Are There Alternatives to Racial/Skin Color Classification in Brazil? A Comparison of Two Large Urban Areas*

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to explore alternatives to racial/skin color classification in Brazil. Data come from SRSR, a survey designed to collect information from females 15-59 years of age on race, reproductive health, and sexuality, representative at the city level. Fieldwork took place in Belo Horizonte and Recife in 2002. The race questions include not only the traditional question from censuses and other surveys carried out by the Brazilian Census Bureau (IBGE), but also interviewer's classification of the respondent (as the 1996 DHS), open-ended questions on color and race, respondent's self-classification according to different categories, and racial classification of famous individuals. The motivation comes from the fact that, differently from the US, racial classification in Brazil is not necessarily related to ancestry or origin but rather to appearance or phenotype. In addition, there is a rejection of the *pardo* (brown) and *preto* (black) categories used by IBGE. However, to date, researchers have not found a better alternative.

Are There Alternatives to Racial/Skin Color Classification in Brazil?
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Differently from the United States, racial classification in Brazil is not necessarily related to ancestry or origin but, more commonly, to appearance or phenotype. Skin color and other characteristics such as hair texture, nose and lip width are usually taken into account when individuals classify themselves into different race/color categories. In addition to physical attributes, socioeconomic factors such as education, income, and exterior signs of wealth also play a role in how individuals racially perceive themselves and the others.

Most researchers interested in racial relations Brazil rely on data from IBGE – *Intituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (the Brazilian Census Bureau). The 1991 and 2000 censuses and some other surveys conducted by IBGE offer a choice of five pre-coded answers to the race question: white (*branco*), black (*preto*), brown (*pardo*), yellow (*amarelo*; Asian-Brazilian), and indigenous (*indígena*; native Brazilian). For those who study reproductive health, two rounds of the Brazilian DHS – Demographic and Health Survey, in 1991 and 1996, also included information on race.

There is no consensus on whether race/skin color classification as measured by IBGE in Brazil is accurate. For instance, the Movimento Negro (Black Movement) would like to see the category *negro* included in official statistics instead of the categories *brown* and *black*, creating a bi-polar racial classification system (Telles, 2003). Longitudinal analysis has shown that individuals migrate among race categories when different censuses are compared (Carvalho, Wood and Andrade, 2004). In other words, racial classification is unstable. Despite the concern and the number of studies involving data from censuses and other surveys conducted by IBGE, to date, researchers have not found a better alternative to racial/skin color classification in Brazil.

The objective of this paper is to explore alternatives to racial/skin color classification in Brazil. Data come from SRSR – *Saúde Reprodutiva, Sexualidade e Raça/Cor* (Reproductive Health, Sexuality, and Race/Color), a survey designed to collect information on race, reproductive health, and sexuality, representative at the *município* (city) level, which interviewed 15-59 years-old in Belo Horizonte and Recife (see Map 1

below). Belo Horizonte, with its 2,238,526 inhabitants in 2000, is the capital of the state of Minas Gerais (MG), located in the Southeast region, the richest in Brazil. Recife is the state capital of Pernambuco (PE), is located in the poorest region of the country – the Northeast – and had 1,422,905 inhabitants in 2000

Map 1 - Brazil

Source: Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas at Austin (http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia03/brazil_sm03.gif, access 2/27/04).

This paper is organized as follows. The collection of data on race/skin color in Brazil and a recent picture of race/skin color distribution according to the 2000 census are

presented next, followed by a summary of our preliminary study using 1996 DHS. We then move to the description of the SRSR data set. Our preliminary analysis of this data set suggests that the alternatives tested here are not better than IBGE's five categories. Yet we have not ended our possibilities in terms of questions to be explored or methodologies to be used.

2. Context

2.1 Data on race/skin color in Brazil

Information about race in Brazil was first collected in 1872, year of the first national census. Race classification was also present on the second census, carried out in 1890, just two years after the end of slavery in the country. The question was omitted in the 1900 and 1920 censuses – as race lost its "scientific importance" among the academic community (Guimarães, 1999) – and reintroduced in 1940[1].

In 1950, respondents declared their skin colors open-endedly and the answers were later grouped into four categories: black (*preto*), white (*branco*), yellow or Asian origin (*amarelo*), and *pardo* (brown). The latter was comprised of individuals who classified themselves in intermediate skin colors such as *mulato, caboclo,* and *moreno,* and also included those who self-declared native Brazilians *(indio*). In 1960, the answers were pre-coded and the categories available to the respondents were white, black, yellow, brown, and indigenous. Nonetheless, when the published results were released the last two categories were transformed into one. The race question was omitted again in the 1970 census because the Census Bureau was not sure about the quality of the information obtained from the pre-coded, five-category answer (Miranda-Ribeiro and Carvalho, 2003).

The questionnaire of the 1976 PNAD – *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios* (National Household Sample Survey), in an attempt to investigate an alternative to the race question, asked the respondents not only the traditional pre-coded question, but also an open-ended question, which generated more than 100 different answers. Studies by Silva (1999) demonstrate that *moreno* is the color of Brazil, as 43% of the respondents classified themselves as such. As Silva points out, this category embraces not only those who are dark skinned, but also those who have dark hair, regardless skin color. Therefore,

[1] There were no censuses in 1910 and 1930.

not only blacks and browns but also whites may define themselves as "*morenos.*" Yet the five pre-coded categories were found to capture the majority of race/skin color declarations. Thus, the race question was reintroduced in 1980 and was also part of the 1991 census. The respondents were requested to classify themselves in one of the five categories—white, black, brown, yellow or indigenous – and classified not only themselves but also all the members of their households. The interviewers were trained not to interfere with the respondents' choices nor to give any explanations unless the respondents classified themselves as yellow and, according to their appearance, did not seem to be of Asian origin.

During the preparation of the 2000 census, IBGE decided to pretest another set of questions (Schwartzman, 1999). In July of 1998, PME – *Pesquisa Mensal de Emprego* (Monthly Employment Survey) interviewed 90,000 individuals 10 years and older in six metropolitan regions, including Belo Horizonte and Recife. In addition to the pre-coded, five-category question and the open-ended question, both similar to the 1976 PNAD, the PME questionnaire included a question on cultural and ethnic origin. The open-ended question generated almost 200 answers. Results for race/skin color suggest that the terms *pardo, preto* and *indígena* were rejected and, once again, the respondents preferred *moreno*. In general, *pardo* is not a color that belongs to people's everyday lives and *preto* is perceived as having a derogatory meaning. Regarding origin, some respondents reported regional (state/city) origin and the majority understood origin as nationality. Very few browns and blacks referred to an African origin and 96% of the total respondents in Recife declared to be of Brazilian origin. Based on the results of the pretest, IBGE decided that the 1991 race question would be maintained onto the 2000 census. Its consulting committee recommended that deeper investigations about race be restricted to sample surveys such as PNAD's.

Following this recommendation, the 2004 PNAD will very likely have a supplement on color and origin, now being pre-tested in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Belo Horizonte. Will the results of the supplement lead to changes in the 2010 census?

Other sources of data on race in Brazil are the 1991 and 1996 DHS. The 1991 round[2] relied solely on the interviewers' classification of the respondents. In 1996, that

[2] Only for the Northeast region of the country.

question was preceded by the respondents' self-classification and the five possible pre-coded answers were very similar to the categories used by IBGE.

Other sources of data on race relations in Brazil include the survey carried out by DataFolha[3] in 1995. Their target was racism (Turra and Venturini, 1995). DataUFF, from Fluminense Federal University (UFF), also collected data on race relations[4].

The Belo Horizonte Area Survey Project, housed at the Sociology and Anthropology Department at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), collected data on race for the Belo Horizonte metropolitan region in 2002. Inspired by the Detroit Area Study, the idea is to create a time series of data on social change. Beijing, Cape Town, and Warsaw are also part of this enterprise, known as the Social Hubble project[5].

2.2 A recent race/skin color picture of Brazil

Data from the 2000 Census indicate that the majority of the Brazilian population (53.7%) is self-declared white. "*Negros*" (blacks and browns together) account for 44.7% of the population. . The figures for Belo Horizonte are very similar: 53. 6% were self-declared white and 45.3% considered themselves "negros." Yellow, indigenous, and those who did not declare race/color account for less than 2% of the total population in Brazil and Belo Horizonte. Therefore, they will not be considered for the purpose of this paper.

Table 1 presents the distribution of the total population in Brazil and Belo Horizonte by race/color, according to the 2000 Census.

Table 1 – Resident population by race/color – Brazil and Belo Horizonte, 2000

Race/Color	Brazil		Belo Horizonte	
	N	%	N	%
White	91,298,042	53.74	1,199,070	53.57
Black	10,554,336	6.21	180,056	8.04
Brown	65,318,092	38.45	833,668	37.24
Yellow	761,583	0.45	4,312	0.19
Indigenous	734,127	0.43	7,588	0.34
No declaration	1,206,675	0.71	13,831	0.62
Total	169,872,850	100.0	2,238,526	100.0

Source: IBGE, 2000 Census.

[3] Research institute associated with Folha de São Paulo newspaper.
[4] More details on the next version of this paper.
[5] For more information, contact Prof. Neuma Aguiar, aguiar@fafich.ufmg.br.

2.3 Preliminary study: 1996 DHS

In a preliminary study (Caetano, Miranda-Ribeiro and César, 2001), we explored the possibilities of the two race questions from the 1996 DHS, which interviewed 12,612 female respondents aged 15-49 years. In addition to the IBGE type of question, the questionnaire also included the interviewer's classification of the respondent. We are aware that the ordering of the questions – the first one being the self-declaration and the second, the interviewer's classification – may be a source of bias to the extent that the respondent's self-classification may affect the interviewer's perception of the respondent. In a personal communication with one of the interviewers in an area that included the state of Minas Gerais (where Belo Horizonte is located), she said the training interviewers had to classify the respondent's race/skin color interviewers was just "use good sense" (Souza, 2001). Table 2 presents the percentage distribution of women 15-49 according to self-classification of race/skin color by the interviewer classification.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Women 15-49 years old according to Race/Skin Color Self-Classification, by Interviewer Classification – Brazil, 1996

Interviewer's	Self-Classification				Total	Total
Classification	White	Brown	Black	Total	(column)	(n)
White	88.6	11.4	0.0	100	44.0	5,508
Brown	7.2	91.1	1.8	100	51.3	6,422
Black	0.1	37.5	62.4	100	4.8	596
Total (row)	42.6	53.5	3.9	100	100	12,527

Source: DHS 1996.

According to Table 2, there are fewer brown females when the interviewer classification is used (51.3%) as compared to self-classification (53.5%). Accordingly, there is a difference of 0.9 percentage points between those classified as black by the interviewers and those who classified themselves as brown. The first three rows of Table 2 indicate that inconsistencies in individual racial classification are greater when compared to net changes appearing in the marginal totals. Among those classified as white, 11.4% self-classified as brown and, among those classified as black, 37.5% classified themselves as brown. The shift from interviewer classification as brown to self-classification as white is

also substantial (7.2%). These changes represent two different movements when self-classification is used, the "*whitening*" from brown to white and from black to brown, and the "*darkening*" from white to brown.

In this regard, Silva (1999) argues that racial classification in Brazil is influenced by the socioeconomic status of the interviewer, as well as of the respondent. On the one hand, given a certain phenotype, the higher an individual's apparent socioeconomic position, the whither he or she will be classified and vice-versa. On the other hand, self-classification tends to reflect identity with a particular social position and a cultural attitude. The main differences stemming from interviewer and self-classification would be that the respondent tends to whiten him or herself the higher his or her socioeconomic situation is, whereas low socioeconomic status darkens one's own skin color (Sansone, 1992). In addition, the interviewer decides the race classification based upon the respondent's visible indications of socioeconomic status (Telles and Lim, 1998). If this is true, then the worse-off status of black and brown groups could be overestimated by self-classification. In view of that, Silva (1999) contends that the socioeconomic differences by race may have been overstated. Given that discrimination may be taken as an exogenous phenomenon to the extent that it depends on the way discriminators sees one's race, Telles and Lim (1998) pose that a more appropriate estimation of race should rely on racial classification by others, at least to analyze job market discrimination and income differences.

In Table 2, we observed the effects of self-classification while holding constant the interviewer's classification. Doing the opposite, i.e., holding self-classification constant to check the effect of interviewer classification (Table 3), 8.6% of women self-classified as white were classified by the interviewers as brown and 9.4% of women self-classified as brown were classified by the interviewer as white. These two changes in opposite directions almost cancel each other out. Among the women that classified themselves as black, interviewers whitened 23.4% of them, passing them to the brown category. This is a smaller proportion of "*whitening*" from black to brown when compared to the shift in the case of self-classification (37.5%).

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Women 15-49 years old according to Interviewer Classification, by Self-Classification – Brazil, 1996

Interviewer's Classification	Self-Classification			
	White	Brown	Black	Tot.
White	91.4	9.4	0.1	44.0
Brown	8.6	87.3	23.4	51.3
Black	0.0	3.3	76.5	4.8
Total (row)	100 (n=5,341)	100 (n=6,700)	100 (n=486)	100 (n=12,527)

Source: DHS 1996.

The point, however, is to decide which variable would best represent the Brazilian racial reality and diversity. The net changes in the individual cells when holding constant interviewer classification appear to be more substantial when compared to the net changes when keeping invariable self-classification. Nevertheless, it is not possible, for instance, to be sure that the "*whitening*" from black to brown noticed by interviewer classification puts these respondents closer to the women consistently classified as brown – classified as brown both by themselves and by the interviewer – or whether the "*whitening*" caused by self-classification is relatively more "precise." Telles and Lim claim that, whereas income levels and socioeconomic status do not help predicting "*whitening*" and "*darkening*" shifts, number of schooling years does (Telles and Lim op. cit.). In this sense, the discrepancy between interviewer's and interviewee's classification would be more likely among the least-educated rather than among the best educated ones.

Table 4, below, presents the percentage difference in number of schooling years for all combinations of interviewer classification and self-classification, having women consistently classified as brown as reference. It indicates that the greatest difference in terms of number of schooling years from the females consistently classified as brown is the consistently classified as white (31.8% higher) and those females the interviewer classified as black and classified themselves as brown (14.3% lower). Females who were classified as white by the interviewer and self-classified themselves as brown were indeed closer to the consistently-classified browns (2.7% higher), while females self-classified as black for whom the interviewer marked the brown option were more distant from the reference category (6.2% higher) as compared to those consistently classified as black (2.0% higher). Yet those self-classified as white and interviewer-classified as brown had an average

number of schooling years 9.5% higher than those that the interviewers whitened from the black to the brown category (6.2%).

Table 4: Percentage Difference in Education for All Combinations of Interviewer Classification and Self-Classification Compared with Consistently Classified Browns – Women 15-49 years old, Brazil, 1996

Interviewer's Classification	Self-Classification		
	White	Brown	Black
White	31.8% (n=4,880)	2.7% (n=628)	Na (n=0)
Brown	9.5% (n=460)	**0.0** (n=5,848, y.s..*=5,7)	6.2% (n=114)
Black	Na (n=1)	-14.3% (n=224)	2.0% (n=372)

Source: DHS 1996.

*years of schooling.

As Table 4 illustrates, the use of one or another classification have different effects, which can bring certain categories closer to educational reality and put others farther away from it. Keeping females consistently classified as brown as the reference category, the use of self-classification apparently rightly puts more women interviewer-classified as white in the brown category and at the same time incorporates as brown those with the smallest number of schooling years who were classified as black by the interviewers. Overall, we find that the "*whitening*" and "*darkening*" effects and its relationship with education is present in both types of classifications, the more dramatic change being the self-classified change from black to brown, which may place the self-classified brown group rather worse-off than it would be using interviewer classification.

3. SRSR data set

The exploratory study based on DHS data suggests that racial/color classification in Brazil is not straightforward but rather complicated. Can DHS or IBGE data really account for the racial diversity of the Brazilian population?

In an attempt to shed some light on this matter, SRSR was collected in 2002 and tried alternative forms of capturing people's perception of race/skin color. The race questions include not only the traditional question from censuses and other surveys carried out by IBGE, but also interviewer's classification of the respondent (as the 1996 DHS),

respondent's self-classification according to different categories (including *moreno* and *negro*), two open-ended questions (one about color, one about race), and racial classification of famous individuals, namely a soccer play (Ronaldo, who currently plays at Real Madrid), a pugilist (world champion Acelino Popó Freitas), and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, at the time of the survey a politician and currently the president of Brazil. The respondent was also asked if she ever felt discriminated against and how she would react in three situations in which she would have to deal with individuals who were racially different from her: a neighbor, a boss, and a son or daughter-in-law.

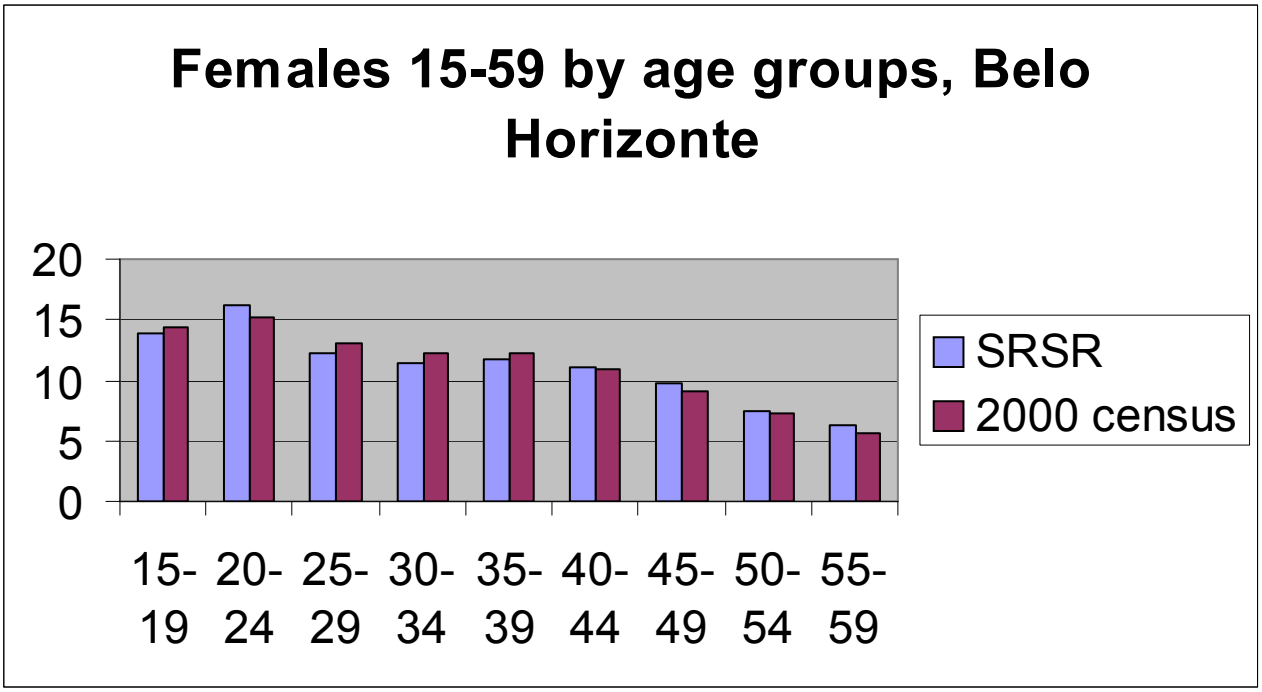
Following a three stage sampling procedure, we randomly selected the census tracts, then the households in each census tract, and finally the eligible female in the household to be interviewed, yielding a total of 2,401 females interviewed in both sites[6].

Differently from the DHS, in which the two race questions (self-classification and interviewer's classification) follow one another (in that order), the SRSR questionnaire was designed so that the interviewer's classification is the first item of all (#100), next to the consent form. Interviewers were trained to classify the respondents according to their first impression. They were also instructed not to change their classification after hearing the first declaration of the respondent regarding skin color, which happened only 24 questions later (question #124).

Sample consistency checks have shown that data for age and marital status are fairly consistent if compared to the 2000 Census. Figure 1 presents the percentage distribution of 15-59 females by age group, according to the 2000 census and the 2002 SRSR. The age structures are very similar for both data sets. Thus, we are quite confident about the quality of our sample.

[6] Pedro Luis do Nascimento Silva (IBGE/ENCE) was in charge of the sampling procedure.

Figure 1 – Percentage distribution of 15-59 females by age group, Belo Horizonte

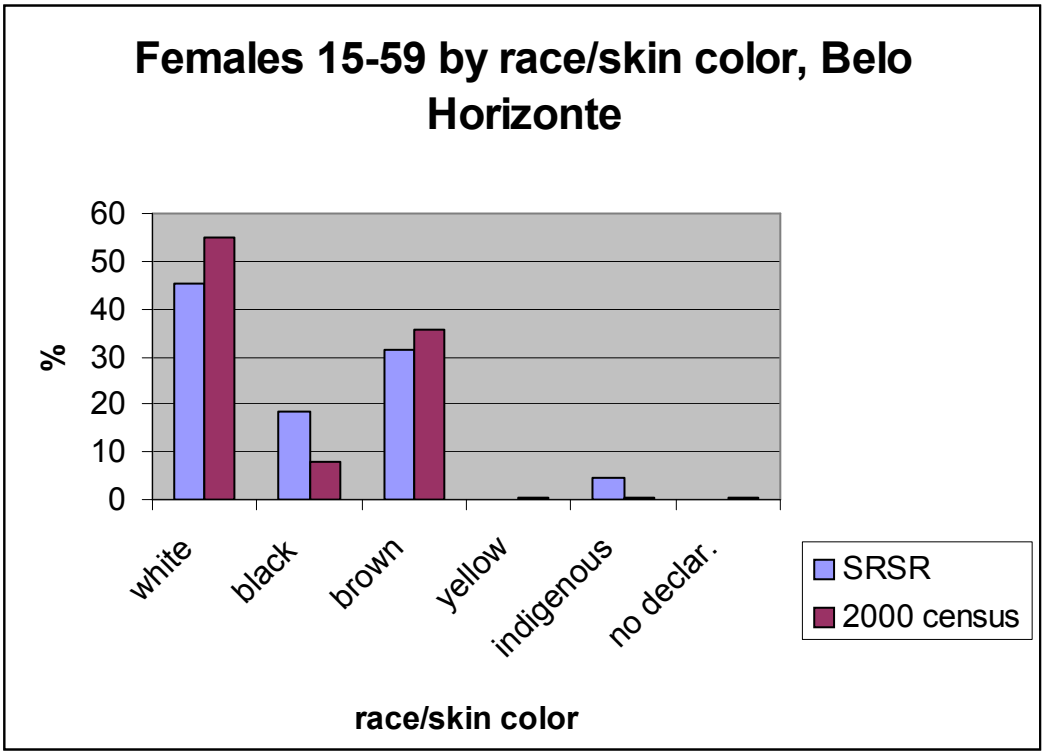


Source: IBGE, 2000 Census and Cedeplar/SOS Corpo, 2002 SRSR.

Despite the similar age distribution, the 2000 census and SRSR yielded very different percentage distributions according to race/skin color, as seen in Figure 2 below. We compare the same questions in both surveys, i.e., the race question from the 2000 Census and the IBGE type of question from SRSR. The picture offered by SRSR is completely different from the census as only 45% of the sampled population is self-declared white and the proportion of blacks more than doubles in SRSR. One possible bias could be the fact that respondents were aware of the topics being investigated by the survey and, therefore, tried to be politically correct. The IBGE-type question is the third one about race (following the two open-ended questions about color and race) and the fantasy name of the survey was "Research on Women's Health in Belo Horizonte and Recife." Thus, we firmly believe the respondents had no reason to suspect race was one of the issues being investigated or to be politically correct. Another reason that could affect the quality of the race module is the fact that SRSR is a long questionnaire – 43 pages and about 40 minutes long. Respondents tend to get tired in interviews of that length. However, the race module is placed on page 7, in the beginning of the individual questionnaire – there are only 23 questions prior to it, all of them regarding characteristics of the respondent such as age and

education. Before the individual questions, there were questions about the household residents (so the eligible female could be randomly selected) and questions about the household itself.

Figure 2 – Percentage distribution of 15-59 females by race/skin color, Belo Horizonte



Source: IBGE, 2000 Census and Cedeplar/SOS Corpo, 2002 SRSR.

It is interesting to note that a considerable part of the brown population of Recife has indigenous origin (Cavenaghi, 1997), differently from Belo Horizonte, where browns are more commonly a mix of whites and blacks.

Using the same procedure of our preliminary study, this paper explores alternative racial/skin color classifications. How consistent is the respondents' racial/skin color self-classification vis-à-vis the way they racially perceive others – namely, the interviewer? How consistent is the respondents' racial/skin color self-classification when different categories are considered?

4. Findings

The first step of our analysis is to compare self-classification and interviewer's classification, both according to IBGE's five categories. In the case of Belo Horizonte, Table 5 indicates that 80% of the whites and about ½ of browns and blacks were consistently classified according to these two criteria of racial classification. For Recife, the figures suggest more consistency among whites (84%), the same consistency for browns (56%) and less consistency among blacks (42%) if compared to Belo Horizonte. For DHS, the figures were 89%, 91%, and 62%, respectively (Table 2).

If we compare the marginal totals for Belo Horizonte, there are more blacks according to self-classification if compared to the interviewer's classification (23% versus 19%). The situation is reversed among browns – there are more browns according to self-classification (33% versus 30%). Among the whites, the figures are almost the same and the difference between the two criteria is only 0.4 percentage points (47.3% minus 46.9%). The largest difference is among blacks (3.4 percentage points).

In Recife, the marginal totals suggest that the percentage of self-declared white females is larger than the percentage of those perceived as white by the interviewer (41% versus 26%). Conversely, there are fewer self-declared browns and blacks – the differences are 8.7 and 6 percentage points, respectively.

Taking into account those declared white by the interviewer (first row), a considerable proportion of respondents perceived themselves to be "darker "— 20% in Belo Horizonte and 15% in Recife. Among those classified by the interviewer as black (third row), as much as 47% of the respondents in Belo Horizonte and 58% in Recife considered themselves "whiter" (either white or brown). Interestingly, 9.6% of those declared black by the interviewer in Belo Horizonte and 8.9% in Recife actually classified themselves in the white category. Regardless of whose opinion is more valid – the respondent's or the interviewer's – these results indicate that race classification in Brazil is quite complicated.

Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Females 15-59 years-old according to Race/Skin Color Self-Classification, by Interviewer Classification – Belo Horizonte and Recife, 2002

BELO HORIZONTE

Interviewer's Classif. IBGE	Self-Classification IBGE				Total (column)	Total (n)
	White	Brown	Black	Total		
White	79.76	17.71	2.52	100	46.94	391,372
Brown	25.34	54.40	20.26	100	30.25	252,174
Black	9.62	37.21	53.17	100	22.81	190,123
Total (row)	47.31	33.25	19.44	100	100	
(Total (n)	394,368	277,235	162,066			833,669

RECIFE

Interviewer's Classif. IBGE	Self-Classification IBGE				Total (column)	Total (n)
	White	Brown	Black	Total		
White	84.36	14.99	0.65	100	26.12	125,809
Brown	32.38	55.73	11.89	100	52.32	252,035
Black	8.91	48.70	42.39	100	21.57	103,906
Total (row)	40.89	43.58	15.53	100	100	
(Total (n)	196,998	209,928	74,824			481,750

Source: SRSR, Cedeplar/SOS Corpo, 2002.

Inverting rows and columns, i.e., holding constant the respondent's self-classification, Table 6 indicates that consistency remains absolutely the same among whites, decreases among browns and increases among blacks in Belo Horizonte. In Recife, it decreases among whites but increases substantially among browns and blacks.

The situation in Recife reflects more consistency among browns and blacks, if compared to the previous exercise, and just 50% consistency among whites. Among those self-classified as white, as much as 45% were perceived by the interviewers as brown.

Table 6: Percentage Distribution of Females 15-59 years-old according to Race/Skin Color, Interviewer's Classification, by Self-Classification – Belo Horizonte and Recife, 2002

BELO HORIZONTE

Self-Classif.	Interviewer's Classification IBGE				Total	Total
IBGE	White	Brown	Black	Total	(column)	(n)
White	79.16	16.20	4.64	100	47.31	394,368
Brown	25.00	49.48	25.52	100	33.25	277,235
Black	6.09	31.53	62.37	100	19.44	162,066
Total (row)	46.94	30.25	22.81	100	100	
(Total (n)	391,372	252,174	190,123			833,699

RECIFE

Self-Classif.	Interviewer's Classification IBGE				Total	Total
IBGE	White	Brown	Black	Total	(column)	(n)
White	53.87	41.43	4.70	100	40.89	196,998
Brown	8.99	66.91	24.10	100	43.58	209,928
Black	1.09	40.04	58.87	100	15.53	74,824
Total (row)	26.12	52.32	21.57	100	100	
(Total (n)	125,809	252,035	103,906			481,750

Source: SRSR, Cedeplar/SOS Corpo, 2002.

Data for the 1995 survey by DataFolha also suggest inconsistencies, as 71% of the browns and only 58% of the blacks are consistently classified. In contrast, 89% of the self-declared whites are also perceived as whites by the interviewer, reinforcing the tendency of "whitening" (Telles, 2003).

Why are SRSR results much less consistent than the ones we found using 1996 DHS? We believe the sequence of questions in DHS lead to agreement between respondent and interviewer. The same does not happen in SRSR because the questions were placed far apart. Differences in the way interviewers were trained to deal with those questions may have also contributed to the differences. Instead of comparing the results and making conclusions about data quality, we want to argue in favor of the subjectivity of racial classification in Brazil. Results also depend on who the interviewer was (racially speaking) and how much external signs of wealth the respondent displayed, which are related to income and, to a less extent, education.

What happens when the category *negra* is substituted for black? What if *morena* is used instead of *parda*? What about the categories *negra* and *morena* as options of the same

question? How much do the respondents identify with the category *mulata*? Tables 9 to 16 present the percentage distributions of racial/skin color classification according to four alternatives of categories, always by self-classification according to the IBGE white, brown, and black categories.

In alternative #1, we use *negra* instead of *preta* (black). *Negra* is a politically correct term that collapses blacks and browns. In the past, many researchers used the expression non-white to name the same combination[7]. Due to its political correctedness, our expectation is that *negra* will attract not only blacks, but also browns.

Alternative #2 changes *parda* (brown) for *morena*. If Silva is correct and *morena* is actually the color of Brazil, we expect that this category will capture those self-declared white, brown, or black according to the IBGE criterion.

Alternative #3 combines #1 and #2 so that the categories are white, *morena* and *negra*.

In alternative #4, we test whether the term *mulata* is well accepted among the respondents. The *mulata* is perceived by Corrêa (1996) as having a defined and definite place and defined as the "encounter of races" (p.47). The mulata is desired because she is "beautiful, gracious, bashful, and sensual" (p.39). Although the origin of the term is related to the mule, *mulata* tend to have good (yet sexualized) connotation. If *mulata* is well accepted by our respondents, we expect that this category will be better accepted than IBGE's *parda*.

In sum, the classifications tested here are:

IBGE	*branca* (white), *parda* (brown), *preta* (black);
Alternative #1	*branca* (white), *parda* (brown), *negra*;
Alternative #2	*branca* (white), *morena*, *preta* (black);
Alternative #3	*branca* (white), *morena*, *negra*;
Alternative #4	*branca* (white), *mulata*, *negra*.

Table 7 presents the percentage distribution of SRSR respondents according to alternative classification #1, by self-classification, in Belo Horizonte and Recife. In other

[7] If we take into account that the yellow and indigenous populations in Brazil are relatively very small, non-whites were basically blacks + browns.

words, we are testing whether the category *negra* is preferred to *preta* (black). If only the IBGE categories are taken into account, there are 47% self-declared whites, 33% browns, and 19% blacks in Belo Horizonte and 41% whites, 43% browns, and 15% blacks in Recife (total row marginal). We expected that the category *negra* would capture not only those previously defined black but also part of the browns. The reason for that expectation comes from the fact that *negra* combined blacks and browns. The results suggest that the respondents perceive the category *negra* as a good replacement for black, as seen by the high percentage of consistency between the two categories – 84% in Belo Horizonte and 80% in Recife classified themselves as both black and *negra*. The marginals for *negra* are practically the same as those for *black* in both sites, the difference being less than 1 percentage point. Therefore, according to Table 7, *negra* does not attract those who classify themselves as brown. It is important to note that consistency is also very high among whites and browns, ranging from 84 to 91%.

Table 7: Percentage Distribution of Females 15-59 years-old According to Race/Skin Color Self-Classification (Alternative #1), by Self-Classification (IBGE) – Belo Horizonte and Recife, 2002

BELO HORIZONTE

Self-Classif.	Self-Classification Alternative #1				Total	Total
IBGE	White	Brown	*Negra*	Total	(column)	(n)
White	90.82	7.07	2.11	100	47.31	394,367
Brown	2.67	87.59	9.74	100	33.25	277,235
Black	3.02	13.09	83.89	100	19.44	162,066
Total (row)	44.44	35.02	20.54	100	100	
(Total (n)	370,488	291,929	171,251			833,668

RECIFE

Self-Classif.	Self-Classification Alternative #1				Total	Total
IBGE	White	Brown	*Negra*	Total	(column)	(n)
White	85.43	12.11	2.46	100	41.35	203,619
Brown	4.13	89.81	6.06	100	43.36	213,521
Black	4.08	15.73	80.19	100	15.29	75,314
Total (row)	37.73	46.35	15.91	100	100	
(Total (n)	185,827	228,269	78,358			492,454

Source: SRSR, Cedeplar/SOS Corpo, 2002.

The next step is to verify what happens when *morena* is used instead of brown. Table 8 below indicate that, as predicted, *morena* captures not only browns and eventually blacks, but also whites. Given the option *morena*, 26% of the self-declared white in Belo Horizonte moved to that alternative, as well as 58% of those self-declared black. In Recife, 25% of those who classified themselves as white and as much as 66% of those self-classified as black reclassified as *morena*. This heavy movement towards morena indicates that Silva is right: *morena* is the color of Brazil. As pointed out by the author, *morenidade* has to do not only with skin color, but also with hair color. Thus, all those who have dark hair (brown or black) can be considered *morenos*, regardless their skin colors.

Table 8: Percentage Distribution of Females 15-59 years-old According to Race/Skin Color Self-Classification (Alternative #2), by Self-Classification (IBGE) – Belo Horizonte and Recife, 2002

BELO HORIZONTE						
Self-Classif.	Self-Classification Alternative #2				Total	Total
IBGE	White	*Morena*	Black	Total	(column)	(n)
White	73.95	25.97	0.08	100	47.42	394,366
Brown	4.62	91.87	3.51	100	33.09	275,227
Black	0.98	57.59	41.42	100	19.49	162,066
Total (row)	36.79	53.94	9.27	100	100	
(Total (n)	305,950	448,591	77,118			831,659
RECIFE						
Self-Classif.	Self-Classification Alternative #2				Total	Total
IBGE	White	*Morena*	Black	Total	(column)	(n)
White	74.93	24.66	0.41	100	41.32	203,401
Brown	5.64	92.54	1.82	100	43.37	213,525
Black	0.35	66.04	33.61	100	15.30	75,312
Total (row)	33.46	60.44	6.10	100	100	
(Total (n)						492,238

Source: SRSR, Cedeplar/SOS Corpo, 2002.

According to Table 9, the combination of *morena* and *negra* in alternative #3 exaggerates the category *morena,* if compared to the original brown category. It also reduces drastically the proportion of self-declared *negras*, if compared to alternative #1, in

which *negra* was used instead of black but brown remained untouched. Results suggest that *morena* is preferred to *negra*, which reinforces Silva's hypotheses.

Table 9: Percentage Distribution of Females 15-59 years-old According to Race/Skin Color Self-Classification (Alternative #3), by Self-Classification (IBGE) – Belo Horizonte and Recife, 2002

BELO HORIZONTE						
Self-Classif.	Self-Classification Alternative #3				Total	Total
IBGE	White	*Morena*	*Negra*	Total	(column)	(n)
White	73.62	25.98	0.40	100	47.36	394,367
Brown	5.04	88.55	6.41	100	33.24	276,810
Black	0.55	53.81	45.65	100	19.39	161,478
Total (row)	36.65	52.18	11.18	100	100	832,655
(Total (n)	305,189	434,444	93,022			832,655
RECIFE						
Self-Classif.	Self-Classification Alternative #3				Total	Total
IBGE	White	*Morena*	*Negra*	Total	(column)	(n)
White	77.66	19.84	2.50	100	41.33	203,619
Brown	5.78	90.97	3.25	100	43.39	213,769
Black	0.49	61.46	38.04	100	15.26	75,314
Total (row)	34.67	57.07	8.26	100	100	
(Total (n)	170,839	281,165	40,698			492,702

Source: SRSR, Cedeplar/SOS Corpo, 2002.

Next we introduce the category *mulata* to replace *morena*. As shown, the latter does not help differentiate whites, browns, and blacks. In Belo Horizonte, *mulata* was not well received by the self-declared brown respondents. Only 52% of them self-declared *mulata* when brown as no longer an option. A third of the browns moved to the category white and 13% moved to *negra*. *Negra* did not please the self-declared black as much as we expected, as only 52% of them self-declared *negra*. In effect, 44% of the self-declared black moved to the *mulata* category when the former was no longer available instead of opting for *negra*.

Differently from Belo Horizonte, in Recife the category *mulata* attracted both browns and blacks. As much as 70% of the respondents consistently classified themselves

as brown and *mulata*. *Negra* also lost space to other categories if compared to black. Again, *negra* does not seem to be perceived as a substitute for both black and brown.

Table 10: Percentage Distribution of Females 15-59 years-old According to Race/Skin Color Self-Classification (Alternative #4), by Self-Classification (IBGE) – Belo Horizonte and Recife, 2002

BELO HORIZONTE						
Self-Classif.	Self-Classification Alternative #4				Total	Total
IBGE	White	*Mulata*	*Negra*	Total	(column)	(n)
White	96.00	3.25	0.75	100	47.44	394,367
Brown	34.06	52.72	13.21	100	33.10	275,123
Black	3.56	44.22	52.22	100	19.46	161,772
Total (row)	57.51	27.60	14.89	100	100	
(Total (n)	478,067	229,397	123,798			831,262
RECIFE						
Self-Classif.	Self-Classification Alternative #4				Total	Total
IBGE	White	*Mulata*	*Negra*	Total	(column)	(n)
White	87.65	11.78	0.56	100	41.99	203,619
Brown	20.28	70.83	8.89	100	42.48	206,004
Black	5.38	51.51	43.11	100	15.53	75,313
Total (row)	46.25	43.04	10.71	100	100	
(Total (n)	224,300	208,703	51,933			484,936

Source: SRSR, Cedeplar/SOS Corpo, 2002.

Based on the findings presented here, is there a better alternative to racial/skin color classification in Brazil?

5. Concluding remarks

This paper is a first attempt to test alternatives to the race/skin color categories used by IBGE, the Brazilian Census Bureau. Why are we looking for possible alternatives? First, because race classification in Brazil is quite complicated and involves not only skin color and physical attributes such as hair and nose, but also education and income and, eventually, origin or ancestry. Second, because there is complaint and disagreement about the five categories used by IBGE – the answers to the race question are pre-coded, there are only five closed options which mix race and color altogether, black has a derogatory

meaning and *pardo* is not a color that belongs to people's everyday lives. Third, because racial inequality and affirmative action have been largely discussed in Brazil and some proposed policies depend on the definition of race/skin color to be implemented[8].

One problems in analyzing possible alternatives to race classification is that there is no base for comparison. In other words, there is no "correct" classification or "measure" of race that we are trying to get close to. There is simply no right or wrong when race is involved. Therefore, our objective is just to present the disadvantages in using each combination of categories tested here.

The first test contrasted the respondent's self-classification with the interviewer's classification of the respondent. Results suggest that consistency varies among categories and between sites. Far from being substitutes, these two forms of classification measure different aspects. Self-classification reveals identity, ancestry and/or self-evaluation of a set of (considered) important physical characteristics that vary from individual to individual. Very few dispute the usefulness and appropriateness of this question despite the fact that, ultimately, there could be as many criteria for racial classification as individuals in a population. Yet there is controversy about the interviewer's classification of the respondent. Classification from the other discloses the way others perceive each individual. Again, there can be as many ways as seeing the other as individuals in a population. The way the world sees someone may not matter until the day this someone tries to get a job and feels discriminated against.

We then tested other categories to replace brown and black, which tend to be rejected. Alternative #1 used *negra* instead of black. Despite our high expectations, this alternative did not work as imagined. Instead of accounting for browns and blacks, *negra* was only a poor substitute for black. Therefore, the suggestion of the *Movimento Negro* may not be a good option.

Alternative #2 introduced *morena* instead of brown. As we expected, whites, browns and blacks reclassified as such. Despite being the color of Brazil, *morena* does not really differentiate groups with different race/skin colors. Why do we need a way of differentiating who is who in terms of race? Because a great deal of Brazilian inequality is still related to differences in race/skin color.

[8] For example, quotas for *negros* in public universities.

The concomitant usage of *morena* and *negra* failed completely (alternative #3). As before, *morena* attracted respondents from the three IBGE categories and *negra* did not capture browns and blacks, as expected.

Finally, the category *mulata* worked differently in Belo Horizonte and Recife. It was apparently well-received in Recife but did not please the Belo Horizonte respondents. There may be cultural differences in the perception of the *mulata* between the two sites. It is important to note that the masculine *mulato*[9] has a completely different connotation, suggesting that the use of this category should be avoided.

This study is part of an ongoing project. This first preliminary analysis suggests that the alternatives presented here are by no means better than IBGE's. On the contrary, they seem to complicate even more the already nebulous scenario of racial classification in Brazil. In spite of it, we will follow this track as we have not finished the possibilities offered by SRSR data set, much less the methodological options. Our future research include analyzing differences by education (as done in the DHS study) and age groups. We will also explore the remaining questions available at the race module, including open-ended questions. Loglinear models will also be used.

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