

UNESCO AND THE STUDY OF RACE
RELATIONS IN BRAZIL:
Regional or National Issue?*

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Abstract: The literature on the cycle of studies on Brazilian race relations written in the 1950s, supported by UNESCO, has considered it a milestone that offered solid findings about the variety of such relations and the existence of racial prejudice and discrimination in Brazilian society. Some evaluations of these studies have asserted that the results of the UNESCO Project frustrated expectations that Brazil could be used as a positive example for race relations and an instrument in the struggle against racism in the period following the Holocaust. This research note takes a different stand in arguing that from the early stages of the organization of the project, Brazilian, French, and U.S. social scientists favored broadening the geographical scope under investigation because they were aware of several patterns of race relations and racial prejudice in Brazil. Originally, a limited and idealized regional focus was to center on the state of Bahia, but soon the scope of investigation became almost national in including Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Pernambuco.

In September 1949, the fourth session of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) approved an anti-racist agenda in response to a demand made by the United Nations.¹ When the Universal Declaration on Human Rights was issued in December 1948, it impelled UN agencies such as the Economic and Social

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1. The Fourth Session of the UNESCO General Conference, entitled "Study and Dissemination of Scientific Facts Concerning Questions of Race," approved three goals: "1) To study and collect scientific materials concerning questions of race; 2) To give wide diffusion to the scientific information collected; 3) To prepare an educational campaign based on this information." See UNESCO Archives, Records of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization, Fourth Session, Resolutions, Paris, UNESCO, 1949, p. 22.

Council (ECOSOC) to establish policies aimed at protecting ethnic and racial minorities.²

UNESCO had been established following the catastrophic results of World War II. One of its major goals was to understand the international conflict and its most perverse consequence, the Holocaust. The issue of race was also kept in the forefront of public attention by the persistence of racism, especially in the United States and South Africa, the emergence of the cold war, and the disruption of colonialism in Africa and Asia. UNESCO, with its egalitarian and universalistic perspective, stimulated scientific inquiry into racism that would address motivations, effects, and possible ways of overcoming it (Maio 1998b, 17–18). To this end, UNESCO encouraged in the early 1950s a cycle of studies about Brazilian race relations. Research was conducted in economically traditional regions such as the Northeast as well as in industrialized areas of the Southeast to present to the world the details of an experience in race relations that at that time was deemed unique and successful.³

Brazil's positive image in racial matters played a major role in UNESCO's decision to sponsor a research program there. The final research design also expressed the concern of UNESCO's Department of Social Sciences and invited researchers to fulfill the international agency's resolution of "organizing in Brazil a pilot investigation about contacts between race and ethnic groups in order to determine the economic, social, political, cultural and psychological factors favorable or unfavorable to the existence of harmonious relations between race and ethnic groups."⁴

The strongest evidence of such concern was the change in the original focus of the investigation. At first, the state of Bahia was the only area of investigation designated (Métraux 1950, 389). But during the planning of the UNESCO Project, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Pernambuco were subsequently included.⁵

This research note will describe the constructing of the UNESCO Project and will suggest that the project's final scope ultimately cut back the original goal of confronting racism worldwide with a homogeneous image of Brazil and paid more attention instead to the capacity of the social sciences

2. United Nations, Economic And Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, Fifth Session, "The Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities," 9 May 1949, in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part I up to 30/VI/50 (BOX REG 145).

3. On the series of studies made as part of the UNESCO Race Relations Project, see Wagley et al. (1950); T. Azevedo (1953); Costa Pinto (1953); Bastide and Fernandes (1955); Nogueira (1955); and Ribeiro (1956). On the history of the UNESCO Race Relations Project, see Maio (1997, chaps. 1–2).

4. UNESCO Archives, Records of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Fifth Session, Florence, 1950, Resolutions (Paris, July 1950), p. 40.

5. Pernambuco was added in 1951, as will be discussed.

to decipher the diverse patterns of race relations in Brazil. Examining Brazil through Bahia alone was closer to UNESCO's initial proposal of showcasing Brazil and its supposedly harmonious race relations. This option was sidelined, however, by the pressures exerted by social scientists who wished to include the Brazilian Southeast, a more urbanized and industrialized region that would reveal the racial tension existing in the larger Brazilian society.

This change in research design resulted from three factors: previous knowledge about Brazil among UNESCO staff members, understandings among Brazilian and non-Brazilian social scientists active in Brazil, and an existing tradition of investigation of race relations in Brazil. This research note will show that the UNESCO Project was guided from the outset by a perspective that wanted to build several "portraits of Brazil" as opposed to a single one.

Why Brazil?

The belief in Brazil as an exemplar in race relations dated back to the nineteenth century, when reports from travelers, scientists, journalists, and politicians from Europe and the United States registered surprise at the peaceful coexistence in Brazil among whites, blacks, and natives (Helwigg 1992; Skidmore 1993; C. Azevedo 1996). This image of "a racial paradise" contrasted with the turbulent U.S. experience, but it contradicted the views prevailing among Brazilian elites. After the belated end of black slavery in Brazil (1888) and the creation of a republican regime (1889), these elites considered the massive presence of blacks and widespread miscegenation to be obstacles to the country's modernization (Ortiz 1985).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, particularly from the 1920s to the 1940s, this pessimistic view of the contribution of the founding races of Brazilian society was dislodged by a more positive outlook. Relations between blacks and whites in Brazil came to be perceived instead as an indicator of tolerance and harmony. This shift can be attributed to economic, social, and political transformations in the country and an ongoing debate over the formation of Brazilian national identity (Schwarcz 1993). The controversial belief in a Brazilian racial democracy, which found its most refined interpretation in the work of sociologist Gilberto Freyre (1933), became an ideological cornerstone of racial integration. This view was substantial enough to attract international attention. In the wake of Nazi genocide, Brazil's seemingly harmonious race and ethnic relations became famous enough to attract the attention of UNESCO.

UNESCO's anti-racist agenda reflected a new international conjuncture with two major political components: the struggle against racism as a result of the rise of undeveloped countries, many recently born out of decolonization in Africa and Asia; and pressure by the USSR on the United States during the cold war manifested in one dimension by the Soviet critique

of racism in the United States, in which the USSR tried to side with third world countries (Malik 1996, 15–16; Lauren 1988, 195–96). It is therefore plausible to suppose that the choice of Brazil as an object of study could yield an alternative for overcoming the problems of racism and thus could advance the ideological battle between the United States and the West against communism.

In 1949 Arthur Ramos became the head of UNESCO's Department of Social Sciences. A physician and an anthropologist, Ramos completed studies in psychoanalysis, education, and public health in his short life (1903–1949), but he is remembered today for his research and reflections on Afro-Brazilians. His studies exhibit two well-defined phases. In the first, he proposed to reexamine the biological work of Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, a pioneer in the scientific study of Brazilians of African descent, substituting the ideas of the Italian and French schools of criminology and psychoanalysis. In the second phase, Ramos studied Afro-Brazilians and their lifestyles from a cultural perspective under the influence of the theory of acculturation. Ramos's later writings represent an attempt to consider the issue of Afro-Brazilians as a structural problem rather than a matter of culture (Ramos 1940, 1942; Corrêa 1998, 277–305).

During World War II, Ramos became an outspoken critic of racism. He published four manifestos and a series of articles attacking Nazism and promoting the contributions that the social sciences could make to racial understanding in the aftermath of the war (Ramos 1943, 1944, 1945b). During the 1930s and 1940s, he maintained close ties with social scientists in the United States (Ramos 1939, 1942, 1943, 1945a, 1945b, 1945c). In the early years, the social sciences at UNESCO were dominated by the U.S. academic world (Lengyel 1986, 11). UNESCO later acknowledged Ramos and his intellectual engagement with racism (Maio 1998a, 22–28; 1999b, 210–12; Stolcke 1998, 51–66).

Ramos's appointment resulted from a political deal between two ranking UNESCO actors. The first was Brazilian chemist Paulo Estevão de Berredo Carneiro, who represented Brazil's positivist, anti-racist, and integrationist tradition. He also represented Brazil in UNESCO and on its Executive Board. The second was the director of UNESCO, Mexican intellectual Jaime Torres Bodet. Carneiro helped create and implement UNESCO and define its early policies. He was in close contact with Torres Bodet and with English biologist Julian Huxley, the first General Director of UNESCO. Carneiro supported Ramos's appointment⁶ and Torres Bodet agreed. Ramos

6. In a letter to Arthur Ramos, Paulo Carneiro praised Ramos's writings and informed him, "to head [the Department of Social Sciences] in which there are problems that are both urgent and serious, I have suggested your name to Dr. Torres Bodet, Director General of UNESCO. He asked me to ask to you privately about the possibilities of your accepting the position. . . . The Executive Board, in its June session, will make the decision about which candidate will be invited. However, the general director would like to include your name in the list as his

was also approved by Otto Klineberg,⁷ a social psychologist in the tradition of Franz Boas and acting head of the UNESCO Department of Social Sciences.⁸

In October 1949, Ramos finished drafting a plan calling for “research projects about race and race relations and the biological and social aspects of miscegenation. . . . Three different countries would be chosen as the experimental basis for the projects, in order to see if race relations and the process of race miscegenation unravel in a harmonious or non-harmonious manner, from the point of view of social tensions.”⁹ At the same time, Ramos foresaw the development of sociological and anthropological studies in Brazil.¹⁰ Attuned to the agency’s concern with racial problems and with difficulties experienced by underdeveloped countries, Ramos thought it necessary to give special attention to the “study of Black and Native groups, so that they could be integrated with the modern world.”¹¹

Responding to the directive of fighting racism approved in the fourth session of the UNESCO General Conference, “Study and Dissemination of Scientific Facts concerning Questions of Race,” Ramos implemented Klineberg’s proposal to hold an international meeting of experts, most of them social scientists, to debate the scientific standing of the concept of race.¹² Ramos displayed keen sensitivity in selecting notoriously anti-racist scien-

preferred candidate,” 12 May 1949, Azeredo (1986, 209–10). Ramos replied to Carneiro, “I can only interpret the terms of your letter, so complimentary to my person and to my work, as dictated by your generosity. The same interpretation goes for your recommendation, made to Dr. Torres Bodet, of my name as a candidate for director of UNESCO’s Department of Social Sciences.” Letter from Ramos to Carneiro, 14 May 1949, in Paulo Carneiro Papers, Departamento de Arquivo e Documentação, Casa de Oswaldo Cruz, Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (FIOCRUZ), Rio de Janeiro. On Paulo Estevão de Berredo Carneiro, see Maio (1997, 44–46).

7. In a letter to Ramos, Klineberg stated, “I know of the correspondence between you and Paulo Carneiro. May I add, entirely unofficially, that I hope things will work out!” Letter from Klineberg to Ramos, 31 May 1949, in Coleção Arthur Ramos, vol. 1:35, 1:22, 1:1577, Arthur Ramos, Seção de Manuscritos, Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

8. Otto Klineberg lived in São Paulo between 1945 and 1947, when he helped create the Departamento de Psicologia of the Universidade de São Paulo. He had worked since the 1920s on the interface between anthropology and social psychology. A student of Franz Boas, Klineberg stood at the forefront of the battle against racism in the United States. He also participated in Gunnar Myrdal’s research project that led to the influential *An American Dilemma* (1944). Klineberg played a key role in organizing UNESCO’s Department of Social Sciences and felt great empathy for Brazil, as can be detected in several parts of *Introdução à psicologia social* (1946). See also Klineberg (1974).

9. Arthur Ramos, *Sciences Sociales*, “Programme pour 1951: Plan de Travail” (Paris, 1949), Coleção Arthur Ramos, I:36, 29, 13, Seção de Manuscritos, Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

10. Letter from Arthur Ramos to Alceu Maynard de Araújo, 27 Oct. 1949, Coleção de Manuscritos, I:35, 13, 19, Seção de Manuscritos, Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

11. Letter from Arthur Ramos to Clemente Mariani, 14 Oct. 1949, Coleção Arthur Ramos, I:35, 17, 248a, Seção de Manuscritos, Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

12. In a letter to a Mr. Terenzio of UNESCO’s Bureau of External Relations, Otto Klineberg reported as Acting Head of the Department of Social Sciences, “Plans are under way for the

tists to debate racial questions. Of the eight scientists who participated in the meeting in Paris in December 1949, three had some experience in teaching or conducting research in Brazil: Claude Lévi-Strauss, Franklin Frazier, and Luiz de Aguiar Costa Pinto.¹³ The two representatives of Europe, where Nazi genocide had taken place, were Jews (Morris Ginsberg and Lévi-Strauss). From the United States, where “Jim Crow laws” were still in effect, Ramos invited an African American (Franklin Frazier) and an English Jew (Ashley Montagu) who lived in the United States and had fought racism openly during the war. The meeting in Paris went beyond debating the scientific standing of the concept of race to propose a worldwide comparative research agenda on racial prejudice and discrimination. Frazier, Ginsberg, Costa Pinto, and Mexican anthropologist Juan Comas recommended Brazil as one country in which such research should be conducted.¹⁴

Between January and May 1950, UNESCO’s Executive Committee worked on conducting “a pilot research project about race contacts in a Latin American country.”¹⁵ In April 1950, Swiss-U.S. anthropologist Alfred Métraux, who was experienced in ethnological investigations of native and black groups in South and Central America, became director of the recently created UNESCO Division for the Study of Race Problems (Métraux 1978).¹⁶ Brazilian anthropologist Ruy Coelho, a former student of Roger Bastide at the Universidade de São Paulo and of Melville Herskovits at Northwestern Uni-

meeting of experts in the various sciences which deal with race. This meeting is being planned for the end of July, and invitations are in the process of being sent out.” Letter from Klineberg to Terenzio, 30 May 1949, “Race Questions and Protection of Minorities,” REG 323.1, Part I up to 30/VI/50 (BOX REG 145). This meeting was postponed, probably because of changes in the Department of Social Sciences. When Ramos chose the scientists who would participate in drafting the Statement on Race, he probably accepted suggestions by UNESCO staff members, especially Klineberg.

13. The scientists who attended the meeting in Paris were sociologists Franklin Frazier (United States), Morris Ginsberg (United Kingdom), and Luiz de Aguiar Costa Pinto (Brazil); anthropologists Ernest Beaghole (New Zealand), Juan Comas (Mexico), Ashley Montagu (United States), and Claude Lévi-Strauss (France); and philosopher, educator, and politician Humayan Kabir (India).

14. Brazil was cited at least five times during the meeting by Frazier, Costa Pinto, Ginsberg, Montagu, and Comas. See UNESCO Archives, “Meeting of Experts on Race Problems,” UNESCO/SS/Conf. 1/SR1, p. 10; UNESCO/SS/Conf. 1/SR3, pp. 6, 9; and UNESCO/SS/Conf. 1/SR4, pp. 3, 4, 9.

15. “The Programme of UNESCO Proposed by the Executive Board: Part II, Draft Resolutions for 1951” (Paris, 1950), p. 40, UNESCO Archives.

16. In a letter to Jorge Kingston, Head of the Departamento de Ciências Sociais of the Faculdade Nacional de Filosofia, Universidade do Brasil, Ramos reported that the Division for the Study of Race Problems was conceived by Otto Klineberg and might be able to start operating in December 1949. Letter from Ramos to Kingston, 14 Sept. 1949, Coleção Arthur Ramos, I:35, 16, 215a, Seção de Manuscritos, Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro. After Arthur Ramos died in October 1949, the Division for the Study of Race Problems was probably not created until April 1950.

versity became Métraux's main assistant. The division thus became a pro-Brazil pressure group within the Department of Social Sciences.¹⁷

The resulting "Statement on Race" was made public in May 1950, during UNESCO's fifth session of the General Conference in Florence, Italy. It was the first document issued by an intergovernmental agency to negate any deterministic association among physical characteristics, social behaviors, and moral attributes. When the statement was publicized by such conclusions as "race is less a biological fact than a social myth, and as a myth it has in recent years taken a heavy toll in human lives and suffering,"¹⁸ UNESCO's Conference approved the research project on race relations in Brazil. Thus the radical statement denying the scientific validity of the concept of race was followed by the selection of a country with a population considered the result of miscegenation and therefore definite proof that miscegenation was universal and a refutation of the concept of a world inhabited by distinct races (Maio 1998b, 403–5). The scope of the proposed research project in Brazil was to be defined between June and December of 1950.

From Bahia to Brazil

Initially, the UNESCO Project planned to focus only on the state of Bahia because of a tradition of studies of blacks in the city of Salvador going back to the late nineteenth century. These studies underscored the strong influences of African cultures (Rodrigues 1935; Ramos 1940, 1942). Bahia thus seemed an appropriate backdrop for UNESCO's purposes. Salvador's large proportion of black residents had also attracted the attention of U.S. researchers and was viewed as a laboratory in terms of race interactions (Landes 1994; Frazier 1942; Pierson 1942; Herskovits 1943). Another opportunity arose while the project's design was being defined. Less than two weeks after the 1950 Conference in Florence, U.S. anthropologist Charles Wagley contacted UNESCO. He had been working in Brazil since the late 1930s, studying native communities and participating in the Brazilian-U.S. alliance during World War II (Wagley 1957).

Wagley was in Brazil at the time and wrote Métraux to brief him about the activities generated by the joint project being conducted by Columbia University and the state of Bahia.¹⁹ Wagley then offered to work with the

17. In a letter to Heloisa Alberto Torres, Director of the Museu Nacional in Rio, Métraux reported, "the tiny division that I occupy at UNESCO [the Division for the Study of Race Problems] is entirely Brazilian. As I write, I hear only Portuguese spoken around me. My assistant is Ruy Galvão de Andrade Coelho, strongly recommended by Herskovits. My Secretary, Miss Bloch, is almost Brazilian." Letter from Métraux to Alberto Torres, 10 Oct. 1950, Arquivo Histórico Heloisa Alberto Torres, Itaboraí, Rio de Janeiro.

18. "UNESCO Launches Major World Campaign against Racial Discrimination," Paris, UNESCO, 19 July 1950, p. 1, in UNESCO Archives, "Statement on Race," REG file 323.12 A 102, Part I (Box REG 146).

19. Letter from Charles Wagley to Alfred Métraux, 6 June 1950, p. 1, in UNESCO Archives,

UNESCO Project. His offer was well received by Métraux and Coelho because it amounted to the inclusion of a research project “fully designed and in progress, . . . requiring only to be conducted in the direction that we wish.”²⁰ The topic of race relations was integral to the community studies being conducted in the interior of Bahia. Wagley too suggested that investigations be made in the city of Salvador under anthropologist Thales de Azevedo, who was connected with the project cosponsored by Columbia University and the state of Bahia. Coelho approved the study in the capital of Bahia “because investigations in Salvador would give us an idea of the conditions prevailing in an urban center.”²¹

In the meantime, four other social scientists proposed broadening the scope of the UNESCO Project. Otto Klineberg observed, “São Paulo and Salvador are so different, in so many ways, that the fact that they are both cities seems to me almost irrelevant in this case. I think it would be very important to study race relations under a number of different conditions, and I would urge strongly once again that the study be not restricted to the situation in and around Bahia.”²² Charles Wagley shared this opinion.²³

Brazilian sociologist Luiz de Aguiar Costa Pinto, a participant in the UNESCO debates over the scientific status of the concept of race, also wrote Métraux about the project. He expressed interest in forming an agreement between UNESCO and the social sciences department of the Faculdade Nacional de Filosofia of the Universidade do Brasil to “conduct, in Rio de Janeiro, in accordance with UNESCO’s plan, the investigations and analyses required to research racial tensions in a Brazilian metropolitan area, analyzing the Brazilian racial situation from the perspective of a society going through a strong process of industrialization.”²⁴

In September 1950, Métraux contacted French sociologist Roger Bastide, a professor at the Universidade de São Paulo since 1938. This important figure in the study of Afro-Brazilian culture had written a series of sociological texts on blacks in Brazil (Bastide 1973). Bastide knew Métraux

Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part I up to 30/VI/50 (BOX REG 145). The Columbia University–State of Bahia Project had been conceived by Anísio Teixeira, the Secretary of Education and Health in the state government. Its goal was to develop knowledge about three rural communities near Salvador in order to direct the design of future public policies that would affect the modernization of those areas (Wagley et al. 1950).

20. Letter from Ruy Coelho to Charles Wagley, 27 July 1950, p. 1, in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part II up to 31/VII/50 (BOX REG 145).

21. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

22. Klineberg, “Comments on Memorandum regarding Research on Race Relations in Brazil,” 1 Aug. 1950, p. 4, in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part II up to 31/VII/50 (BOX REG 145).

23. Letter from Charles Wagley to Ruy Coelho, 9 June 1950, p. 2, in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part II up to 31/VII/50 (BOX REG 145).

24. Letter from Costa Pinto to Alfred Métraux, 31 July 1950, p. 1 in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1. Part II up to 31/VII/50 (BOX REG 145).

personally, and they shared intellectual and professional interests, such as the study of blacks in the Guyanas.²⁵ Métraux wrote Bastide, "Naturally, it will be in Bahia that our main efforts will be made, but I wish to research other regions of Brazil and I will need your advice on this matter. When I visit Brazil, I will look you up and we will discuss the quite complex aspects of this research project."²⁶

Bastide had just served as the French representative to the Primeiro Congresso do Negro Brasileiro in Rio de Janeiro in August 1950, under the sponsorship of the Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN). This political-cultural organization was in its heyday from the late 1940s to the early 1950s. According to leader Abdias Nascimento, the event was intended to bring scientists and intellectuals closer to the black movement and to help pull together academic work and political action aimed at producing alternatives for reducing social inequalities between whites and blacks (Nascimento 1982).

At that juncture, TEN identified with UNESCO's recent choice of Brazil as "a socio-anthropological laboratory." Alberto Guerreiro Ramos, a mulatto sociologist active in TEN, proposed that the Primeiro Congresso do Negro Brasileiro should try to pressure the Brazilian government to convince UNESCO to sponsor an international congress on race relations (Guerreiro Ramos 1982, 237–38). Guerreiro Ramos thought that in the aftermath of World War II, UNESCO had a significant role to play in "integrating racial minorities in the several countries in which they are more or less discriminated against" (Guerreiro Ramos 1982, 237). To this end, UNESCO would have to present "practical suggestions, avoiding academic or merely descriptive studies that lead to a false consciousness" of discrimination (Guerreiro Ramos 1982, 237).²⁷

In terms of political action against racism, an international congress on race relations would have had more political impact, but TEN's suggestion did not include a pilot research project on the matter with academic characteristics, like that suggested by UNESCO's General Conference in Florence. In the end, Guerreiro Ramos's proposal had no impact on UNESCO. But at least two social scientists actively engaged with UNESCO in designing the research project in Brazil, Charles Wagley and Costa Pinto, also participated in the congress sponsored by TEN. Another participant, Roger Bastide, was contacted by Métraux immediately after the congress.

25. Letter from Roger Bastide to Alfred Métraux, 13 May, 1950, in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part I up to 30/VI/50 (BOX REG 145).

26. Letter from Métraux to Bastide, 18 Aug. 1950, in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part II up to 31/VII/50 (BOX REG 145).

27. The strictly political content of Guerreiro Ramos's proposal may have been linked to the ebullient debate over racism in Brazil, particularly after the episode involving U.S. actress Katherine Durham in São Paulo. She had been denied admittance to a hotel because she was black. This episode of racial discrimination opened a series of congressional discussions about an anti-discrimination law approved in 1951, the "Afonso Arinos Law." On this episode, see *Quilombo* 2, no. 10 (June–July 1950):8–9; and Bastide and Fernandes (1955, 210–22). On Guerreiro Ramos's ideas on race relations in Brazil, see Maio (1996).

Bastide, still influenced by the TEN Congress, argued in responding to Métraux that the project should not be limited to a research effort. He thought it important to give a practical direction to theoretical reflections in order to foster a cooperative attitude between white intellectuals and black associations. In this way, at least in the Southern part of Brazil, certain “taboos” could be broken and emerging tensions could be relieved. Bastide told Métraux about his plans to create a research center dedicated to the black community of São Paulo that would pull blacks and whites together and seek to influence government actions.²⁸

These first steps in the assembly of the UNESCO research project indicate a wide-open scenario constructed on the basis of knowledge previously gathered by the social scientists on the staff, amplified by contacts and suggestions offered by Brazilian and non-Brazilian researchers with experience in teaching or research in Brazil and the effects of the Primeiro Congresso do Negro Brasileiro on anthropologists and sociologists involved in the research project planned on race relations in Brazil (Wagley, Costa Pinto, and Bastide). This process became even more complex during the second half of 1950.

Brazil as Seen from the Outside

Between June and September of 1950, the Division for the Study of Race Problems of UNESCO’s Department of Social Sciences was corresponding with some of the researchers who might participate in the UNESCO Project (Costa Pinto, Bastide, and Wagley). The division also got in touch with Klineberg and Paulo Carneiro, chief of the Brazilian delegation at UNESCO, who played a decisive role in “the Brazilian option” (Maio 1997, 50–54). In addition, Giorgio Mortara, a demographer from the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE, the Brazilian census agency), was asked to provide information and analyses of the racial composition of the Brazilian population.²⁹ In September, Métraux and Coelho, incorporating suggestions and criticism by Klineberg,³⁰ wrote the final version³¹ of the document that would shape the decision on the scope of the research program.³²

28. Letter from Bastide to Métraux, 9 Sept. 1950, in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part II up to 31/VII/50 (BOX REG 145).

29. Letter from Giorgio Mortara to Robert Angell, 1 Aug. 1950, in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part II up to 31/VII/50 (BOX REG 145).

30. Klineberg, “Comments on memorandum regarding Research on Race Relations in Brazil,” pp. 1–7, in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part II up to 31/VII/50 (BOX REG 145).

31. The first draft of the document by Métraux and Coelho was not found in the UNESCO Archives.

32. Métraux and Coelho, in “Suggestions for Research on Race Relations in Brazil,” in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part II up to 31/VII/50 (BOX REG 145).

The introduction to this document briefly analyzed the historical evolution of research on Brazilian race relations. In these studies, according to the authors, race relations “were never considered problems per se in Brazil, but as part of general social problems.”³³ The abolition of slavery and the adoption of the republican regime had apparently solved “the problem of the black,” and therefore until the 1930s, the literature had focused on Afro-Brazilian culture, especially in the works by anthropologists Nina Rodrigues and Arthur Ramos. Economic and political changes brought about by the Revolution of 1930 highlighted the efforts of intellectuals dedicated to the issue of national identity. The best example was *Casa-grande e senzala* by Gilberto Freyre, which the document cited as “the most important landmark of the period.”³⁴

The 1930s also saw the emergence of a new structure in higher learning, with the creation of programs in social sciences in Rio de Janeiro and especially in São Paulo. In the Escola Livre de Sociologia e Política in São Paulo, a specific concern emerged with systematic social research. The document mentions study of topics such as the relations between blacks and whites and the assimilation and acculturation of immigrants (German and Japanese). The contributions of Donald Pierson, Roger Bastide, and Emilio Willems were highlighted in the text. During this period, researchers like Ruth Landes, Franklin Frazier, and Melville Herskovits were working in Bahia on several anthropological and sociological aspects of the black population.

Métraux and Coelho mentioned the scarcity of studies on patterns of race relations in Brazil. Donald Pierson’s study of race relations in Bahia, *Negroes in Brazil* (1942), was considered a point of departure. Yet Pierson’s outlook raised some doubts about appropriate techniques to be adopted in an investigation aimed at detecting the existence of racial prejudice in the country. According to the two anthropologists, “It is doubtful, for example, if the use of questionnaires dealing directly with racial attitudes provides an adequate picture of the situation. It must be borne in mind that in Brazil, it is considered disgraceful to have racial prejudice; as a result, such prejudice, when it does exist, may assume covert and subtle forms not revealed by the questionnaire technique. It seems essential, therefore, to add other methods and techniques which will make it possible to arrive at a more complete understanding of the pattern of race relations in Brazil.”³⁵

Although Brazil was considered to be a country that displayed only a small degree of racial tensions, special attention was being given to particular and sometimes subtle forms in which racial prejudice could present itself. It was therefore considered desirable to use other methodological tools such as qualitative interviews, participant observation, the Rorschach test,

33. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

observation of certain attitudes based on the scale of social distance developed by U.S. sociologist Emory Bogardus, and others methods.³⁶ Again it is evident in the original research design that "the Brazilian option" did not preclude devoting close attention to the specificity of racial prejudice in the country.

UNESCO anthropologists believed that Brazil was a positive point of departure in the sense that because "concepts such as harmony and 'good' and 'bad' race relations are perforce relative, a comparative point of view imposes itself. Comparisons will be drawn not only between Brazil and the United States, but also between other countries on which there is available information."³⁷ Métraux and Coelho concluded that the proposed studies should take into account the living standards of whites and nonwhites, including wages, occupations, and the broader influence of the race variable on levels of competition in the job market. Even the role of religion in the dynamics of social relations and the study of stereotypes and the types of personalities found in minority groups should be investigated.³⁸ Finally, they proposed, "The main responsibility for the social and cultural side of the research projects will be given to Dr. Charles Wagley and his team. . . . Additional field workers will be needed outside of Bahia."³⁹

Métraux Rediscovered Brazil

Although already familiar with Brazil, Métraux considered a trip to the country necessary "to predict the nature of the problems that should be studied and, at the same time, gain better acquaintance with scientific institutions and personalities who may be in charge of the execution of this part of our program."⁴⁰ Métraux accordingly visited Brazil in November and December 1950. Even before his arrival, he began to recognize that Brazil was not Bahia. In a conversation with Paulo Carneiro in Paris, Métraux commented, "the race question in Brazil has quite different characteristics from region to region, and . . . it would be necessary to take into account different geographic zones if the planned investigations are to give us a valuable view of the country as a whole."⁴¹ In his report on the trip, Métraux mentioned that the main participants in assembling the UNESCO Project were Wagley, Costa Pinto, and Bastide.⁴²

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–9.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–9.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

40. Métraux, "Rapport au Directeur Général sur Mission au Brésil (16 nov.–20 déc. 1950)," p. 1, in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part II up to 31/VII/50 (BOX REG 145).

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

Métraux arrived in Bahia on 17 November 1950. He met with Anísio Teixeira and Charles Wagley and confirmed that research would be conducted not only in rural communities, as in the project cosponsored by Columbia University and the state of Bahia, but also in the city of Salvador. Thales de Azevedo would be in charge of investigating the upward social mobility of blacks and the tensions created by such mobility in the capital of Bahia.⁴³

Métraux proceeded to Rio de Janeiro the following week. Meeting with Costa Pinto, he became convinced by arguments about the importance of studying race relations in the context of industrialization and conducting research in what was then the Federal District (the capital) of Brazil. Costa Pinto's interests also combined well with UNESCO's wider objectives in that the meeting in Florence had decided in favor of a specific research program on the impacts of industrialization in underdeveloped areas.⁴⁴

Métraux arrived in São Paulo on 8 December 1950. From the UNESCO perspective, the Escola Livre de Sociologia e Política (ELSP) and the Faculdade de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras (FFCL) of the Universidade de São Paulo were the highest-ranking social scientific institutions in Brazil. Even before "the Brazilian option" was proposed, Donald Pierson had been approached about participating in a research program in Brazil. In early February 1950, the interim director of the UNESCO Department of Social Sciences, sociologist Robert Angell, requested information on the Escola Livre de Sociologia e Política (ELSP). Pierson responded with a brief report on its courses of study, research, and faculty, offering to work jointly with UNESCO in the future. He closed his letter expressing interest in participating in research on race relations in Brazil.⁴⁵

Initially, Donald Pierson and Roger Bastide were to be the social scientists in charge of research in São Paulo. But when Métraux arrived in São Paulo, he found Pierson already committed to a vast community study project in the valley of the São Francisco River, in the Northeast of Brazil. Pierson suggested that sociologist Oracy Nogueira, another professor at the Escola Livre de Sociologia e Política, take his place.

Roger Bastide agreed to chair a committee responsible for the project in São Paulo consisting of representatives from the FFCL (Mario Wagner Vieira da Cunha) and the ELSP (Oracy Nogueira and Octavio da Costa Eduardo).⁴⁶ Adopting the same rationale as in the case of Rio de Janeiro, Mé-

43. Métraux had access to the database on socioeconomic indicators collected for the Columbia University–State of Bahia Project, under the direction of Thales de Azevedo. Métraux visited the recently created Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Ciência no Estado da Bahia, an institution dedicated to funding research created by Anísio Teixeira. In addition, Métraux visited two of the three rural communities under investigation. *Ibid.*, pp. 2–4.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 4. On the participation of Costa Pinto in the UNESCO Project, see Maio (1998a).

45. Letter from Donald Pierson to Robert Angell, 15 Feb. 1950, in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part I up to 30/VI/50 (BOX REG 145).

46. Métraux, "Rapport au Directeur Général sur Mission au Brésil (16 nov.–20 déc. 1950),"

traux pronounced it important to investigate race relations in São Paulo, a state experiencing rapid industrialization and urbanization and showing clear signs of racial tensions.

Actually, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro were both included in the UNESCO Project to serve as counterpoints to the experience of Bahia. In a certain sense, the decision to do research in São Paulo embodied the tensions existing between politics and science, between UNESCO's initial expectations about the Brazilian experience and the UNESCO Project per se. These tensions surfaced in Métraux's official trip report: "The scientific spirit that must guide our investigation would be betrayed if we were to discard new problems and hold on to a harmonious—but antiquated—state of affairs. Investigating only Bahia would give us an incomplete picture of the race question in Brazil."⁴⁷ According to Métraux's reevaluation, "Contrary to my previous plans, Bahia will no longer be the focus of our project. We shall study race relations as they appear in four communities and concentrate on the problem of social mobility in the city of Salvador. On the other hand, we shall concentrate on the rapidly deteriorating racial situation of São Paulo. Dr. Costa Pinto will undertake a similar study, but on a lesser scale, in Rio de Janeiro. I expect to get, at the end of the year, a picture of the racial situation in Brazil which will be close to reality and cover both the bright and dark sides."⁴⁸

The design of the UNESCO Project was finalized a year later, when Métraux visited the city of Recife in the Northeast. Contacts between the Instituto Joaquim Nabuco (created by sociologist Gilberto Freyre in 1949) and UNESCO started in the first half of 1951. Freyre was interested in setting up a calendar of activities in conjunction with the international agency. He wanted to strengthen his recently created research center and use it to debate race relations in Brazil with the critics of his own socio-anthropological approach (Maio 1999a, 115–18).

Freyre visited UNESCO headquarters in August 1951 and requested that the Instituto Joaquim Nabuco be invited to be a partner in the research project about race relations in Brazil.⁴⁹ The suggestion was immediately

p. 5, in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part II up to 31/VII/50 (BOX REG 145). The committee was formed but operated for only a short time. In a letter to Métraux, Nogueira reported having sent a copy of the project proposal to Bastide as "president of the committee that was formed at that moment." See letter from Nogueira to Métraux, 22 Dec. 1950, in UNESCO Archives, Statement on Race, REG file 323.12 A 102, Part I (Box REG 146).

47. Métraux, "Rapport au Directeur Général sur Mission au Brésil (16 nov.–20 déc. 1950)," p. 5, in UNESCO Archives, Race Questions and Protection of Minorities, REG 323.1, Part II up to 31/VII/50 (BOX REG 145).

48. Letter from Métraux to Melville Herskovits, 29 Jan. 1951, p. 1, in UNESCO Archives, Statement on Race, REG file 323.12 A 102, Part II (Box REG 147).

49. Métraux, "Rapport sur mission au Brésil," from 10 Oct. to 12 Dec. 1951, p. 1, in UNESCO Archives, Statement on Race, REG file 323.12 A 102, Part II (Box REG 147).

accepted because of the prestige enjoyed by Freyre, the Brazilian who was originally invited to head the Department of Social Sciences of UNESCO, even before Arthur Ramos was asked.⁵⁰ René Ribeiro, former student of Melville Herskovits at Northwestern University and head of the anthropology section of the Instituto Joaquim Nabuco, was selected to conduct research on the influence of several religions—Catholicism, Protestantism, and African cults—on race relations in Recife.⁵¹

The research activities of the UNESCO Project were conducted and their findings were assembled between 1951 and 1952. Several aspects influenced the choice and development of the individual projects. The first was the influence of a tradition of race studies, especially on Bahia and São Paulo. Just as important were teaching and research centers, particularly in the city of São Paulo. Also, UNESCO began in 1950 to demonstrate an interest in processes of industrialization and their impacts on underdeveloped regions, hence the inclusion of areas from the Southeast of Brazil in the project. Finally, intellectual prestige, personal relationships, past research experiences, and a transatlantic network of scholars determined the outline of the case studies. Bastide and Métraux had shared a series of projects and intellectual affinities. Wagley had worked in Brazil since the 1930s. Costa Pinto's participation grew out of his professional and personal relationship with Arthur Ramos. Freyre's international fame accounted for the late inclusion of Recife in the project.

Conclusion

In the first half of 1951, five months after his visit to Brazil, Métraux wrote about his trip. He published an article in the UNESCO periodical *Courier* under the suggestive title, "Brazil: Land Of Harmony for All Races?" It provided a contrasting view of the Brazilian racial scenario (Métraux 1951, 3). Métraux opened with historical, anthropological, and sociological comments on Salvador. The "great Brazilian 'Negro Metropolis'" had made a paradoxical impression on him. African culture was strong and visible, but he reported having seen only a few "really 'black' Negroes." Métraux concluded that Bahia was a land of mestizos in which "a new race" was emerging. In his opinion, intense miscegenation would lead to a lack of concern with racial

50. Immediately after a 1948 forum organized in Paris entitled "Tensions that Cause Wars," Hadley Cantril, professor of social psychology at Princeton University and coordinator of the UNESCO project entitled "Tensions Affecting International Understanding," had approached Freyre informally about accepting the chair position. Letter from Cantril to Freyre, 13 Aug. 1948, Arquivo Histórico da Fundação Gilberto Freyre. Cantril received a letter from Freyre declining the informal invitation. Cantril thanked Freyre for his response but provided no details about Freyre's reasons. Letter from Cantril to Freyre, 9 Dec. 1948, AHFGF. Freyre's letter to Cantril was not found.

51. Métraux, "Rapport sur mission au Brésil," 29 Oct. to 12 Dec. 1951, p. 2.

identity. What actually prevailed were problems of a social nature. Drawing on Freyre, Pierson, and Frank Tannenbaum, Métraux concluded that the Portuguese heritage had created a more humane model of slavery than that of Anglo-Saxon America, a model that allowed the upward mobility of mulattos and blacks.

Métraux nonetheless called attention to the risk of oversimplifying the Brazilian racial situation. Although he noted frequent interracial marriages, they usually involved persons of the same class, rarely occurring between individuals occupying extreme positions in the complex system of Brazilian color classification (Métraux 1951). This example allowed Métraux to consider Brazil as "an example of a country where relations between the races are relatively harmonious" but without failing to notice that it "would be an exaggeration . . . to claim that racial prejudice is unknown" (Métraux 1951, 3). He cited numerous stereotypes in relation to black people. And the higher one went up the social ladder, the more evident were instances of color prejudice. In large cities like São Paulo and Rio, Métraux noted "unmistakable racism" among workers, stimulated by competition in areas subject to industrialization. He attributed racism in the Southeast to the history of slavery, which kept blacks in positions unfavorable for competing with whites. In this sense, the difficulties experienced by blacks were attributable not to their color but to their position in the social hierarchy. Their expectations therefore converged on education as a means of ascending the social ladder.

Métraux minimized the effects of racial discrimination in Brazil, given that the forces of tradition do not allow interethnic conflicts and thus help "solve the dilemma in Brazil." Yet at the end of the article, he stated, "the eagerness shown by the Brazilian sociologists working with UNESCO to explore all favorable and unfavorable aspects of the question alike show the feeling of confidence with which Brazilians everywhere regard the racial situation in their country" (Métraux 1951, 5).

This 1951 article reflected Métraux's ambiguity and imprecision but also his optimism. He revealed in part the reasons that led to the definition of a broad research program inside the UNESCO Project but also the tensions between race discrimination and the myth of racial democracy. His visit to Brazil in late 1950 catalyzed the research program. Indeed, Métraux was deeply empathetic toward Brazil. Although he did not have a deep understanding of the reality of Brazilian race relations, he was open enough to absorb the view that Bahia could not represent all of Brazil. And thus the Brazilian mosaic was recognized and accepted.

The UNESCO Project obviously benefited from investigating more than a single Brazilian region. Its findings revealed a diversified situation. Enormous social distance separated whites and blacks, and little social mobility occurred among nonwhites. In the North and Northeast, racial prejudice was deemed to be subtle but existent nonetheless. Research in south-

eastern areas looked at race relations in Brazil's major centers of development, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, where economic and social changes were intense. There blacks and mulattos had been forced to deal during the last years of slavery with large numbers of European immigrants, and racial tensions became more visible. The project also found that racial classifications in Brazil combined phenotypic definitions with nonbiological attributes such as class, status, and education. Thus a complex system of racial classification was revealed.

Research under the auspices of UNESCO in the 1950s brought a series of noteworthy consequences. First, the Brazilian sociological tradition of investigating relations between whites and blacks, a line of investigation that had gained prominence in the 1930s with Gilberto Freyre and Donald Pierson, was reinforced. Second, the social sciences in Brazil, which were being institutionalized in this period, expanded their scope and have studied the issue of race relations systematically since the 1950s. Third, the project produced a vast documentation of prejudice and discrimination against Brazilian blacks. In focusing on these issues, the UNESCO Project prompted new questions about Brazil and helped identify difficulties, deadlocks, and conflicts in a society experiencing swift urbanization and industrialization. Research findings did not deny the importance of the myth of racial democracy. Rather, they revealed the tensions between the myth and the Brazilian style of racism, a tension that had already been discussed by black and white intellectuals and activists in Brazil.

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