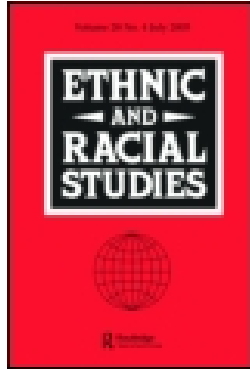


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What's love got to do with it?: racial features, stigma and socialization in Afro-Brazilian families

Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman

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Abstract

This article explores how racial socialization in poor and working-class Afro-Brazilian families conveys messages about racial features that reproduce and resist racial hierarchies. Relying on 116 semi-structured interviews and ethnography in fifteen Afro-Brazilian families conducted in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, I argue that racial socialization consists of discursive strategies, concrete practices and affective displays that stigmatize black racial features. This study examines racial socialization within the intimate context of parent and sibling relationships, highlighting how Afro-Brazilians negotiate racial features such as skin colour, hair texture and nose shape during day-to-day interactions and life transitions. To illustrate the complexity of Afro-Brazilian families, I discuss critical moments when socialization simultaneously reproduces and inverts racial hierarchies. I conclude by arguing that racial hierarchies are constantly negotiated in Afro-Brazilian families, but racial socialization most often reinforces dominant racial structures in ways that compromise the affective quality of family relationships.

Keywords: socialization; phenotype; family; stigma; race; Brazil.

Introduction

Aw, yes! In a family, people are happy to have children. They have the dark one first...but when the white one comes everything changes! The white one is treated really well and the dark one is forgotten... The black one is punished because it is said to have the "face of a slave".

With a hushed voice, Ana, a dark-skinned woman who identifies as *negra*, whispered this statement to me in an interview about the relationship between race, colour and differential treatment in Afro-Brazilian families. Previous interviewees had hinted at the importance of race and colour in the marriage market, but Ana's response offered a provocative statement about how the internalization of racial hierarchies also impacts parent-child relationships in Afro-Brazilian families. Our conversation was rare because it directly challenged popular assertions that Brazil is a racial democracy, which is an idea that continues to wield formidable ideological power (Sheriff 2001; Telles 2004). Furthermore, it centred the Brazilian family, an institution portrayed as the paragon of racial egalitarianism (Freyre [1933] 1944), as an important site for intra-familial differentiation based on racial appearance (phenotype).

Research illustrates that racism in Brazil stratifies the population based on skin colour and shapes life chances in ways that are particularly devastating for Afro-Brazilians (Lovell 1999; Guimarães 2002; Telles 2004). While this is clear, little is known about how family practices socialize Afro-Brazilians into the complex rules that assign race and rank racial features. Sansone (2003) provides compelling examples about the ambiguity and fluidity of racialized interactions in Bahia, but how are these complex rules learned through socialization? Findings from multiracial sibling studies suggest that intra-familial processes drive differences in outcomes between siblings, suggesting that parents may distribute material resources differently based on race (Telles 2004; Rangel 2007). Yet, these studies reveal little about the affective realm of racial socialization. Contrary to research emphasizing the sacred notion of *amor só de mãe* (a mother's love), affective resources might also be unequally distributed in families based on racial features (Burdick 1998; Rebhun 1999, p. 166). Racial socialization in phenotypically diverse families provides the opportunity to explore how families function as the first site for learning about dominant racial hierarchies (Gomes 1995). By examining parent and sibling relationships, this article expands upon research analysing race and family, which predominately analyses interracial sex and/or partnerships, but rarely considers how phenotypic variation shapes within-family affective interactions (Berquó 1987; Twine 1998; Goldstein 1999; Petrucelli 2001; Moutinho 2004).

This article uses a theoretical frame that draws on Foucault's (1979, 1980) notion of 'disciplinary practices', because it emphasizes how the body is evaluated and manipulated in response to racial and gender hierarchies. Not merely one-dimensional protectors against racism, families 'play an absolutely vital role in giving, sustaining, and reproducing' racial structures and legitimating hegemonic whiteness (Hall 1986, p. 13). I argue that concrete practices, affective displays

and specific discursive strategies, which are all used in the context of parent and sibling relationships, reveal the centrality of the body to how Afro-Brazilian families negotiate racial hierarchies. In this article, I begin by discussing whitening and racial mixture in Brazil, followed by the emergence of a phenotypic continuum, and then I discuss the limits of racial socialization literature. Next, I outline the methodology and results, relying on qualitative data on racial socialization to show how parent and sibling relationships 'contain elements of both accommodation and resistance' to racism (Weitz 2001, p. 670).

Fade to white: ideologies of *mestiçagem* and the phenotypic continuum

The racial composition of Brazil's population is shaped by the country's role in the transatlantic slave trade, as it received the largest number of African slaves and was the last country to abolish slavery, in 1888 (Santos 2002). However, the emergence of the contemporary population also results from a carefully implemented racial project of Brazilian elites, representing a 'compromise between the racist doctrines in vogue around the 20th century and the socio-racial reality of Brazil' (Hasenbalg and Silva 1984, p. 2). This doctrine suggested that national progress was inextricably linked to the eminence of a nation's racial origins and distance from its African roots (Skidmore 1993). Furthermore, eugenic ideas about racial morphology stigmatized features viewed as African, so that coily hair, full lips, a wide nose, large breasts, flat feet, among other features, were framed as indicators of racial inferiority (Costa 2002; Hofbauer 2006).

In tracing the trajectory of racial thought in Brazil, Guimarães (2002) argues that the aforementioned racial compromise later required an embrace of *mestiçagem*, which was popularized by Freyre's ([1933] 1944) romanticized portrayal of Brazil as a racial democracy. This notion suggested that race relations were harmonious and race-specific distinctions were absent. Hopeful predictions by Brazilian intellectuals that by 2012 blacks would be eliminated belied this notion (Nascimento 1979; Santos 2002). Researchers juxtapose the ideology of whitening through mixture in Brazil to the 'one-drop rule' in the USA to illustrate the construction of race, whereby a confluence of factors (rather than objective criteria) inform racial systems (Omi and Winant 1986, p. 61; Nogueira 1998; Medeiros 2004). Indeed, race is based on superficial differentiation where 'the race ascribed with the superior position enjoys social, political, economic, and psychological advantages over the group or groups ascribed with inferior position' (Bonilla-Silva 1999, p. 899; Harris 2008). Given the emergence of race during European imperialism, the hierarchies that undergird modern racial systems are based on assumptions of European superiority and are deeply embedded in society.

While 95 per cent of Brazilians classify themselves in one of only four racial categories, a 1976 national survey suggested that colloquially Brazilians may use over 100 different terms when asked to describe themselves by phenotype (Telles 2004). The use of these diverse terms convinced earlier scholars that Brazilian racism was merely ‘colour prejudice’ and an atavism of slavery (Frazier 1942, p. 292; Fernandes 1965; Pierson 1967, p. 349). However, the adoption of an elaborate lexicon to describe racial appearance is rooted in a continuum that orders racial features, beyond merely skin colour (Acevedo [1955] 1996; Guimarães 1999; Sheriff 2001). Members of a family may share the same racial classification, but may still be differentiated based on their possession of certain racialized physical features (Nogueira 1998). The US concept of colourism, ‘discrimination against persons based on their physiognomy, regardless of their perceived racial identity’, provides a useful conceptual frame to understand differential treatment in families (Russell et al. 1992; Harris 2008, p. 54). In order to avoid the conflation of colourism and racism, I emphasize that there is a ‘bedrock reality of racial polarization and opposition’ that flanks Brazil’s racial structure – anchored on one end by whiteness and by blackness on the other (Sheriff 2001, p. 57; Munanga 2004). While colourism is a useful concept, this article highlights how the ranking of other racial features beyond skin colour can reproduce a white supremacist ideology by rewarding proximity to whiteness (Bonilla-Silva 1997).

Neither the work of Brazilian nor US researchers provides a complete conceptual frame for understanding the connection between racial hierarchies, racial features and racial socialization in families. US researchers frame racial socialization, particularly in black families, as protective, emphasizing how it prepares members for racism, fosters self-esteem and teaches cultural pride (see McLoyd et al. 2000; Lesane-Brown 2006). Contemporary research into colourism and internal differentiation in US families has been ‘marginalized in family research’ (Burton et al. 2010, p. 442). Similarly, the contributions of Brazilian scholars is significant, but they frame racial socialization within the context of traditional interracial relationships (Moutinho 2004; Pacheco 2006), rely on a heavily psychological approach (Souza 1983), or emphasize the protective role of families (Barbosa 1983; Cavalleiro 2003; Brito 2003). Moreover, while prominent scholars describe Brazil as a ‘pigmentocracy’ where gradations of skin colour are associated with status differences, there remain gaps in the literature explaining how families negotiate racial features beyond skin colour in their day-to-day family lives (Nogueira 1998; Guimarães 1999, p. 49). Hence, a systematic analysis of how racial features are negotiated and impact the affective experiences of Afro-Brazilians offers a significant contribution.

Method

Between 2009 and 2010, I spent fourteen months conducting ethnographic research with fifteen families, including 116 in-depth interviews with Afro-Brazilians (blacks and browns) from a poor and working-class neighbourhood in the Lower City of Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.¹ According to the 2006 census, Salvador's population is 51.7 per cent *pardo* (brown), 28 per cent *preto* (black) and 18.9 per cent *branco* (white). The proportion of Brazilians who self-classify as *preto* is three times higher in Salvador than in the national census.

My ethnographic data include observations of family celebrations (birthdays and births), religious/cultural events, neighbourhood gatherings and day-to-day family interactions. A key informant helped me to establish a rapport with the community by initially inviting me to weekend gatherings and introducing me to families. I observed families approximately three times a week, sometimes spending the night in the home of my key community informant when necessary.

Research participants were targeted using non-probabilistic (purposive sampling) and interviews were organized by themes targeting family background, daily routines, beauty and appearance, marriage/partnership, family and perceptions of racism. Although race and colour were acceptable topics of conversation in Salvador, personal revelations about the interplay of race and phenotype in families often occurred in informal settings and often unexpectedly.

My positionality as a black, female researcher from the USA with a dark brown complexion, natural Afro-hair and what are viewed as black facial features allowed me to circulate in Salvador undetectable as a foreigner. Families were perplexed by what they perceived as the inconsistency between my racial appearance and nationality ('but you look *Bahiana!*') and my incorporation of the *jeito brasileiro* (Brazilian way of being).² I occupied a 'web of interlocking social categories', so that while my racial features made me seem familiar to respondents, my American-ness created the distance needed for them to entrust me with intimate narratives (Caldwell 2007, p. xv).³

Results

Racial socialization: parent and sibling relationships

In Afro-Brazilian families, the legacy of racial mixture has led to the presence of a particularly wide array of phenotypic combinations (Nogueira 1998; Telles 2004). The reach of hegemonic whiteness means that well before a child is born, its potential phenotype is visualized and openly discussed in the family – 'the most intimate and inescapable realm where one's physical appearance is interpreted and classified' (Hall 1986; Pinho 2009, p. 39). Although race and

phenotype are current in everyday life, pregnancy represents a critical life transition that amplifies racial anxieties and serves as a harbinger of future racial socialization (Burdick 1998; Moutinho 2004).

Damiana is a twenty-eight-year-old pregnant mother with caramel brown skin and naturally straight black hair. She identifies as *uma mulher negra* (a black woman) and often discusses the vivid dreams she has about her unborn child with her black (*preto*) husband:

I have dreams about what she will look like. Sometimes she is white and sometimes she is *morena* [brown/dark]. I hope she gets her nose and straight hair from me. That's why I sit here all day and watch "*gente bonita*" [pretty people] on television. If an ugly person walks by I try not to even look in their direction.

I spend months in Damiana's home watching novelas with her and documenting her continuous commentary about the hair, nose and bodies of white actresses. Her explanation of why she watches *pretty people* takes on a specific meaning because colloquially the phrase is understood to mean white people. Hence, her casual use of the term naturalizes whiteness and conflates it with beauty (Adelman and Ruggi 2008). Nearly indifferent to the baby's skin tone, it is the baby's nose and hair that are seen as the most decisive *indicações* (racial markers).

A mother's anxieties about racial stigma are encoded in her expectations, fears and desires (Candelario 2007). Curious neighbours instigate whispers that Damiana may have a *barriga suja* and they exacerbate Damiana's anxieties. Translated as 'dirty womb', this is a pejorative term that describes a woman's tendency to produce dark-skinned babies when the baby has the potential to be lighter. This phrase normalizes gendered racism by constructing blackness as a contaminant and assigning blame to women who have dark babies (Twine 1998). Damiana does not protest the racist phrase and similarly hopes that she does not have a dirty womb. Consequently, Damiana is eager to display her newborn daughter who is unambiguously viewed as pretty: white skin and straight hair. Damiana's insistence that I accompany her to introduce the baby to the community resonates with Frazier's (1942) classic study in Bahia in which he found that when babies were born lighter and with 'white' features they were strapped to the front of the mother's chest. In contrast, those with stigmatized 'black' features were hidden on the mother's back.

The neighbourhood stroll provides a public space for the mother and newborn to be validated. Moreover, a mother's interest in publicly displaying offspring with valued racial traits continues beyond infancy

(Costa 2002). Juliana, a fifty-two-year-old mother, insists that her family be included in my study. She eagerly introduces me to her teenage daughter, complimenting Adrielle's light skin and green eyes and encouraging me to stroke her hair. Nearby stands a brown-skinned, wavy haired girl with a lowered head and her hands folded across her chest. Before I walk away, I inquire about the girl's identity and Juliana replies apathetically and with a dismissive swipe of her hand: 'Oh her, she's my other daughter.' Her lacklustre affective response transmits a clear message of racial hierarchy and reinforces her daughter's devalued status.

Racialized features are a point of comparison for parents, but neighbours also function as extended family, legitimating racial hierarchies and (re)producing racial stigma. While Damiana's neighbours dote on the newborn baby, they also lament her unfortunate feature:

She's beautiful! . . . But you know you really have to do something about that nose (laughs) that wide nose [*nariz chato*] of hers. You will definitely have to fix that nose with a clamp [*pegador*]. You need to pinch it down. There's no way around it (everyone nods and laughs loudly).

An initial compliment quickly diverges into a conversation about how to correct the baby's wide nose.⁴ Laughter normalizes the racist statements and suggests that they have been spoken in jest. But I discover that Damiana follows their advice and engages in a ritual where she squeezes and holds down the baby's nostrils daily, so that she will not have what is popularly referred to as '*o nariz que o boi pisou*' (a nose that the bull stepped on). Nose modification was reported in several families, with an even more drastic approach taken in Tais's family:

I remember my mom doing this to my sisters. She would light a small candle and warm her fingers over the flame and then she would pinch the baby's nose and hold it. They said it would correct the nose. Who wants a wide nose? I remember the women, our neighbors would shout to us from their windows: "Don't forget to pinch her [the baby's] nose!"

While a wide nose is viewed as somewhat correctable, other babies are born with features that are viewed as unsalvageable. Dona Elena, a sixty-eight-year-old black woman, describes the birth of her daughter, whose nickname is *Neguinha* (translated as 'Blackie' or 'little black one'):

When Neguinha was born she was totally black, I mean really black. When I came home from the hospital and her father saw her he said, “Ugh! Where did you get that black baby? Take her back!” (laughs)

The delivery of this exceptionally dark-skinned baby dampens a normally joyous occasion. Although both parents describe their race and colour as black (*negro* and *preto*, respectively), their child’s skin colour elicits an adverse reaction. Goldstein (2003, p. 45) argues that laughter is part of an ‘emotional aesthetic’ in Brazil that allows Dona Elena to express and deflect the pain of her husband’s repulsion. Beyond the mother’s pain, her daughter Neguinha has been exclusively referred to by this nickname so that even as an adult, her skin colour comes to define a large part of her identity.

The affective consequences of differential treatment

In a family unit, racial socialization leads to experiences that compromise relationship quality and sense of self. Regane (self-classified as *morena* and hesitantly as *negra*), is a precocious nine-year-old girl who upon hearing about her mother’s (Damiana) dreams of having a white baby with straight hair starts to behave differently. Neglecting her hygiene, Regane refuses to comb her hair. Her mother responds by roughly combing Regane’s hair outside their front door while exclaiming: ‘I hope the baby’s hair isn’t like this!’ In an act of defiance and affirmation, Regane ties a tattered piece of long orange cloth around her head and pretends to have long straight hair. A short-lived pleasure, it is eventually snatched off by neighbourhood boys who taunt her by calling her *cabelo duro* (hard/nappy hair). Frustrated, she begs her mother to straighten her hair and, in resignation, reveals her disappointment that her prayers to Iemanjá⁵ have gone unanswered stating: ‘I always wish for the same thing: for my hair to grow . . . long and straight. Down to my butt! But, my hair never grows.’ Her prayers reflect her ‘identity fragmentation’ and the difficulty resolving who she is with her mother’s desires and the images of *gente bonita* plastered on the streets, magazines and television (Caldwell 2007, p. 113).

Damiana chuckles as she informs me that when the newborn arrived home Regane cried all day. This was potentially a quite natural response to the uncertainty of a changing family dynamic. However, Regane’s interview clarified that her concerns were rooted in specific concerns. When asked why she cried upon seeing the baby, she replied:

Regane: Because I am afraid of losing the love of my parents.
(whimpers)

Elizabeth: Why do you think this will happen?

Regane: (looks at me incredulously) Because of the baby! You saw her didn't you?! She was born *limpinha* [clean] and with straight hair. I'm afraid they will love her more . . . her hair won't be as much work . . . Everybody is saying it. She will get everything and I'll have nothing.' (she then covers her face with her hands and sobs)

Even as a young child, Regane has internalized the significance of racial features. Her fears that she will be negatively compared to the baby are substantiated when she hears her mother agree with a family friend that, '[despite the baby's wide nose] . . . at least the baby's hair didn't turn out like hers' (frowning and pointing to Regane). Regane refuses to talk and is inconsolable for days. Weeks after the birth, she resents the baby and constantly checks for changes in the baby's skin colour as Regane's mother offers a few peculiar words of comfort: 'Don't worry, she will get darker.' Rather than reassure Regane that the love she feels for her will not change, the ambiguous statement suggests that if the baby does not become darker, perhaps Regane will need to worry.

In Regane's case, there is only a fear that the *carinho* (affection) she receives might change. However, the fear of losing affective ties actually materializes in some families where the distribution of affection is perceived as unequal. In these cases, racial socialization transmits messages of devaluation and expendability. Consider David's narrative:

There was always tension. It's always there between brothers, you know. But my father kicked my brother out of the house when he was only 12 years old and I think it had a lot to do with him being dark. They never got along. They always fought. My mother was white and my father was black. I don't think he wanted dark children. He treated my brother very differently.

In this case, internalized racism leads a father to reject his darker son, which not only destroys parental and sibling relationships, but also has material consequences. David's brother becomes homeless and receives little education, while David, the white son, graduates from college. Similarly, Tania describes her family, which consists of a father and

two sisters who all have a medium-brown skin tone and *cabelo duro* (nappy hair):

My father was really bad. Just horrible! He drank a lot . . . When my mother died, he started staying out late with a lot of different women. As little as we were, little girls, he left us at home by ourselves. He decided to marry one of the white women he was dating, so he split us up and gave us away to other families so he could have children with her. I was six years old . . . the new family treated me like a slave. He didn't take care of us but he took care of his new white family.

In this example, the pursuit of forming a whiter family contributes to a father's decision to give away his three daughters. The reasons for his decision are likely complex – *criação* or informal adoption was a widely accepted practice, particularly for rural families like theirs (Twine 1998). He may have believed there was more opportunity for them in an urban home. However, when the daughters hear him repeatedly praising his white grandchildren by proudly stating, 'Now that's cleaning the race!' while attempting to pinch the nose of their black children, they challenge his early motivations. On his deathbed, which coincides with my research period, he attempts to reconnect with his daughters, but only because he requires a bedside nurse. He does not approach his white children for this duty. The three daughters remain expendable and perceive that their race and phenotype, in part, influences the unfair terms of their family membership.

Racial socialization can also be a brutal process involving physical violence. While the previous examples illustrate violence in the form of abandonment of those with black-looking features, there were also narratives of corporeal abuse against lighter family members. According to Isabella:

She [my mother] would hit me all the time. Whenever I did something . . . even a small thing, she would slap me across the face . . . she punished me by throwing scalding hot water all over me. I asked her, "Mama, why do you do these things to me?" (pauses to cry) But I knew why. I had my father's skin color and his straight hair. I was white and she hated me. She was jealous of me, her own daughter.

In racialized societies, all members are socialized into the logic of racial hierarchies. Although the immediate victim in this narrative is the lighter-skinned family member, Isabella is brutalized not because

the mother is ashamed of her, but rather because her mother is jealous and ashamed of herself.

Resistance to racial hierarchy

While there are numerous examples of how racial socialization reproduces racial hierarchies, it is important to convey that Afro-Brazilian families are not monolithic. In one of the five families where nose-pinching was directly observed, family members simultaneously adopted a strong racial identity proudly asserting: 'All of us are black, some just have lighter skin than others.' Similarly, the mother in the de Jesus family firmly ridiculed nose-pinching outright exclaiming: 'I would never do something like that to a child of mine. Never!' Likewise, Damiana, who constantly complimented the straightened hair of other women and flaunted her own straight hair to neighbours, refused to straighten her daughter Regane's hair. Instead, she repeated a universal socialization message used throughout families that girls should be happy with the hair that God had given them. In a pithy statement that best captures this idea, Daniel a middle-aged taxi driver who identifies as 'brown [*pardo*] on the outside and black [*negro*] on the inside' proudly teaches his teenage daughter, 'what is in your head is more important than what is on your head.'

Among the most creative and subversive socialization strategies are those used by the de Jesus and Nascimento families. The father of the de Jesus family insists that everyone calls him *Pantera Negra* (Black Panther), a moniker he uses so that neighbours and family see the neighbourhood improvement projects that he organizes as a form of racial resistance. He describes socialization as a community responsibility stating: 'You can't just be a father to your child but you also need to be a father to your neighbor's child as well.' Similarly, Dona Elena, the matriarch of the Nascimento family and mother of Nequinho, affirms that her baby was, in fact, '*preta preta mas linda*' (really black but pretty). Although the phrase suggests that very dark skin and beauty are conflicting descriptors, Dona Elena embraces her daughter's blackness and enters her in beauty competitions. Furthermore, she links her blackness to Africa, asserting that her racially unmixed family possesses 'true' black beauty. Although Twine (1998) illustrates how families often deny African ancestry, Dona Elena inverts the dominant racial hierarchy re-framing African features, which she describes as 'wide noses, full lips, and dark skin', as authentic and desirable. Yet, in a candid moment that epitomizes the dual nature of racial socialization in Afro-Brazilian families, she later confesses:

Our hair, black people's hair is bad (pointing at both of us) . . . Nappy hair? I do not like it. I accept it [on others] but for me no (shakes her head and sucks her teeth three times) . . . Honestly, I love my color. I like my color, you know? But my hair, no. I want to be the black woman that I am now except with straight hair. I would love to have straight hair, I do not like nappy hair.

Conclusion

By addressing major life transitions including the birth of a baby, the arrival of a new sister and death, I frame life transitions as moments that amplify the racial and phenotypic hierarchies that exist in day-to-day interactions. In particular, affective responses to racial features and the pervasiveness of racially defined dichotomies such as a dirty/clean womb, good/bad hair, wide/refined nose reflect the centrality of the body to racial negotiation. Racial socialization often provides a bridge between structure and interaction by legitimating the 'disciplinary practices' that are used to devalue and control racialized non-white bodies. But, most importantly, I illustrate how families act in ways that are multidimensional. To be sure, racial socialization in families can naturalize whiteness and promote the devaluation of black-looking features; but, at the same time, and sometimes simultaneously, it can offer messages of racial pride and strong racial identification. This finding is critical because while researchers have often constructed families as protective, by focusing on the coexistence of resistance and reproduction of racism in families, this study provides a 'far richer and nuanced picture of social life' (Weitz 2001, p. 670).

Gender roles in Brazil assign to mothers a central role in policing bodies, and women are monitored and sanctioned based on how well they enforce dominant hierarchies. Reflecting on gendered pressures, one respondent states that when a child is born with a *nariz chato* (wide nose), 'it is the mother's job to fix it'. In this way, racial socialization is not a private process, but rather involves an extended network of actors that legitimate dominant racial structures. And, far from being passive reproducers of racial inequality, mothers are driven by motivations that, while still connected to race, should be analysed with attention. A mother's anxieties and willingness to engage in racial rituals can be linked to 'sexual suspicion', as some fathers deny paternity and compromise a mother's moral integrity if the baby does not meet the family's phenotypic expectations (Suarez-Findley 2000; Gregg 2003). In one family, Corina, a mother of three children, laughed and cried as she recounted that her partner waited two years to recognize their son because of the newborn baby's black ears. There is also a perception (and supporting data) that 'good looks' and a

whiter phenotype translates into both status and material advantage (Moutinho 2004; Telles 2004). Poor mothers wanting to ensure opportunity for their children may work within their limited means to secure this. Some do so hesitantly and regrettably. Describing the decisions that she has made raising her children, Magda tearfully offers: 'No one understands what we black women (*mulheres negras*) have to do to survive and provide for our families.' Although women's socialization practices are more heavily emphasized here, men are also agents and subject to socialization. Male respondents report using chemical relaxers to fix *cabelo ruim* (bad hair), while others recall periods of adolescence when they experienced family ridicule and had difficulty accepting their racial appearance.

Although data presented here suggest that resistance to racial hierarchies is sporadic and contradictory, these 'moments of ruptures' still pose important challenges to the dominant ideology (hooks 1992, p. 117). These actions suggest that what is defined as totalitarian hegemonic whiteness may not be completely impenetrable. For example, Dona Elena's views on beauty destabilize dominant hegemonic ideologies of beauty, even though this destabilization does not extend to hair. Overwhelming, poor Afro-Brazilian women in this study made decisions about their hair and socialized others in ways that reflected an internalized devaluation of their natural hair texture. It became increasingly apparent that hair texture was considered more important than skin colour for both racial classification and status. However, internalized racism is not always at the heart of Afro-Brazilian women's hair decisions, even when the decision is to straighten their hair. Women across the diaspora manipulate their hair in various ways to achieve styling freedom, creativity and versatility (Tate 2009). Some women frame their willingness to adopt mainstream hairstyles as subversive because they are intentionally seeking to capitalize on the advantages that job mobility and economic security may bring (Caldwell 1991; Weitz 2001). Yet, within families, silence about these subversive acts can normalize racialized notions of hair manageability and reproduce racist aesthetic hierarchies.

The immediate goal of this research is to understand how racial hierarchy is transmitted through parent and sibling relationships in phenotypically diverse Afro-Brazilian families in Salvador. But there are also far-reaching regional and global implications of this work. Researchers committed to the idea that 'whiteness must be analyzed both as an interconnected global system and by focusing on its local specificities' have already begun to extend the analysis of racialization processes to a global level (Ware and Back 2002, p. 19; Gomes 2008; Glenn 2009). Some scholars have attempted to analyse race and phenotype separately by exploring within-family racial tensions in Latin America (Castillo 1994; Suarez-Findley 2000; Pinho 2009).

Racial jokes called *brincadeiras* in Brazil function very closely to racial comments said *en forma de broma* (jokingly) in Puerto Rico (Relenthford et al. 1983; Twine 1998). Likewise, ideologies about cleaning the race in Brazil find a twin concept in desires to *adelantar/limpiar la raza* in Latin America (Relenthford et al. 1983; Candelario 2007). Of black Puerto Rican woman, Jorge (1979, p. 194) posits: ‘Her negative experiences are not only from outside groups but from her own community and family that judges her dark skin and African features harshly.’ Taken together, this research suggests that African descendants in the Americas have shared experiences in their struggles to negotiate racial hierarchies.

Concluding, this research highlights how racial hierarchies shape Afro-Brazilian families, while also making visible the affective consequences of practices that naturalize black inferiority. Highlighting how Afro-Brazilians families simultaneously reproduce and resist racism offers a dynamic and innovative conceptual approach that enriches our understanding of racial socialization in families. This research suggests that efforts towards racial equality in Brazil might consider involving families because racialized dynamics within them can compromise subjective well-being in ways that are more devastating than structural inequality. So, what has love got to do with it? In families, love is present but as an emotional resource, what love looks like may depend, in part, on what you look like.

Notes

1. Afro-Brazilian describes those classified as *pardos* and *pretos*. Afro-Brazilian families are predominately comprised of *pardos* and *pretos*, but may also include family members who classify as *branco* (white). See Telles (2004) for debates surrounding the term.
2. Translated to mean from Bahia and often represented as a dark-skinned, African-looking woman.
3. From this study: I eliminated men from the study when real (and perceived) inappropriateness threatened my relationships with women and their children.
4. The term *chato* literally means lousy, boring or awful.
5. Iemanjá is a goddess in the Afro-Brazilian religion, Candomblé. Each year on the second day of February, it is customary to celebrate Iemanjá Day by placing a small sacrifice in the Bay of All Saints and asking for a wish.

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