, more problems than problematizations. I had great difficulty of adaptation. I still face this until today.”

Therefore, it is possible to affirm that, for Tiago, a post-colonial reality cannot be grounded where racial inequalities, hierarchies, and segregation are dominant in a given society.

The similarity and difference between non-racial discourses in Brazil and in South Africa were a great part of some of my informants’ reflections about the country. Three participants (Tiago, João, and Paulo) and I, who were familiar with racial history from Brazil, could link the similarity of non-racialism between the idea of the Rainbow Nation and the Brazilian Racial Democracy myth. Through their experiences in South Africa, they noticed clearly that Rainbow Nation ideas are just as unrealistic, an empty discourse, as the Racial Democracy myth.

However, those three participants knew that miscegenation in Brazil did not lead to the end of racial inequalities and racism in that society, and as many authors argue – such as Nascimento and Nascimento (2001), Biko (1978), Pillay (2015), and Mangcu (2015) in the South African case – non-racialist discourses are dangerous because they can mask and deny existing racial inequalities, race-based privilege, then reinforcing the status quo of racial hierarchies and oppression.

In conclusion, my informants’ perception, based on their personal experiences, of South Africa as more racist than Brazil can be directly connected mainly to three elements: the visible evidence of strong segregated spaces and populations; the racialization in daily lives; and the usage of the internalized idea of miscegenation as a lens through which they evaluate South African society. All three elements together showed to be the main causes of difficulties in adaptation for Brazilians in the country.

## CHAPTER 2

### Self-Identity of Brazilians in South Africa

The process of Brazilians making sense of South African racial, cultural and national identities does not happen in isolation from making sense of their own identities in this new context. Their identities in South Africa are influenced by external factors – how South Africans see them and relate to them – and by internal factors – how they see themselves prior to arrival, and once in the country. The dialectic between the internal and the external, and the past and the present, can lead to conflict as there is not a perfect match between constructions of race in Brazil and South Africa.

In order to understand the identities of Brazilians in South Africa, it is important to acknowledge their condition as transnational immigrants. According to Hall (1996) and Holvino (2012), the theoretical landscape of identity studies has been changing with the forces of globalization, that provokes structural changes alongside the national and cultural border-crossing of people, challenging “notions of stable and one-dimensional identities” (Holvino, 2012:161). For Holvino (2012) identities are influenced by the conditions of postmodernity, such that identities are non-linear and constructed through discourses and language. Holvino (2012) further argues that feminist theories can help us to make sense of identity, in that feminist work addresses the intersectional nature of identity, such that even when women share the same sex or gender category, their experiences differ because of their other identities, such as racial, class, ethnic, and cultural.

Fieldwork showed that identity, for my informants, was relational, situational, malleable, overlapping and unstable. Racial discourses and categories were questioned and deconstructed by those who experienced or observed the fluidity of identities according to contexts and people, the large amount of people living on the borders of categories, and those who did not ‘perfectly’ fit in any category or who were classified by others as belonging to more than one category. They also observed the agency of people in negotiating and choosing who they are.

The research showed my Brazilians informants’ process of making sense of their own racial identity (sometimes conflated with cultural and class identities) in the South African context were far from being linear or easily ordered. My informants’ reflections had many entangled elements, connected to past and present lived experiences, interactions, observations, questions, and assumptions. For that reason, translating such an organic and unstructured

process into a structured written format for the present thesis was a challenge. In order to not lose the fluidity of the path that their experiences and reflections took, in the following section I begin with one in-depth and detailed trajectory of an informant, Paulo, and use it as an anchor and a window to dialogue with the diversity of other informants' experiences, in the light of the theoretical framework on identities selected for this study.

### **Racial identity crisis**

The question of the racial identities of Brazilians in South Africa matters because their experiences as outsiders provoke intense reflection on South African society, and engage them in a process that produces variations in the meanings of race. Hall (1996:596), pointed out that this is a common aspect of modernity, in which “modern identities are being de-centred; that is, dislocated or fragmented”. For Hall, globalisation caused a structural shift in landscapes of race, gender, culture, and nationality. As such, our identities as social individuals are no longer as stable, “undermining our sense of ourselves as integrated subjects” (Hall, 1996:596). Hall further draws on Mercer (1990), who argued that “identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty” (Mercer, 1990:43, in Hall, 1996:597).

In keeping with this, I argue that the experience of migration caused an identity crisis for Brazilians in South Africa. For example, Paulo is in his mid-twenties and came to South Africa as an academic postgraduate student, as mentioned in Chapter One. We met in a class at the university and during our first conversation I told him the topic of my research. He found it interesting and told me his struggle to understand South African racial categories. I asked him what his racial identity was in Brazil and he said “I don't know... I think white... I never thought much on that. But here in South Africa I keep wondering about what I am for them.”

Later in the research process, Paulo told me that he was going through a ‘racial identity crisis’. He realized that here he might not be considered white, and he was confused and feeling pressured to define his race, “because in South Africa society pushes you to position yourself.”

Two months later, Paulo and I went walking at Sea Point promenade in Cape Town. He told me with more certainty that he saw himself as different from white South Africans and Europeans, culturally and physically. He believed that most of white people in this country do not recognize him as white, even though a few did. And, most importantly, he found out that he was not white in South Africa. But to my surprise, he said “and I am probably not white in Brazil as well, as I thought I was. Now I believe that in Brazil I am *pardo*”.

After this statement, I questioned Paulo on what happened to cause this change in his identity. He told me his key experiences and a subsequent reflection process in South Africa contributed to the shift: from uncertain white identity to a certain ‘non-white’ identity in South Africa and to *pardo* in Brazil. Before I unravel his experiences, it is necessary to explain possible reasons for his not having a defined racial identity in the Brazilian context, or to self-identify (or be identified by others) in the ‘wrong’ racial category.

**Brazilian racial non and mis-classifications:  
A massive uncertainty and the erasure of blackness**

As mentioned in the Introduction it is common for many Brazilians to not be aware of or sure about their own race. Paulo’s first uncertain answer was in keeping with those of four other informants who answered my question about race uncertainly: “I’m white/pardo/negro, I guess”; “I think I’m white/pardo/negro?”; “probably white/pardo/negro”. Not being sure, and not having to think about racial classification, is a reality for many people in Brazil, especially (but not only) for the majority of the population who do not fit the stereotypical ‘very white’, ‘very black’, ‘very indigenous’, and who have multiracial family background – a large part of the Brazilian population. Class also comes as a strong factor that influence the definition or undefinition of a racial identity in the racial hierarchies of power and wealth, since the privileged positions are mostly occupied by white people and the unprivileged by black people. In Brazil, there is no systematized racial classification/self-declaration in the civil registration document or mandatory self-declaration in other state or private institutions<sup>12</sup>, unless the person is applying for affirmative action, a very recent and still not extended public policy that began with some universities and a few public service positions.

However, as many people do not know their own race and are influenced by the negative stereotypical image that attributed to black people due to racism, it is common to see a phenomenon in which self-declarants use euphemisms to not say they are black in open questions, or in closed questions they tend to classify themselves in whiter degree that they really are (Nascimento and Nascimento, 2001). This phenomenon explains some discrepancies such the ‘appearing or disappearing’ of millions of people in one or other racial category from

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<sup>12</sup> The only document in which is mandatory race/colour declaration when a child is born is *the Declaracao de Nascidos Vivos* (Born Alive Declaration), filled by the hospital staff (and are common cases of ‘whitening’ the child, and/or declaring as *pardo* even when the child is not). There is also a non-compulsory section for self-declaration of race/colour when applying for public schools. However, in the main compulsory documents of a Brazilian, the *Registro Civil* (Civil Registration), Birth Certificate and the ID, there is no field race/colour.

one Census to the next. One of the actions that black movements advocate in Brazil is to promote mass campaigns to improve the positive image of black people, to explain the population who is *negro* (basically to explain that *pardo* or '*moreno*'<sup>13</sup> is *negro*) and how self-declaring as *negro* (or *preto* or *pardo*) is necessary for the development of public policies for inclusion and reparation, such as affirmative actions. When such campaigns were promoted, it was possible to see the increase of the *negro* category reflected on the statistics of self-declarants (Duarte, 2011).

In short, racism in Brazil also operates at the level of self-identification, in which many *negros* do not see themselves as *negros*, since unconsciously some find the need to distance themselves from the negative stereotypes associated with blackness. In addition, the Racial Democracy Myth promotes the idea that everybody is racially mixed, that there is no racism or even race in Brazil, and that to racialize is to discriminate. One could say that racism in Brazil is dissimulated, especially when its practices are justified as class and cultural differences and not racial discrimination (Nascimento and Nascimento, 2001).

To return to Paulo, he first mentioned that he was not sure about his racial identity, but it could be white. Choosing white as the probable identity when he did not know what race he belonged can indicate a choice influenced by white normativity. Paulo is also part of the minority of people who have higher education and belong to the middle class, which is mostly a white environment. This could influence his belief that he belonged to the same racial group of his friends and school colleagues. However, it also shows that Paulo had an ambiguous racial identity in Brazil, that can either be white or *pardo/negro*. He is, in Brazil, a clear example of those who live in the borderlands of the racial classificatory categories.

Through his trajectory in South Africa, Paulo then came to realize that here he was not white. But more than that, he started to doubt and question his white identity in Brazil as well, further defining himself in the *pardo* category. He told me that he read about racial issues, went to open lectures promoted by #Fees Must Fall and #Rhodes Must Fall student movements about race, and had conversations with many South Africans and Brazilians, searching for an understanding of his discovery about his own blackness.

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<sup>13</sup> *Moreno* is most popular euphemism for *negro*, alongside with *mulato*, and *caboclo* (primary *caboclo* was a term was used to designate a mixture between indigenous and white people, but in some areas it can be a synonym for *mulato*, since the phenotypical boundaries between them are blurred due to mixed race appearance and background).

During our walk at Sea Point, I told Paulo that I could relate a lot to the process he was going through, of ‘becoming *negro*’ – whilst now I consider myself to have always been *negra*, Paulo’s words that “this truth was hidden from my own perception” resonated with my own experience. Paulo wanted to know more about my experience, and I told him that before encountering a friend who introduced me to readings on racial identity in Brazil, I never thought about my race, just as he did not. I was satisfied to be called and call myself *morena* because of the brown tone of my skin, however never thought that *morena* or *mulata* meant *negra*. When this friend, that looked similar to me, told me that she was *negra* and explained the whitening process in Brazil, I spent months in shock. I started to read more about blackness and racial construction in Brazil, and talk more about the topic with people from black movements. My knowledge on the topic increased, I could understand past facts of my life through racial lenses, and identify discriminatory practices that happen in my life. Those experiences unraveled to be common to millions of *negra* women in Latin America and the world. And the cause of those experiences had a name: racism. For me, this process took around three years, with intense personal research. I was 28 years old when I could affirm to myself with certainty that I was *negra*, and along the way I found many *pardos* going through a similar learning process of their racial identity and understanding better covert racist practices of the Brazilian type of discrimination and structural racism.

Hall (1990:224-225) is useful here when he uses an example of the Caribbean experience to affirm that in places of the African diaspora (as in Brazil) there was a loss of identity experienced through dispersal and fragmentation due to colonialism. For the Caribbean, Africa became the missing link that could heal such lost identity. However, while there are points of similarity between the Caribbean and Brazil,

“We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about ‘one experience, one identity’, without acknowledging its other side—the ruptures and discontinuities which constitute, precisely, the Caribbean’s ‘uniqueness’. Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’. [...] Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. [...] identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. It is only from this second position that we can properly understand the traumatic character of ‘the colonial experience’. The ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subjected in the dominant regimes of representation [...].

They had the power to make us see and experience *ourselves* as ‘Other.’”

(Hall, 1990:225)

My conversations with *pardos* who went through this process of ‘becoming *negro*’ confirmed that it was an affirming experience, because suddenly many hurtful repetitive events of our own lives that we could never understand, made a greater sense in the light of identity and racial discrimination.

### **Revealing racial identity in South Africa: Experiences leading to ‘race talk’**

During our walk in Sea Point, Paulo told me very excitedly that he had a great breakthrough. He mentioned that there was something that happened to him which he needed to talk about before our encounter, so I knew how important this experience was to him. In short, his parents came to visit him in Cape Town and experienced racialization and discrimination. Firstly, his parents found Cape Town and Stellenbosch were too European and white. They felt uncomfortable with that, especially after being followed by a security guard in a Woolworths grocery shop in Sea Point, and when they noticed that white people would stare at them in Stellenbosch restaurants and shops. Here I would say, from my own knowledge of Brazilian society, that in Brazil discrimination in spaces like grocery and coffee shops, such as staring and being followed, is more obvious and visible if one has darker skin, and seen as poor. In South Africa, the intolerance against people of colour in ‘white’ and upper-class spaces is higher, which included a family such Paulo’s, middle class ‘brown skinned’ family. For Paulo, those experiences generated conversations about race in the family, and his parents read them as racist expressions, connected to class discrimination. During one of those dialogues, Paulo then spoke to them about being a participant of a study, exposed my research topic and said how he felt confused about his race in the country. Then something unexpected happened: his father said that he is *negro*. Paulo and his mother were shocked by that revelation, they did not know and had never imagined that he self-categorised in that way. Paulo realized that in his whole life he had never spoken about racial identity with his family, and neither had his parents spoken to each other.

After the silent moment of shock, his mother said to her husband that she does not agree that he is *negro*, she does not see him as *negro*, but as *pardo*. She also sees herself as *parda*. She argued that *pardo* is not *negro*, because ‘a *negra* woman has darker skin and suffers from

racism', and she does not. In this logic, they could not be racially equal. His mother, however, believed herself *parda* but not *negra*.

I asked Paulo about his father's appearance and he said that his skin is a darker tone of brown than his mother (but not 'obviously black' to him), his hair is curlier, and he has some features associated with black people such as nose and lip type. After this revelation, Paulo remembered then that in his childhood his mother used to say that his father was ugly and Paulo thought it was because of the nose, but now Paulo believes that this was a racist comment against the physical features that were connected to being a black person. This conversation with his parents made Paulo question again his previously held belief that he was white. I asked if he thinks that this conversation would have happened in Brazil, and he strongly believes that it would not; the racialised experiences in South Africa were essential in bringing to his family the dialogue about racial identity.

This episode shows clearly a crucial moment in which the racial habitus in South Africa meets the racial habitus in Brazil; when the high racialization in South African society meets the colour-blind Brazilian social culture. When his father affirmed himself as *negro*, Paulo's own identity was also impacted, shifting his identity references from white to *negro*, but now through direct kinship.

### **The influence of External Racial Ascription (Hetero-Classification<sup>14</sup>) on Racial Self-Identification and The Racial Limbo**

The lack of awareness of some Brazilians about their own race, and the possibility of one having an ambiguous racial identity, is an uncommon phenomenon to many South Africans. Every time I told my story to them, that I had no idea of which race I was until my 28<sup>th</sup> year, people were surprised. They also saw this as a good thing, an example of non-racial colour-blindness, whereas I have come to view it as masking a subtler racism in Brazil.

In South Africa, the intense classificatory practices during colonial and apartheid periods made by the state and society left little room for an ambiguous racial identity for any large population group. Besides that, my informants were clear that they feel that in South Africa one *must* position oneself racially.

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<sup>14</sup> The term mostly used by Brazilian academics is heteroclassificacao (hetero-classification), but in this thesis I will use the term external racial ascription.

Paulo’s experience showed that not being seen as white by white people influenced his self-identity and notion of belonging. In other words, his external ascription as non-white in South Africa heavily influenced his self-identification as a non-white.

Nine out of ten informants were racially ascribed by others differently in South Africa from their self-identification in Brazil, impacting then on their self-identity in smaller or greater extent. The following table shows the shift:

<b>Table 1 – Self-identity in Brazil and External Racial Ascription in South Africa</b>		
<b>Informant</b>	<b>Racial self-identity in Brazil before coming to South Africa<sup>15</sup></b>	<b>Informants’ perceptions and experiences on how they were classified by South Africans (External Racial Ascription)</b>
Paulo	Not sure (maybe white)	People of Colour (POC), coloured, white, black
João	White	Coloured, white, mixed-race
Tiago	White	White, a different ‘sort’ of white, coloured
Anita (myself)	<i>Parda/ Negra</i>	POC, coloured, mixed-race, white, black
Ina	<i>Parda/ Negra</i>	Coloured, black
Rosa	<i>Preta/ Negra</i>	Black
Ayo	<i>Preta/ Negra</i>	Black, coloured
Rico	White	Coloured, white
Maria	White	Coloured, white
Kelly	<i>Preta/ Negra</i>	Coloured, black

Table 1 shows that Brazilian informants found themselves in an ambiguous situation in South Africa, being classified in more than one racial category. Surprisingly, some of them were externally ascribed in all the main racial categories of South Africa, with the exception of Indian. However, most of them reported that they did not fit perfectly into the local racial

<sup>15</sup> The column ‘Racial self-identity in Brazil before coming to South Africa’ was not easily ‘given since birth’ as it happens in South Africa. Part of the participants – especially those who does not fit the physical stereotype of white, black or indigenous – had to go through a phase in their lives in which their self-identity was thought, questioned, and then defined, for the reasons explained in the previous section.

categories, or that they were not recognized as members of South African racial categories by South Africans who self-identified as belonging to those same categories. It is hard to imagine that in a country where racial categories have such rigid boundaries, a foreigner is able to be seen as simultaneously belonging to many of them, or to none.

This fact raises questions. If identities are formed through a combination of self-identification and external racial ascription, how do subjects self-identify if they are externally ascribed in more than one racial category? According to Holvino's (2012:172) model of simultaneity of identities, "more than intersecting circles, social identity is constructed by a number of coexisting identity-forming systems of difference always in interaction and transaction with each other at the same time". Therefore, what identity-forming systems of difference are being played simultaneously in their case?

This phenomenon of being externally ascribed in many categories of race and none (perfect fit) at the same time could then be explained by two opposite forces existing in the South African racial habitus and identity politics that reinforce each other, whilst also creating tension and contradiction. One force is the rigid and strict requirements of belonging to a category which facilitates the *exclusion* of individuals who do not meet most of the core requirements, and the other force is the social contract of *having to* categorize and *include* individuals in *one* of the established categories. For Holvino (2012:176), the social "pressure for singularity" and "aversion to ambiguity and multidimensionality is a human trait, [...] sociopolitical tradition, or a result of identity politics, with its demand for unity in the face of oppression". In short, those two forces operate together and can exclude and include at the same time.

In other words, the research showed that in South Africa almost all participants felt and were told that they did not belong perfectly to any of the South African racial categories. This aspect promoted a racial exclusion in a highly racialised society. However, as part of the South African racial habitus, society expected that the individual positioned themselves racially and belonged to a racial group of the local understanding – nevertheless, it was not possible because they were foreigners and thus did not meet the strict requirements that conflate culture, nationality and kinship within a racial category. Therefore, Brazilians found themselves in a sort of racial limbo.

### **Informants' experiences on identities, belonging, and racial relations in South Africa**

### *Disrupting white identity*

As shown in Table 1, informants who in Brazil self-identified as white reported that in South Africa they were seen as white or coloured. Because of the marked conflation of culture and race around coloured identity, being recognized as coloured was made mostly from phenotype. However, many racialised experiences of inclusion and exclusion can happen because of the phenotype and colour of skin, before an engagement through dialogue which would denounce them as not part of the South African coloured group. Informants' who self-declared as white in Brazil were positioned ambiguously in South Africa such that all of them felt 'not as white' as white people of South Africa.

Some of them continued to affirm themselves as white, such as Tiago and Rico (see below), however in a different manner. While Tiago suffered emotionally from what he perceived as exclusion by the white group, Rico chose to stick to a colour-blind approach, not thinking about race and his position. Maria developed aversion and resentment towards white people in South Africa, and João maintained himself in the ambiguous identity situation in the country. In the following paragraphs, I will describe and analyze some of the trajectories and reflections of those informants.

#### Rico, Maria, João, and Tiago

Rico was living in South Africa for two years when we met. He was 25 years old, born in a small sized town in Minas Gerais state, grew up in a lower middle class household that turned to be upper middle class in the last ten years. He had a higher education degree in Computer Sciences and worked as IT support in South Africa. During dinners, he always offered Brazilian food and drinks for his friends, talking a lot about good things from Brazil, such as culture and nature. At those meetings, race was not part of the conversation topics, and this was different from my other experiences in South Africa. In our interviews, when I asked how he was seen in South Africa in terms of race, he said he was seen as white but sometimes coloured, when people who he believes to be classified as coloured spoke to him in Afrikaans. But for him, "this was natural, because many coloureds have white skin and many whites are tanned. The race divisions are ridiculous and don't really matter". In Brazil, he saw himself as white, even that his skin is light brown as mine, and he has straight hair. He told me that most of the people he relates to are white and so that he goes to places where the majority of people are white. When I questioned why, he said that those places are mostly white because of culture

“usually people who like rock’n roll are white, and I like rock. The places are open to everybody, there is nobody stopping any person to go to those places”.

He noticed that it was difficult to make friendships with South Africans, but he attributed this to openness towards foreigners and not to racial discrimination. He said, “people here are not so easy going, they are a bit closed in the circles they grew up. [...] I don’t think there’s anything to do with race”. All of his friends in South Africa were white Europeans introduced by his European girlfriend, and he felt belonging to this group, not missing or feeling any problem on having closer relations to South Africans. He was the only informant that believed that the “heavy racism in South Africa ended with the end of apartheid” and “most black people live in difficult situation because now is a matter of class, not racism”.

One could say that Rico’s position is in tune with a great part of the Brazilian population who cannot see, do not want to talk about and deny racism – colour-blind by their own decision making – having great conviction on non-racialism. However, his notion of non-racialism and colour-blind ideally walks side-by-side with a white-centered social relations and spaces, despite him being externally ascribed in certain moments as a person of colour. He rejects and denies ideas of race, similarly to how Erasmus (2008) explained colourblindness, and he argues that racial inequalities are given because of the racism of the past (not the present), and the actual situation is due to a class continuation, as believed by many Brazilians.

Maria, a sixty years old woman who stayed in the country for a short term in order to travel, told me that she was also classified as coloured, in spite of having white skin and straight black hair. She told me this fact in a happy proud way, and took this external racial ascription as a compliment. She said that she is white but she had Brazilian indigenous ancestry as well, and is very proud of that heritage. She grow up in a rural working class family in the countryside of Goias state, moved to Goiania (capital of Goias) and got a higher education degree in English Literature in a working class college. From there she moved to Brasilia (capital of Brazil), got married and had two children, and found a job at an international organization. She ascended to upper class in fifteen years, a rare example of class mobility in Brazil.

In South Africa, she developed an aversion to white people. She said “white people here are snobbish and racist. Even those who are not rich, they behave like if they were. They think they are ‘the last Coca-Cola of the desert’, better than everyone just because they are white. They treat black people badly”. In this moment, it became clear that Maria made a link between class behavior and white people’s behavior connected by a superiority notion of themselves.

Watching Maria engaging with people on the streets was very intense. She would talk to all people of colour in an open and intimate way, hugging people, laughing, carrying babies, making jokes, complaining about politicians, even when they were strangers. I could see that for her, a good day was a day with many interactions on the streets. Sometimes, she would cross social boundaries such as touching black women's hair or taking pictures with black children, which is considered racist and unpolite by many people of colour. "I learned that some people don't like when I do that", but she said that they were very patient and "explained things to her". However, I saw her doing it again, almost that if she could not resist getting intimate with strangers. She would also ask many questions about history, politics, racism and racial inequalities, and I could see most of the people were pleased to answer. I was impressed with the easiness that Maria was having on interacting with non-white South Africans, in comparison to me and most of my informants, and I realized that she was neither shy nor concerned with acting according to the local racial habitus. There was a moment, for example, that she started to ask a woman to teach her the clicks of the isi-Xhosa language. I could see that the woman did not like that. In this situation, I believed I would understand that I said something wrong and stop the interaction, probably apologizing. But Maria insisted, making funny faces and clumsy clicks, until the woman relaxed, laughed, and taught her. In the end, they were smiling to each other and giving hugs of goodbye. "Give me a big hug, Brazilians like to hug!", she said.

In her strategy, it is identifiable that Maria chose to ignore racial sensitivities between racial groups and forcibly pushed the boundaries of race, class and cultural divisions in her social interactions (except with the white group that she chose to exclude). In her performance, she made a risky but smart use of her naivety as a Brazilian foreigner to break people's resistance and to cross the boundaries as a white woman, integrating herself very easily within black and coloured groups. And the fact that she was white but "not very white" worked, in her opinion, in her favor.

João's is a lecturer at a South African university. He is mid 30 years old, was born in Sao Paulo state and is middle class. His identity is complex because it shows a certain hybridity. Physically he is white in Brazil, but non-white in South Africa and "hetero-classified as coloured" in the country. He is a son of interracial marriage of black and white parents, and his mixed background influenced his feelings of identification with coloured people. "I identify myself more with coloureds. This is the place where I feel more comfortable, a parallel space. I believe that the communities of foreigners, muslims, coloureds, are 'the other of the other',

and that's how I feel. Black population has a clear relation to the land, even that they were excluded [...]. Whites are pretending that this situation has nothing to do with them but always treating blacks as 'the other': is their land but the possessions are mine. And the coloureds are 'the others of the other', because we know very little about them, who they are, their demands." João raised then an ontological debate connected to racial identities in South Africa. Basically, if black South Africans are considered 'the other' by white people since colonial times, coloured people would be 'the other of the other', displaced from the dichotomy black/white, with unclear position in this society and little political attention; a relatively marginalized place. And as a Brazilian foreigner hetero-classified as coloured, he goes through a process of becoming an 'other' that not only carries a condition of alterity, but an alterity that is racially undefinable.

However, João's political affinity with the black movements struggle and his cultural afro-Brazilian diasporic heritage provide him a strong identification to black South Africans. As an example, he commented on the students protests, in which South Africans sing and dance. "I identify it a lot with the Brazilian *negra* community. Because our main *negra* roots are bantu roots (despite the term bantu has a terrible connotation in South Africa, the word bantu for us takes us to a positive identity in Brazil). For us, the bantu culture is the mother culture of our samba, of our jongo, of our batuque [drums beat]. The bantu culture is this mythical and rich place of our heritage."

João emphasized an encounter with an elderly Xhosa music and storyteller artist, Madosine, and her niece. He had the opportunity of personal interaction and felt deeply connected with her affection, "as grandmothers from Brazil have". He realized that her "with such an amazing rich black culture, little valued and visibilized, is within this second or third place that blacks occupy in South Africa. Her niece works to clean the university. This is a place that society reserved for her. And at the same time, her niece is the main heir of all this culture. [...] I think we are separated by class, not only by race. The racial separation plays a less relevant role than the class issues. If South Africa was more inclusive, in which the black population had more access to economic power, South Africa would be more open". In other words, class and racial habitus are both acting together and cannot be treated in separation; both contribute to distancing those who have affinities and openness towards people from another racial identity. Therefore, João experiences show "lived hybridity in which contradictory identities were attended to simultaneously rather than only in separate spheres or times" (Dhingra 2007:15, in Holvino, 2012: 177).

Tiago considered himself white in Brazil and in South Africa, the category of his racial identity did not change. He was born in Sao Paulo state, is middle class, and mid 30 years old. However, as mentioned in his narrative on Chapter One, he struggled to adapt to the racial divisions in this country. Once we were at my house and he told me how he felt inferiorized and had low self-confidence and self-esteem when he was around white South Africans. This fact was because here he felt as a different sort of white – “a white who is ‘less white’ than South African white people”. I asked why and he mentioned a few aspects that differentiate his whiteness from the majority of white South Africans he met. First was the fact that he does not have the same level of the English language, which was a big barrier to him. In the clubs, for example, he said that he feels insecure to flirt and engage in conversations with white South African men, and this does not happen in Brazil. When he feels insecure here, he tries to socialize with people who he identifies as Coloured or Indian, with whom he feels more relaxed. Another aspect was his appearance: he believed that his colour and complexion were not as white as the South Africans whites. He mentioned that a couple of times he was externally ascribed as coloured.

Tiago’s feeling of being a different kind of white in comparison to white South Africans explains more about the social constructions and requirements of the white racial category in this country. For Holvino (2012: 167-168) “differences are socially constructed. They reflect the socially attributed meanings to specific dimensions of human differences that have been signaled as important in a given society”. Tiago felt unappreciated and excluded to some extent by white South Africans because of relevant differences between them, and even though he was considered white, he did not have relevant attributes that whites in South Africa value and associate with the white category.

His experience showed that the combined difference of language, skin colour, and political affinity, and nationality (not being white South African, European, Australian or North American) were important marks of the production of difference or belonging the white South African category. He did not have necessary attributes that would fit the meaning of ‘white conveys superiority’ in a racist society. However, this alterity would not be radical, as he believes that he was still considered white, although a different kind of white that is lower in a racial hierarchy of whiteness. The feeling of ‘not being good enough’ to belong that racial group produced insecurity, shyness, and low self-esteem.

Six of my research informants were frustrated by the same issue, and developed anger, insecurity and/or fear of rejection when trying to befriend South Africans, not only white but also black locals, because of the racial difference. All of those informants said that this was

never a problem back in Brazil. Therefore, one could say that not being fully accepted by South Africans impacts one's racial identity and sense of belonging, but also one's notion of self-worth. The condition of foreignness in which Brazilians find themselves in South Africa, makes my research participants feel that their race here happens differently from South Africans to whom race is 'given' since birth.

### *Disrupting negro identity*

To return to Table 1: four informants (Kelly, Rosa, Ayo, Ina) besides me self-identified as *negros* before coming to South Africa. Kelly, Ayo, Rosa, and Ina were in South Africa for a short-term and were externally ascribed in two racial categories, and Rosa was the only *negra* who was not externally ascribed as belonging to another category than black. Paulo and I, in South Africa for a period longer than a year, were externally ascribed in more than two racial categories. In this sample of only ten participants, I could notice that longer the period in the country, more reflexive, racialised and external racial ascription experiences tended to occur, complexifying one's identity.<sup>16</sup>

### Kelly, Ayo, Rosa, and Ina

Kelly, Ayo, and Rosa who self-declared as *pretos* in Brazil, were visiting South Africa for a few months in order to study English, engage in personal projects, and do tourism. I met Kelly and Ayo through a Brazilian community page on Facebook, and Rosa at a house party organized by two South Africans in Muizenberg, Cape Town.

Both Ayo and Kelly were told by some people in South Africa that they could be seen as coloured (again, the focus is on physical appearance only, because of the conflation between race and culture of coloured identity). Ayo was told that her skin is slightly lighter than most black South Africans. Kelly was told that her hair is curly instead of kinky and that she cannot be black since she does not belong to any South African ethnicity.

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<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, Andre and I were the only informants who self-identify as *negros* living for a longer period in the country, and none of us were self-identified as *pretos*. I believe that it would have been rich to have other *pretos* informants for a long term in South Africa to explore with more in-depth their identities in relation to blackness.

Kelly was born in a working class household in the periphery of Brasilia and ten years ago ascended to middle class, living in Taguatinga. She was 28 years old, and had a higher degree in History from a private college. She chose to visit South Africa because she was a History teacher and would like to know more about the country, Mandela's history, and the anti-apartheid struggle. When I met her, she was running around asking questions about places to visit, safaris to take, where to buy African style clothes and a jacket for cold windy weather. After two weeks, we met again and she told me that what she found unexpected was that here she would not be classified as black, although her skin is as dark as black South Africans, in her opinion. However, she reproduced what people who she met in the country (mostly foreigner travelers and a few South Africans) said: that here one is black if they belong to any local South African black ethnic group, such as Xhosa and Zulu. And that here she would be classified as coloured (according to phenotype only) because of her hair, but she could not be coloured since she did not have their culture. It is possible to see that in the encounters of Kelly, the lack of a local culture and ethnicity de-racialised her and put her in racial limbo. However, she did not pay much attention to it, seeing it as an unfamiliar and 'exotic' part of South African society.

When I asked Kelly if she noticed any kind of discrimination, and she said with sarcasm and humor "of course, a diva with a black face like me, leader of the crowds, coming straight from the periphery of Brasilia to Cape Town, makes the *branquitude* [whiteness] scared, haha... But I'm used to that, and no one can stop me!" Therefore, Kelly's goals of having fun in the country and interact to everybody was not intimidated by racism or cultural differences, and her coping mechanisms to deal with discrimination through ignoring or laughing at it – strategies she learned in Brazil – were used in South Africa.

Ayo was 29 years old, born in the periphery of Sao Paulo city, in a working class household. In the last ten years, her family ascended to middle class and she achieved a better position in her work as a Human Resources professional. She came to the country to study English as a requirement for growing in her career. Besides that, she was also interested in finding her 'African roots' as an afro-descendent, such as cultural manifestations as African religions and music. However, she realized that unlike Brazilian cities, these elements of traditional black culture were not spread all over Cape Town and its access was difficult and restricted to their own social and racial communities.

Most of the people she nurtured closer relations in South Africa were black foreigners. She was not sure why she did not meet South African women, and believed that South African

men were too aggressive in their sexist approach in pubs and clubs, so she did not want to engage with them. In our conversations, Ayo told me how she values politeness and good manners. She grew up in a poor peripheral neighborhood of Sao Paulo, and her mother made a great effort for providing her education and teaching her “to not have the same destiny of girls there had: a girl without a future who gets involved with criminals, uses drugs, gets pregnant during teenage, quits school”. I could hear and see how Ayo concerns with self-care and self-respect were very strong and she could be seen as an ‘empowered woman’. I asked whether her trajectory in Brazil related to that, and she mentioned her mother’s education but also her father who was involved in black movements. She was not part of movements but “I grew up with those values, and I like to read articles about it”. Therefore, Ayo’s formation would not tolerate what she considers rudeness from people, and she valued politeness, people well dressed, intelligent, with good work habits, with pride and good self-esteem. This for her was a matter of self-respect and distancing for the negative stereotype attributed to black people in Brazil.

With regard to racial identity, she was told that in South Africa she would be classified as coloured because her skin was not dark enough. She found this strange since in Brazil she is undoubtedly *preta* with dark skin, but for her this information did not impact the way she saw herself as black. Ayo and I had many conversations on her experiences of blackness in Cape Town. One day at Ganesh, a pub in Observatory, I noticed that to relate to non-blacks was not part of her world, meaning that it was not relevant or a question to her. However, this happened not because of any sort of personal activism in which she would have political resistance to relate to them (she also made friendships with a few white foreigners), but of a sort of natural flow in which the approximation and relationships with black people, mostly foreigners, were easily made. One thing that stood up to her was “here in South Africa I saw so many black people empowered in comparison to Brazil, and this made me proud. One day my friends and I were driving a convertible Maserati [fancy car] and I realized that, wow, three *pretos* in such a car, I’ve never seen a scene like that in Brazil. Here we find so many black people in positions of power and wealth, this made me really happy”. I immediately understood that, since I found the same. In my whole life in Brazil, I’ve never seen such a scene. To go to a fancy restaurant and see one black family having dinner is rare, and so is rare to see more than five black people in a private school or university class (in most of the classes I would see only one *preto* person and maybe three *pardos*). The structural racism and inequalities in Brazil is such that it is rare to see *negros*, especially *pretos*, in privileged spaces and positions of

power. Even with all racial inequality in South Africa, the landscape of black people in power is, for Brazilians concerned with that, a racially representative paradise.

The only *preta* informant who believed that she was classified solely as black (and not as any other race) was Rosa. She was 24 years old, grew up in a working class family in Sao Paulo city who turned to middle class in the last decade. She was studying in Brazil, doing her graduation in Social Sciences. She came to South Africa to have English classes, but also had another goal related to her activism and academic life (she researches the usage of headwraps by black women). My first encounter with Rosa was at a house party of South African artists, one of the rare parties I've been in the country in which guests were racially balanced. Rosa was there dressed in her African style clothes and we chatted in Portuguese, which was a relief for her since she struggles a lot to communicate in English. There she introduced me to her friends, all black South African activists and artists. I could see her talking to them, it was more in gestures than words.

During other encounters, she told me that she arrived with very little money and was staying for free at the house of a South African woman she met already when she was in Cape Town. I had a strong impression that for her all the support she was having in the country was given in solidarity of the black activists she encountered. Rosa was my only participant whose primary relationships and interactions in the country was with black South Africans, even though her dialogue with them was restricted to a few words. She said that she liked them but was sad she could not communicate well to them, and she was feeling that she was missing great opportunities of engaging in a deeper way and having enough information for her activism because of the lack of English language. "I feel like a child here, I don't understand people well and they don't understand me".

Here she found out about the great division between black and coloured people, which made her disappointed since for her they are all black. In our encounters, she asked many questions in order to understand 'who is the coloured' and why they were not black. For her, this division did not make any sense and I could see how her involvement with Brazilian black intellectuals' work and activism, in which *pardos e pretos* are considered *negros*, influenced her political view of racial categories in South Africa. She said "but I don't understand, because Biko is South African and he wrote about that blacks are the oppressed, and coloureds were oppressed! How South Africans do not see that everybody is black? This is colourism that divides us black people, we must unite!". I could relate to Rosa's ideas, that are much in accordance with black intellectuals from Brazil, which for me it was also a point of

estrangement, a great differential between the racial politics in South Africa and the countries of the Diaspora.

I noticed that Rosa had strong anti-white sentiments a couple of times. For example, in a party a white woman apparently drunk was trying to seduce a black man in the middle of the dance floor in a very explicit way. Rosa mocked the woman to me, saying “white making whiter [ *branco fazendo branquice* ]”. She told me that she met a few white South Africans that she found nice people “who came to me”, however “I’m here for a short time in the country so I won’t definitely be dedicated to them, I don’t have time for them”. Rosa’s relations were intentionally black-centered and to make networking with black people here was her objective.

Therefore, in spite of her being successful on her goal of engaging with black local activists in the country, her activities as an activist and academic and the possibility of understanding details about the local culture and struggle were very restricted by the language barrier. Nevertheless, Rosa was the only informant who managed to be fully inside of black activism circles in South Africa, as it was her desire.

### **Trying to define an identity**

As seen in the last section, the problematic around external racial ascription, racial limbo and shifting identities of my informants’ trajectories resides in their multiplicity of racial identities when navigating the spheres of being, belonging, and representing, within the South African context marked by what they perceive as rigid racial/cultural boundaries, hierarchies, inequalities, disputes, conviviality, and conflicts. Of the three key informants (Paulo, Tiago, and João) and me who spent a period longer than a year in the country, three of us felt the need to define their racial identity, during some moments or in the whole trajectory in South Africa. According to Holvino (2012:171), feminist theories on transnational identities argue that “there is no core identity or inner self because the ‘self’ is always in process”, contrasting then with the individual’s need to define one racial/cultural self-identity for her/himself.

In my conversations with Paulo, for example, I could see that he was very concerned with finding the appropriate term to explain his identity to South Africans. He found out that he did not belong to any of the official South African racial categories. He found out that the unofficial terms such as Biko’s Black could include him, and also People of Colour (POC), however these were terms restricted to politicized and intellectualized spaces. Biko’s Black and People of Colour are generalist terms that expand blackness to those not considered to have black skin colour (with exception of those considered whites), and emphasize blackness in

terms of colour and common experience of structural racial discrimination. This expansion, however, dissociates the concept of being black or of colour from specific cultural references and is supposed to be multicultural inclusive term, a unifying term around the notion of blackness. Besides the fact that those terms will not be broadly understood outside those intellectualized environments, the reality that we are living within a society in which race and culture are mostly conflated and matter, to use a term that does not carry specific cultural meaning to designate our racial identity seems to be insufficient in order to communicate to South Africans who we really are.

### **Social Capital and Intersectionality**

According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:119) social capital is “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”. Therefore, Paulo shifting self-identity from white to POC/*pardo/negro* and discovery of his blackness was facilitated by and caused the process of losing the social capital linked to whiteness in South Africa. And this process is a significant shift in polarized societies in terms of dualisms such as oppressor/oppressed and privileged/unprivileged hierarchical positions, especially those societies that are structured around and through racism, such as the South African and Brazilian ones.

This shift also changes how his identities intersect to each other and within society. According to Holvino (2012:170), Intersectionality is

“a theoretical framework and a strategy for change based on a multidimensional and discursive and material understanding of identity (Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Dill, 2002). Intersectionality stresses the qualitative impact of categories of identity which intersect in a variety of ways, creating at the same time both oppression and opportunity. Inequalities are seen as ‘complex, mutually reinforcing or contradicting processes’ (Acker, 2006b:442) as ‘people live multiple, layered identities and can simultaneously experience oppression and privilege (Dill et al., 2007:629). In addition, Intersectionality pays attention to the interplay of macro societal structural inequities and the micro interactions and daily practices that sustain inequality (Essed, 1990; Hurtado, 2003; Weber, 1998 and 2010)”. (Holvino, 2012: 170)

Therefore, Paulo's racial identity is highly complex. In Brazil he lived in the racial borderlands of white and *pardo* identities, however because of the blurred line between them he was considered white by a large amount of people and benefited partially for some social capital linked to whiteness. However, he was not white so he did not benefit fully from this social capital, and therefore experienced covert racial discrimination. In South Africa, it became clear for him that he, most of the time, is not considered white, losing social capital linked to whiteness (besides nationality).

Interestingly, experiences of racial mis-classification were not limited to foreigners. I encountered South African people in similar situation of de-racialization or racial mis-classification in South Africa as some of my informants and I were going through. For example, I had the opportunity to attend a public talk on Coloured Identity during the Open Book Festival 2017, in Cape Town. On the occasion, Zimitri Erasmus read an auto-biographical piece of her book *Race Otherwise*, which I could relate to the transnational experience of me and my informants:

“My blackness is supposedly visible only because I do not ‘look white’. But, in some parts of West Africa I am called white. My blackness is ambiguous because I am not *black* Black or black African. These descriptions are increasingly used to distinguish between formerly colonized South Africans with different historical relationships to this region and its colonial past. I am (more often than not) not considered African in South Africa. I am still called ‘Coloured’. In the Western and Eastern Cape provinces ‘what I am’, racially speaking, is seldom questioned. In Limpopo, Gauteng and Mpumalanga, the northern provinces of the country, I am asked which tribe and which country I am from. In parts of Europe I am assumed to be from a Caribbean island. African-Americans are surprised to find that I was born and live ‘in Africa’. People from different parts of the world ask ‘what mix’ I am. Which would you prefer? Salt and vinegar or cinnamon and sugar? Neither one of my parents was *black* Black. Neither one of them was white White. I am not half-and-half.” (Erasmus, 2017:1-2)

This quote shows how the experience of the South African author is similar to my informants and me, in which racial identities and categories are situational, fluid, and might shift according to the context we are in.

### **Simultaneity and Multiplicity of Identities**

In order to understand my informants' complex identities in South Africa, it is important to emphasize that according to Weber (2010:90-92, in Holvino, 2012:170), an intersectional analytical approach takes into account that identity and differences are "historically and geographically contextual; socially constructed; reflective of power relationships; occurring at macro social-structural and micro social-psychological levels; and simultaneously expressed". In this sense, the relation between previous racialised experiences, racial paradigms, social structures, power relations, and habitus in Brazil with the new ones in South Africa, creates new dynamics and identities within the same field, such as multiple racial identities – or experiences of the variations of racialised meaning, as said Zimitri Erasmus during a private conversation with me after her public talk at Open Book Festival 2017 – and modifies how this multiplicity intersects. In order to address such complexity and drawing from the feminist intersectional and transnational theories, Holvino (2012) defends the idea of simultaneity of identities, which is

"Reconceptualizing identity as 'simultaneity' also attends to the ways in which race, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and nation are not just about a personal and individual identity, but about the social and institutional processes that determine opportunities, which also produce and reproduce racial, gender, class, and other differences. Simultaneity thus means the simultaneous process of identity, institutional and social practice, which operate concurrently and together to construct people's identities and shape their experiences, opportunities and constraints (Holvino, 2010)" (Holvino, 2012:172).

It is important to emphasize that my informants' processes of 'make sense of their identity in South Africa' does not necessarily mean resolving to define one racial category for belonging. The reflection on identity can lead a person to define her/himself as belonging to a multiplicity of identities, including variations of racial meanings, and perceive their overlapping, hybridity, intersections, fluidity, mobility, and contexts of activation of one and/or another identity.

In conclusion, the importance of those individuals' trajectories (foreigners who cannot be easily classified and 'do not fit' any specific racial classification, and so as locals in similar situations) is that they challenge the boundaries, fixation, and essentialisms that constitutes racial categories. Racial paradigms and stereotypes that reinforces racism and racial hierarchies are deconstructed by them not in purely theoretical or intellectual level, but through what they represent within a society: living examples that impact, puzzle, affect, and put unilateral,

bounded and fixed notions of racial identity into question for those of their immediate environment.

## CONCLUSION

The present ethnographic study about racialised experiences and perceptions of race of Brazilians in South Africa showed how being placed in a different racialised setting impacted their adaptation in this society and their own identities.

It became clearer in which ways the racial habitus of both countries differ and provoked a reflection process on those individuals about race. For them, it demanded conscious rational, emotional, and behavioural ‘labour’ in order to read and navigate the local social encounters and spaces, in the most harmonious and non-conflictive way possible as was their desire. A great part of such work they went through was to scrutinize race in South Africa through their own experiences; make sense of their observations and feelings; question critically their previous ‘taken for granted’ understanding of race, racial categories, and racialised social interactions; experiment and perform the local racialised behaviours; and finally, try to understand their own racial identity in this new context, developing a greater awareness about their previous identities and racialization in Brazil. The transnational movement of Brazilians brought to their consciousness their engagement with race and identity through social observations and interactions in South Africa, engagement previously done mostly through unconscious reproduction, automatic, intuitive, assumptive, and in accordance to the characteristics of their racial habitus in Brazil.

The study made with my informants was divided in two steps: first, the step in which they encountered the South African racial habitus and discovered its differences to the Brazilian one; and second, its impact on their identity that showed to be situational and intersectional. Both steps were organically entangled and non-linear, bouncing back and forth in their reflection process according to the events that appeared in their trajectories. During the research, no sign of present or future stability was evident, showing to be a highly dynamic and unstable field.

In Chapter One, the first step of their trajectories was emphasised. Some elements of the South African society and racial habitus caused great discomfort and challenges of adaptation for all Brazilians’ informants. Noticeably in the first days in the country, the visible racially segregated spaces and lack of racially-mixed spaces had a big impact on them. Then it came to their attention the rarity of racially-mixed groups of people, and the lack of significant number of multiracial families. When navigating the city, they noticed that places and people were mostly separated, gathering same-race individuals. White or black or ‘brown’ neighbourhoods, supermarkets, restaurants, pubs/clubs; all seemed to be racialised and divided.

In this setting, they connected the racial division of people and places with racism and questioned the real 'end of apartheid'.

Through interactions that Brazilians had in South Africa, they came to understand better how race 'works' in the country and in daily life. One conflictual aspect of the local racial habitus for Brazilians was to accept and adapt to the racialization, that they perceived as overwhelming, recurrent, and judged as unnecessary in most of situations. With such open and out-spoken racialization by South Africans on a day-to-day basis, my informants became aware of the racial categories in the country. The South African populations looked similar to the Brazilian populations – in a simplistic mode based on skin colour and physical features, they are white, black, brown, or Asian – but they differed in their historical formation, origin, culture, meanings, and requirements of belonging. It was through my informants' process of understanding the racial categories in South Africa through social interactions, that they came to learn how to differentiate people and places, the taxonomy of race, and how race and culture are conflated in this country.

The study showed that my informants came to adapt and embody elements of the local racial habitus in many situations: of seeing and speaking about race more frequently than in Brazil, and racializing and categorizing people according to local categories. Such behaviour did not come without an initial moral conflict; in Brazil they learned that speaking about race in many ordinary situations and racializing people constantly and 'unnecessarily' is unpolite and a racist expression. However, after accepting the new habitus, they engaged with racialization practices as South Africans do (however, without losing awareness that in Brazil such practices are not common and might be interpreted as racism).

The differences in social behaviour around race and the racial categories of Brazil and South Africa – of which my informants became aware – and their response feelings to the new racial habitus, showed to have strong connections with the history of both countries. While in South Africa, since colonization, the notion of racial/cultural purity led to apartheid's racial segregation politics, in Brazil the idea of racial/cultural miscegenation was developed instead. Colonialist heritages based in those two opposite notions showed to be present in the countries local habitus and social imaginary, which has historically maintained racial oppression and white privilege. This difference provided an explanation to the internal conflict that Brazilians went through when trying to adapt in South Africa.

Miscegenation is a fundamental notion advocated historically by the Racial Democracy discourse in Brazil, and it has a non-racialist basis. This discourse was internalized by Brazilians, who culturally share the belief that miscegenation and non-racialism are

requirements for pacific racial relations and equality. The effect of such internalized discourse was the development of highly colour-blind society that, contradictorily, sees the racialization, *negro* identity affirmation (such as black consciousness), and denounces of racism as expressions that reinforces racial division and, therefore, racism. For such reasons, my informants struggled to accept the South African racial habitus, in which racialization, race-talk, and denounces of racism were part of daily social discourses and interactions. It became obvious to them that race matters in South Africa and is one of the main lens in which South Africans engage and read their own society.

In Chapter Two, my informant's second step was emphasised. In the South African racialised environment, they felt impelled to understand and position themselves on 'who they were', 'which race they have', and 'which racial category they belonged' in their interactions in South Africa. My informants' trajectories and reflection process had a particular and individualized aspect according to their social interactions, racialised experiences, knowledge on race, political views, and previous racial identity. However, all of them saw themselves in an unstable position in relation to their identity in this new context.

Some of my informants did not have a strong sense of racial identity prior to South Africa. They believed that racialised experiences in the country led them to think and talk about race and identity, and went through an in-depth journey in order to discover 'what they were' and how racial identities and categories work in this country. Such reflection showed to be of a critical nature, and they questioned racial categories and identity requirements of belonging in South Africa and also in Brazil.

Much of their experiences and subsequent identity questioning were due to not being fully recognized as belonging to any of the South African categories. However, my informants felt pressured to define themselves in a South African category or affirm an identity comprehensible for South Africans, mostly because of the persistent and frequent racialization, and the fact that race matters in daily interactions and when navigating social spaces; the likeliness that South Africans know their own racial identity since childhood and wanted to know my informants' race; when dealing with racial discrimination; to know which spaces and people would be open to them; and the lack of knowledge about the meanings of Brazilian racial identities by South Africans.

My informants were racially ascribed in many different official and unofficial categories by South Africans. Some were seen as belonging to all the main racial categories by different South Africans, but at the same time not belonging fully to any of the South African categories due to the local conflation of race, culture, origin, and history. This generated a great

deal of confusion for my informants and for South Africans they interacted with, for mainly three reasons: categories in which some informants were ascribed brings a historical and political antagonism (such as being classified as white and as black), others experienced a drastic shift from their previous racial identity in Brazil (such as *negros/pardos* being recognized as white, or white as coloured), and others found themselves in a problematic ambiguity in situations in which a (one) coherent racial identity was required by South Africans.

Such experiences led to disruptions of white and negro identities, as they understood them. Their previous ‘taken for granted’ notions of such identities were challenged by different dimensions, requirements of belonging, and meanings of being black, white, the ‘new identity’ coloured, all present in the local dynamics of hierarchies of power and status, social codes, relationships, and access to places and people. In this disruptive process, they consciously reevaluated their previous ideas on white, *pardo*, and *negro* Brazilian identities.

The Brazilian racial identities and categories were no longer ‘taken for granted’ after my informants’ experiences in South Africa. They tried to understand South African racial categories and much of the knowledge they acquired on it was made not only by observations, but through their own experiences and feelings. ‘Not belonging’ a racial identity was understood by Brazilians through overt or covert communication with South Africans, and so through the dynamic of inclusion, exclusion, and discrimination in interactions Brazilians had in the country. The feeling of not being black enough, or white enough, or coloured was recurrent among my informants.

They became aware that their own identity was relatively unstable, situational, malleable, intersectional, and sometimes simultaneous. For them, the simultaneity of their intersected identities was made noticeable when realizing that, in South Africa, they had identification with more than one racial, cultural, and class identities – according to their new *and* previous racial experiences, notions, and meanings; and they were racially ascribed in different categories in different situations by different South Africans, with no identifiable pattern (then gaining or losing social capital in accordance to them). Such aspects were contrary to a coherent long-lasting one-dimensional self-identity, and how their multiplicity of identities and racialised meanings in the racial, cultural, class, and national fields were interplaying – sometimes at the same time and rapidly shifting, demonstrated the movements in which identities could intersect. Such movements challenged notions of fixity of identities.

More than understanding racial identities and categories themselves, I find relevant to understand the movements in which they interplay, intersect, and shift; from where to where,

how and why, which trajectory, and when they carry colonialist heritages or disrupt them. The present research provided not more than a glimpse of the experience of Brazilians in South Africa, and I believe that there is much more to investigate within this topic. The lack of ethnographic studies about race and identities that put Brazil and South Africa in relation to each other pushed me to fill the blank in a way of developing a basic foundation for understanding my informants' vast experiences. Many interesting elements that appeared during the fieldwork could not be investigated in-depth because of the limitations of one Master's thesis. In other words, this study has an overall basic characteristic and many of its findings would deserve more investigation and, possibly, research of their own. For example, to investigate specific racial groups would provide a better understanding on specific identities: Brazilian *negros* in South Africa could provide in-depth dialogue between the construction of blackness, 'Africaness', Brazilian African diasporic heritage, experiences with black activism, decoloniality, and racism. In my fieldwork, I noticed that many of the debates around coloured (or so-coloured) identity have much in common with *pardos* in Brazil, of being in an ambiguous, hybrid, or undefined position in polarized 'black or white' societies. Many Brazilian white people in South Africa experienced a 'loss of whiteness', sometimes being seen as a lower category of white or as coloured, losing social capital and power; or coming to see whiteness as problematic and oppressive due to South African black activism denounces, as they have not seen in Brazil. Besides that, investigations about how Brazilians refine their understanding of racism in South Africa; what happens when they go back to Brazil and encounter their previous racial habitus; the inverse research, of what happens to South Africans when they travel to Brazil, in relation to this one; how Brazilians adapt to in longer periods in the country; and finally, and in-depth investigation of Brazilians in South Africa focusing on gender, sexuality, class, and other identities.

Therefore, transnational studies between Brazil and South Africa are a fertile ground to develop a better understanding on race with a focus on the global South's countries.

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