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**Valorization as an Educational Project: Schooling, Afro-Brazilian  
Cultural Organizations, and the Struggle Against Racial Exclusion in  
Salvador da Bahia**

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Cultural Organizations, and the Struggle Against Racial Exclusion in  
Salvador da Bahia**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

# **Valorization as an Educational Project: Schooling, Afro-Brazilian Cultural Organizations, and the Struggle Against Racial Exclusion in Salvador da Bahia**

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This MA thesis attempts to achieve three main goals in setting the stage for a case study on Afro-Brazilian community social organizations. First among these goals is to demonstrate that scholarly and activist criticism of community organizations' inability to generate broad-based political constituencies overlooks a key component of what community organizations actually strive for, and thus, characterizing them as an inappropriate use of resources is an error. This is accomplished through a discussion of the reluctance of Afro-Brazilians to self-identify as such and the need to support consciousness-raising with a valorization effort that addresses the negative stigma associated with blackness. Second, this essay looks to theories of education, specifically

the racialized nature of the educational experience, as an indication that valorization efforts must focus on supplementing or countering the racial subjectivities that schools establish with more positive experiences of blackness. Third, this essay considers how community social capital is among the most influential sources of valorization, and establishes several hypotheses about the mechanisms of community organizations that garner effective valorization. These hypotheses are tested in a case study of community organizations in Salvador da Bahia.

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## **Introduction**

This thesis investigates the role of culture in social mobilization efforts by presenting a case study of Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, where a rich network of community organizations are committed to using culture to promote Afro-Brazilian consciousness. In a country that celebrates racial mixing and fluidity, stigmatization of a distinct and outright black identity has impeded the race-based political mobilization strategies that are employed in other countries. The cultural mobilization effort studied here has emerged as an interesting alternative, working first toward breaking down the stigma of blackness by attempting to valorize the Afro-Brazilian culture and identity. Because many of the organizations in Salvador da Bahia regard valorization primarily as an educational project, the work seeks to better understand the relationships between the community organizations and local institutions of formal education. It concentrates on the competing strategies of presenting culture as a supplement to existing curricula and, alternatively, the use of culture to generate a distinct counter-narrative about black identity. It inquires about what conclusions can be drawn regarding the ways communities navigate the realm of cultural politics amidst the constant flux brought on by democratization, neoliberalism, and globalization processes in the region.

An attribute that distinguishes this thesis from similar projects that consider the role of culture in social mobilizations is that ideologies and practices are analyzed according to their significance at the community level. This work demonstrates that previous studies of educational projects tend either to condemn community organizations

for their inability to generate collective action by the marginalized population in state and national politics, or to praise the organizations for the progress they make in cultivating heightened individual consciousnesses. This work argues that each of these types of analysis imposes an inappropriate scale for measuring changes in racial dynamics. While there is a tendency among studies of race in Brazil to transpose the meaning of community as the wider “black community,” the organizations studied here are directly responsible to specific local residential neighborhoods. While the discourse invokes conceptualizations of broader communities based on Pan-Africanism and national racial consciousness, the actual daily activities, the participants, and the concrete education and valorization goals are targeted at the specific neighborhoods in which each organization operates. Thus, the following chapters contribute an analysis that considers the local community function of the Afro-Brazilian cultural organizations, evaluating their presence and effectiveness in combating racial inequality and exclusion at the community level.

### **CULTURAL MOBILIZATION: A FOCUS ON EDUCATION**

When looking at the community as a meaningful level of analysis for evaluating mobilization against racial exclusion and inequality, it is important to establish the mechanisms by which these organizations can and do achieve community-level change. While the organizational goals and behavior are articulated and manifested in a number of different ways, this work identifies education as the primary arena in which community organizations have established themselves and worked to make improvements. Education forms the focus of this study for three reasons: 1. its centrality



to the origins of racial inequality; 2. its relevance to communities and their local objectives; 3. the fact that addressing education has become an issue toward which community organizations themselves have put the most resources. While Chapter 1 introduces problems associated with race and racial mobilization, Chapter 2 discusses how education is a primary setting where racial inequality is established and maintained. Together these chapters develop the argument that one indicator by which we might measure the cultural organizations' impact on education is the effectiveness in combating racial inequality. Education is established as a realm that can be addressed meaningfully at the community level and the motivations for conducting a community-level analysis are presented. Chapter 3 describes the theoretical framework that informs the analysis and traces a complex history of discourse about racial mobilization and culture. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present a case study of Ilê Aiyê and Olodum, two community cultural organizations in Salvador da Bahia whose educational projects have been intertwined since their origination in the 1970s. These chapters evaluate the significance of the community-level education goals set forth by each group and consider how changes in these goals over time reflect the opportunities and challenges these cultural organizations encounter while working in the realm of community education.

## **Chapter 1. Cultural Mobilization and its Discontents**

Socio-economic inequality and exclusion in Brazil are among the chief issues the country faces. Inequality can be linked to a number of detrimental national outcomes including: 1) economic problems, when development models are plagued by limited human capital pools; 2) political problems, when marginal groups tends to be less able to elicit government action on their behalf and; 3) social problems, especially when government inaction or inability to provide basic resources results in poverty, inadequate healthcare, or high rates of crime (Vegas and Petrow 2008: 7-13). Brazilian inequality is worsened by the degree to which racial discrimination and exclusion inhibit social mobility for a large portion of the population.<sup>1</sup> Because racial discrimination structures maintain systems of differential access to social mobility, attempts to address national problems that are symptomatic of inequality will not succeed until efforts to redress racial exclusion are realized in earnest. Persistence of Race theory argues that because elites find socio-economic advantages in maintaining the marginalization of their subordinates, it is the state, and not the market, which will ultimately be able to reduce racial exclusion and generate better social mobility in society (Wilson 1978). Telles (2003) and others have shown that the Brazilian state has never been pressured to enact real change and address racial exclusion because of an absence of a politically strong, race-based black constituency.

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<sup>1</sup> Brazilians claiming to be black or mixed race number about 80 million, roughly half of Brazil's 173 Million people. In the 2000 census, 56 percent of respondents indicated they were white, while 39 percent identified as brown, and 6 percent as black (Bailey and Telles 2006). Problems with the use of these color categories will be considered below.

Political action based on race has been particularly hard to achieve in Brazil, because of the dominant hegemonic paradigm of racial democracy. Racial democracy, originally developed by Gilberto Freyre, holds that because the Brazilian identity is rooted in a history of biological and cultural miscegenation, blackness is celebrated, as opposed to stigmatized, in the Brazilian psyche (1933). Later generations of scholars characterized the obvious socio-economic divide between whites and non-whites as a class issue, noting that black poverty was connected to the historical tradition of slavery, and was a transitory status that would diminish over time, especially with industrialization (Pierson 1967: 177-205). When the black marginal status did not diminish, racial democracy ideology was renewed by nationalists who drew upon comparisons with race relations in the United States. These theorists pointed to horizontal racial relationships in Brazil, including low levels of spatial segregation and high levels of intermarriage and miscegenation compared to the United State, as evidence that there was little or no racial exclusion in Brazil—although they overlooked the widespread vertical socio-economic exclusion in Brazil. The irony of racial democracy is that in attempting to illustrate a lack of stigmatization, racial democracy itself actively stigmatizes blackness in two important ways.

The first way racial democracy ideology stigmatizes blackness is that it attributes the preponderance of social exclusion and immobility among nonwhites to something other than blackness. Only a few decades removed from slavery, it was easy to point to the remnants of marginalization structures, but this explanation has less contemporary saliency. Activists in Brazil's black movement argue that a century later, blacks are

instructed to associate their continued subordinate status in the absence of social barriers as a product of their own deficiencies rather than of structural obstacles that they must overcome through political action (Vargas 2004).

The second way racial democracy has effectively propagated a stigmatized notion of blackness is implicit in a subtext of the racial democracy narrative, the “Mulatto Escape Hatch.” As articulated by Deglar in 1971, the Mulatto Escape Hatch theory holds that, unlike the United States, which had firmly delineated racial categories, Brazilian race relations have a fluidity that grants a middle ground for mulattos to ascend in socio-economic status. While the apparent social mobility for mulattos is celebrated, the theory also implies that darker blacks are less able to take advantage of social mobility opportunities. The Brazilian adage, “money whitens,” reflects the sentiment that what makes racial democracy so great is that blacks can ascend *in spite of* their blackness. Thus while Brazilian race relations are celebrated because some non-whites are given access to social mobility, the ideology still reinforces a spectral conception of race wherein whiter means more socio-economic opportunity, and darkness is associated with an inability to achieve success.

Another aspect of race relations touted by racial democracy is the idea that in Brazil racial identities are allowed to be self-constructed (Telles 2004: 78-84). Although this is supposedly an advantage because individuals are not condemned to an identity bestowed on them by society, one can argue this sometimes reinforces racial hierarchies because, in granting the privilege of aspiration, self-identification implies that blackness is a burden that Brazilians are lucky enough to be allowed to shed. There is a marked

reluctance among dark-skinned individuals to think of themselves as black, when they perceive the more ambiguous middling identities (*mulatto*, *pardo*, *moreno*, etc...) as markers of better social standing.<sup>2</sup>

In feigning fluid racial boundaries and celebrating the negotiability of identity, the racial democracy narrative has significantly impaired mobilization efforts to rally a clearly defined black identity. Returning to Wilson's Persistence of Race theory, the reluctance of non-whites to self-identify as black—because of the stigmas associated and the “privilege” of choosing not to—represents a major challenge for activists interested in enacting change through political pressure. Despite the ease with which scholars and

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<sup>2</sup> The meaning of different racial terms and their role in constructing and reinforcing racial hierarchies is a topic that has drawn much attention from scholars. This complexity of these meanings affects the precision with which scholars can employ racial terminology in English. The Portuguese term *preto* is understood as a skin color, while *negro* is “intended for persons of ‘discernable’ African origin” (Sansone 1995: 72). Racial discourse has historically contributed to the sense that blackness as a color (*preto*) is an integral and valuable part of the Brazilian identity, while blackness in the African sense (*negro*) is an indication of inferiority and failure to embody Brazilian identity. Activists have recently attempted to reframe the connotation of *negro* to represent ethnic affirmation and pride. Thus members of this *negro* movement have made the distinction between common black (*preto*), and the Africanized black, (*negro*) (Barcelos 1999:163). This work uses the term “black” to refer to those common blacks who might potentially identify with *negro* category as a part of the mobilization process, and uses the term “Afro-Brazilian” to describe those people who already do ascribe to an Africanized consciousness. “Afro-Brazilian” is also used elsewhere to describe the cultural practices that are informed by an Africanized identity.

At other times it is more useful to speak in terms of “whites” and “nonwhites.” In spite of the fact that Brazilian discourse discourages conceptions of a bi-racial social divide, Telles (2003) provides data showing that in terms of racial exclusion, mixed-race *morenos* and *pretos/negros* are disadvantaged to a very similar degree. Sheriff (2001) argues that many people are keenly aware that white/nonwhite is the most operative racial distinction, although they employ and avoid this logic at different times in a strategic manner. When this work describes the Brazilian “black movement,” it speaks of the effort to help common blacks (*pretos*) and dark-skinned *morenos* to recognize their identity part as the collective non-white population. Affirmation of Africanized cultural identity has sometimes been used to support this effort, but has at other times it has been regarded as an obstacle—for various reasons described below. This essay uses the term “Afro-Brazilian” to indicate situations where Africanized cultural identity is a component in the mobilization of nonwhites.

It is also important to note that in Brazil there are significant other nonwhite populations, including people of Asian or Amerindian descent, which are not generally included in the conceptualizations of nonwhite presented in situations here.

activists have identified the existence of racial inequality and social exclusion,<sup>3</sup> establishing coordinated political action against it has proven more difficult. Efforts have historically been plagued by a lack of broad-based constituencies, as racial stigmas have produced reluctance on the part of non-white Brazilians to acknowledge their blackness, let alone frame political meanings in relation to it. Because of this, first major goal in generating a meaningful resistance to racial marginalization and inequality has been the attempt to mobilize a black consciousness that can exert pressure on the government to introduce real structural change to socio-economic racial hierarchies. This consciousness-raising effort has taken on two often competing forms and much debate has taken place over the effectiveness of each mobilization strategy.

### **THE POLITICAL ACTION VS. CULTURALIST DEBATE**

Though it seems unreasonably essentialist to divide the forms of Afro-Brazilian mobilization efforts into two camps with distinct boundaries and little cooperation, scholarly debate and the discussion emanating from the two camps have historically conceptualized such a dichotomy. Those organizations that define themselves as political tend to focus on human and civil rights, legislation, and electoral politics, while culturalist organizations concentrate on the redefinition and valorization of Afro-

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<sup>3</sup> Nearly every summary indicator of social conditions shows evidence of inequality between whites and nonwhites. More importantly, scholars are able to demonstrate that underlying these inequalities is a system of racial discrimination that relies widely on shared rules about the appropriate place for members of each racial category. In particular, there is overwhelming evidence of a glass ceiling that disproportionately excludes nonwhites from mobility into the middle class. Racial discrimination is reinforced, naturalized, and legitimated through such channels as humor, popular sayings, television, and advertising. Racist culture is acted out through direct discrimination in education and employment, as well as the exclusion of nonwhites from the important social networks in Brazilian society. Furthermore, studies indicate that the state is complicit in perpetuating racial discrimination by insisting on anti-poverty policies that do not acknowledge the impact of exclusion or the mechanisms that disqualify or restrain the aspiring nonwhites from achieving social mobility (Telles, 2004: 140-172).

Brazilian culture and identity. Long-standing accusatory critiques have continued to fuel the perceived divide: the culturalist groups are accused of “folklorizing” and reifying culture, while the political organizations are charged with “ineffectual elitism and a failure to speak to the masses in their own language” (Sheriff 2001: 191). Political activists such as Thereza Santos of the Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU) understand much of Afro-Brazilian culture as compartmentalized and set apart from everyday life and the meaningful discussions of socio-economic hierarchies. They claim that the dominant classes see it in their interest to maintain cultural inclusion as a misleading distraction (Santos 1999: 24). On the other hand, black movement political discourse is understood by culturalists to create a discursive disjuncture because of its fundamental foreignness and inattention to local realities. Lacking familiarity with the debate, the untrained observer might suggest that if the two camps would simply cooperate, each could help mediate the other’s deficiencies. However, historically such cooperation has not come to pass, and intellectuals tend to privilege one method entirely over the other.

Hanchard’s *Orpheus and Power* (1994) is a particularly persuasive work that rejects the integration of culturalism into the black political project. In fact, Hanchard blames culturalism as one of two “basic impediments to further seepage of the black movement into the institutions, discourse, and political practice of civil society” (p. 159).<sup>4</sup> He criticizes culturalism for its Diasporic outlook, which forgoes participation in the national public debate and pressure on formal politics and institutions. He also criticizes its historical outlook, which privileges attention on topics that are not easily translated into specific goals for solving the ills of contemporary Brazilian society (*Ibid.*, 160-164). The assertion that culturalism does not challenge racial hegemony because it does not

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<sup>4</sup> The other basic impediment is resource and institutional deprivation, which, paradoxically, forces the activists to rely on resources generated by the culturalists and their institutions in order to operate.

establish institutional progress that can combat the maintenance of dominant ideologies leads to the conclusion that dominant groups have historically allowed culturalism to operate as a benign endeavor, with its veneer of resistance cutting mobilization efforts short of seeking real structural change.

In addition to its burden as a costly misallocation of resources, intellectuals and activists are concerned that culture serves as a means for the dominant group in Brazilian society to further exploit and subordinate the marginalized Afro-Brazilian population. Part of the apparent saliency of the racial democracy ideology has been that the adoption of some Afro-Brazilian symbols as part of the national culture hides racial exclusion and misleads blacks about the extent of their integration into society. Cultural organizations have also been accused of forgoing their political potential when they throw their support behind white politicians in exchange for promises of preferential treatment and monetary support. An often-cited example that is of this is the *afoxê* group Filhos de Gandhi, which received a new building to house its organization in exchange for advocating political support of a candidate who seemed to represent an obstacle to the overall political project of Afro-Brazilian mobilization (Dunn 1992: 13). By effectively subsidizing culture in this way, dominant groups have been able to restrict cultural groups from pursuing projects that might threaten the racial hierarchy in any meaningful way. Consistent with this position, the MNU confirmed in its plan of action from the Ninth National Congress in 1990 that one of its primary responsibilities must be the systematic resistance to the commercialization, folklorization, and distortion of Afro-Brazilian culture (Covin 1996: 48). That the MNU sees part of its responsibility as corralling or protecting the vulnerabilities of culturalist organizations demonstrates the sorts of burdens these organizations are understood to place on the resources and attention of political activists.



However, what activists and intellectuals see as the most tragic shortcoming of Afro-Brazilian culturalism, especially in Salvador da Bahia, where community organizations are so strong, is the apparent willingness to settle for a raised level of consciousness and an emphasis on the valorization of culture, without applying these triumphs to address the structural dilemmas that keep Afro-Brazilians excluded and subordinate. This apparent shortsightedness of culturalist goals is frequently visible in the language culturalist leaders use to describe the progress they are striving for. The following notion was expressed by Neguinho do Samba, a leader of Olodum, one of Bahia's preeminent Afro-Brazilian culturalist groups:

Drums acquire in this context an unsuspected status, through the expansion of their use and through the valorization of the player, since from a *batuqueiro* he is transformed into a percussionist— and this is not just a matter of semantics. There is no doubt that with the rise of *blocos afro* and of Olodum in particular— which, through the use of Pan-Africanist colors, has made each drum a banner of negritude —was instrumental in acquiring not only affection for but also pride in handling an instrument which has become an Afro-Brazilian symbol, which reveals and reaffirms a rhythmic tradition. (Guerreiro 1999:133)

Indeed Olodum is correct in celebrating the burgeoning dignity with which Afro-Brazilians approach the profession of drumming, but this analysis also falls disappointingly short of considering why it is that the position of dignified drummer represents perhaps the highest position many poor Afro-Brazilians might ever hope to achieve. It is the failure to locate cultural struggles and victories within a broader struggle against oppressive and exclusionary political and economic structures and the underlying racial hierarchy that so often damns the culturalist project in the eyes of many activists and intellectuals.

## THE CASE FOR CULTURALISM

There is a growing contingent of scholars who would claim that in spite of the notable large-scale shortcomings of culturalist organizations, (which these groups have recently made strides toward addressing) the directly attainable gains of self-esteem and dignity associated with consciousness-raising are indeed part of the appropriate direction for mobilization. Of these scholars, Howard Winant makes a particularly convincing argument, when he writes,

The battle for racial justice is fought not only in the open political arena of state and social movements, not only in the struggle for adequate cultural representation, signification, and the consciousness of difference; it is also fought on the interior terrain of the individual –his/her intrapsychic world and immediate relationships. (Caldwell 2007: 107)

The value of psychological well-being of the individuals who are to be mobilized should not be understated, for it affects the ways in which they will be able to interpret and express the call to action and new modes of agency that mobilization generates.

Taylor (1994) provides some key theoretical insights about the psychological terrain individuals must negotiate in multicultural societies. In stigmatizing blackness and granting the opportunity to strive for a whiter existence, Brazilian racial discourse simultaneously thrusts the calamities of *nonrecognition* and *misrecognition* on non-white Brazilians. Nonrecognition occurs in the sense that non-white Brazilians are discouraged from realizing their blackness, while misrecognition occurs when it is implied that striving toward whiteness is imposed as core feature of the non-white identity. The result, according to Taylor, is “imprisonment in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” to the point that “even when some objective obstacles to their advancement fall away,

they may be incapable of taking advantage of the new opportunities, because they have internalized a picture of their own inferiority” (p. 25). Resolving to purge non-whites of the imposed destructive identities, the “most potent instruments of their own oppression” (p. 26), continues to be an important goal that cultural valorization efforts take very seriously.

Sheriff (2001) provides a discussion of silence and the psychology of oppression that confirms the importance of creating a positive image of the self. She explains that the widespread silence that surrounds the issue of racism is not evidence of subscription to the idea that within racial democracy racism does not exist. Rather, silence illustrates the fact that “in narrating such an experience [of racism] one almost inevitably casts oneself as defenseless and dependent” (p. 72). Thus, non-whites may develop an aversion to discussion and action decrying the racist structure of Brazilian society, as when her informant Guilherme insists, “it doesn’t do to keep talking about it, it doesn’t resolve anything, it doesn’t change things” (p. 69). These insights about the psychology of oppression suggest that political militants who force Afro-Brazilians to acknowledge their marginality and subordination, even as a means of remedying it, will never gain the widespread participation that they seek. Culturalist groups, on the other hand, attempt to reinforce pride and solidarity among Afro-Brazilians, which allows them to approach discussions of racism without the damaging effects of the psychology of oppression.

Caldwell (2007) describes the opinions of several informants who illustrate the importance of having a positive self-image to underlie any approach to mobilization. Regina is a woman who consciously identifies as black, and who plans to encourage a

sense of blackness in her daughter despite the enormous baggage of racism. This is because “in terms of being a person, individually, I think that she will have fewer problems if she knows that she is *negra*” (p. 115). The sentiment reflects the enormous amount of psychological turmoil that Afro-Brazilians encounter when they attempt to ascribe to a whiter, more Brazilian (according to the dominant discourse) identity which is not their own. Adriana, another self-identified *negra*, recounts how her upbringing in a racist society made her racist against her own self (p. 122). The recognition of the self as a valuable and beautiful unit of the family, community, or nation is not an easy process in the midst of hegemonic discourse that perpetuates a dissociated self<sup>5</sup> for so many non-whites. Yet, this type of recognition is one that culturalist organizations are particularly well suited to support through their valorization of the Afro-Brazilian identity.

## **BEYOND THE DEBATE**

Underlying the debate over the deleterious or affirmative effects of culturalism on the consciousness-raising project is a fundamental disagreement over the level of analysis with which one ought to measure change in racial dynamics. Opponents of culturalism point to a lack of collective action by the black population at broad state or national levels as a measure of failure to achieve significant progress toward a consciousness that combats racial inequality. Meanwhile, supporters consider the individual consciousness as the most appropriate unit to measure the work of culturalist projects, a sort of one-mind-at-a-time strategy that is not strikingly visible at the macro level but nonetheless

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<sup>5</sup> Fanon argued that the major weapon of colonizers, and subsequently dominant domestic groups, was the entrenchment of their hegemony through the inculcation an image of inferiority in the subjugated, and the creation and maintenance of a dissociated self. In order to find meaning in life and value their existence, the subjugated must first purge themselves of these depreciating self-images (Fanon 1963).

important. I argue that both of these positions impose an inappropriate scale of measurement to evaluate the effectiveness of cultural groups. It is important that nearly every culturalist organization functions primarily as a *community* group, and while there is a tendency among scholars to transpose the meaning of community as “the black community” at a macro-level, cultural organizations are in fact more generally oriented toward their own local residential neighborhoods. While their discourse is one of Pan-Africanism and a broad-based national Afro-Brazilian identity, their actual daily activities, their participants, and their concrete consciousness and valorization goals are targeted at the specific neighborhood communities in which they operate. Thus, it seems appropriate to look more carefully at these organizations with an emphasis on their community-level function, and to evaluate their presence and effectiveness in combating inequality at that level.

## Chapter 2. Education as a Racial Site

Education is important to the discussion of racial inequality and social exclusion because it functions to reinforce these processes and structures in two ways. First, education has historically played a central role in reifying the stigma of blackness by perpetuating the hegemonic narrative of racial democracy. Second, the racialized nature of schools and classrooms can preclude non-white students from equally benefiting from education. That is, the subjectivities formed in classrooms generate differential racial access to schooling, even among students in the same classroom with the same aptitude. Before exploring how community organizations have sought to address these processes this chapter will elaborate on their significance.

The history of the Brazilian school system is intimately tied to the aspirations of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century elites to overcome Brazilian degeneracy through a whitening of the national population. Freyre's *Masters and Slaves* (1933) invigorated these aspirations because it suggested that miscegenation could be regarded as an asset, as the Brazilian race already had the seeds of whiteness, which could be brought out through behavioral and consciousness instruction –and the implicit shedding of blackness. The Brazilian race then, regardless of individuals' skin color, could be provisioned with the tools of whiteness through education. During the 1930s, education reformers were positioned at the center of nationalist attention and channeled the associated resources to achieve

remarkable expansions of the school system and deep institutional reforms.<sup>6</sup> Because the Brazilian race could be taught to embody whiteness, this education expansion and reform

made the school system into an engine that in ways both deliberate (furnishing poor and nonwhite Brazilians with the tools of whiteness) and unwitting (establishing barriers by reifying [the reformers'] narrow values) created racial hierarchy in the school system that mirrored their own vision of social worth (Dávila 2003: 10).

Through this process, Brazilian education became a vehicle for transforming discourse about race and nationhood into everyday practices wherein race was not necessarily evident, but always significant.

Education under Brazil's military dictatorship (1964-1985) underwent several significant transitions. The regime was fundamentally oriented toward achieving short-term economic objectives. This translated into broad investment in higher education, which was expected to make a quick contribution to development. Attempts to mend the quality gap between public and private schools and the focus on expanding secondary education were basically abandoned amounting to substantial "white flight" from public to private schools. At peak levels in the 1970s, private schools accounted for more than 46% of all students (Guimarães de Castro and Tiezzi). Meanwhile the central government relegated the oversight of primary and secondary education to the state and

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<sup>6</sup> Getulio Vargas' ascendancy in 1930 ushered in a new political era for Brazil, as Vargas sought to engineer an alliance among regional political bosses, nationalist intellectuals, and an emerging industrial class. Each of these groups was interested in adopting a new nationalism to replace the legacy of the decentralized political system that had been controlled by regional oligarchies since the fall of the monarchy in 1889. Regional bosses, because they needed ties to the central government to bolster the power they had wrestled away from the oligarchies; intellectuals, because their obsession with degeneracy and whitening demanded consolidation and the institutionalization of a Brazilian race; and industrialists, who needed nationally coordinated infrastructural development to foster economic development and modernity. The intellectuals were charged with designing and achieving this new nationalism, hence their

municipalities, further underscoring education as a low priority (MacLachlan 2003: 148-149).

What did not change about Brazilian education was the understanding that it was an important arena for shaping and maintaining social order. Nationalism became a paramount priority to justify authoritarian rule, and the racial democracy narrative suited nationalist claims well by functioning as a basis for other narrations of a national coming-together. The wedding of racial harmony and nationalism meant that any critique of racial inequality or oppression was read as “social agitation” and met with swift and hostile repression. The 1967 and 1969 constitutions prohibited racial distinction and classifications. The rationale was that if there were no terms with which to critique racial ordering, there would not be any critiquing (Htun 2004: 65). The aggressive insistence on racial harmony resulted in an end to the race-based political movements (the Frente Negra Brasileira was criminalized), a fifteen-year hiatus in Brazilian race research, and the cementation of Vargas-era racial pedagogy in schools that has proven difficult to undo (Fico 1997). The legacy of linking racial harmony with nationalism has also meant that racial mobilization and political efforts can still be misconstrued as unpatriotic and anti-Brazilian, undermining their credibility and distorting their actual goals.

Contemporary Brazilian education experienced a tremendous expansion during the mid-1990s in attempt to address the perceptibly poor quality of the public school system. In 1996 Brazil enacted far-reaching reforms including increased teacher pay, new

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unprecedented insertion into decision-making processes, especially in education (MacLachlan 2003: chap. 3).



standards for teachers, and mandatory minimum levels of education spending per student (Arrends-Kuenning and Duryea 2006: 268). The government also broadened Bolsa Escola, a conditional cash transfer program designed to incentivize school attendance among the poor. These actions have largely succeeded in expanding educational access, but the results on the quality of Brazilian education remain ambiguous, because the extent to which these reforms have expanded positive learning environments to previously excluded groups is unclear.

If, like Bourdieu, we regard schools as sites of symbolic violence, where dominant powers impose meanings by socializing subordinate groups into a value system that justifies their subordination, then the school setting remains a hostile and foreign environment for students from marginalized groups (Sandovnik 2007:11). The fact that racial hierarchies continue to be codified in curricula and classroom practices renders minority students less able to take advantage of the increased inputs than students who are not forced to undergo the alteration of meanings and values that constructs certain identities as subordinate or inferior.<sup>7</sup>

Scholars point to various elements of contemporary Brazilian education that reinforce racial democracy and stigmatize blackness. In anticipation of the enactment of

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<sup>7</sup> Lloyd, Mensch, and Clark (2000) found that the literature on education in the developing world that links certain inputs to learning usually fails to take into account the fact that some populations are excluded from fully realizing the benefits of these inputs. There are indeed other inputs that might be prerequisites to a supporting learning environment, especially for disadvantaged racial or gender groups. The authors call for an expanded framework of quality education that considers the educational experience paramount, especially the levels of safety, comfort, and relevance that students and their families subjectively feel about school (p. 118). Au and Mason (1983) also offers a similar analysis of how the discontinuity between learners' cultural background and the content of the curriculum is a chief factor that hinders learning. Conflict theorists and code theorists would add that having to undergo ideological indoctrination and the

national curriculum parameters that include “cultural pluralism”<sup>8</sup> and discusses the black movement, the history of discrimination, and ways forward to a more free and fair society, scholars insisted that these reforms would not actually challenge the racial democracy narrative (Frenandes de Souza 2001:55). Local experience with these curricular elements in Bahia had already shown that while the new parameters tend to reference situations where racial discrimination has been successfully combated, they fail to characterize the struggle for racial justice as one that is active and ongoing.

Emphasizing a victory such as the provisions from the 1988 Federal Constitution that establish racism as a criminal offense (Article 5, Paragraph XLII) ignores the difficulty victims have in trying to ensure prosecution and conviction of discriminatory acts.

Similarly, celebrating the victorious push to include more Afro-Brazilian folklore in the curriculum disregards the ongoing effort to develop an Afro-Brazilian identity that is constructed around more than just passive folklore. (*Ibid.*, 56). In emphasizing the resolutions rather than the conflicts that characterize Brazilian racial pluralism, these curricular parameters obscure the obstacles to racial inclusion and equality. They also discourage participation in the black consciousness movement by portraying racial discrimination as a problem that is solving itself. Worse, they contribute to the sentiment that, in the absence of structural barriers, blackness continues to correlate with marginalization and subordinate status, furthering the stigma of blackness and the reluctance to self-identify as such.

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reordering of meanings represents another obstacle to the maximal utilization of the standard inputs. This problem is discussed further in the case study that follows.

In the 1970s, Paulo Freire considered the nature of Brazilian education system based on his experiences studying education in the Brazilian Northeast during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. He asserted that there was no such thing as a neutral education process, and that in failing to teach people to think critically about their position in the environment around them, education functions as an instrument used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity (1970: 16). Thus, even for scholars who contend that contemporary Brazilian educators have made strides to limit racial discrimination in classrooms, the passive distancing from explicit racial ideologies neither denies them nor provides students with the tools to critically approach and deconstruct them (Htun 2004; Vargas, 2004).

Additionally it is important to understand that while discrimination and ideology in the classroom have perhaps been reduced, the formation of racialized subjectivities and the stigmatization of blackness in schools certainly continues. Developmental psychology holds that the acquisition of knowledge can only be explained in terms of its physical and social context, and that we must think in terms of “situated cognition” (Hargreaves, Marshall and North 2003). Blacking (1988) notes,

structural links between people’s organization of feelings and their construction of social reality enable them to associate, by ‘resonance,’ qualitatively and functionally different but structurally similar experiences (p. 98).

For Afro-Brazilian students then, the educational experience may be significantly altered by the situations in which their blackness is framed during classroom processes, in spite

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<sup>8</sup> Federal Law n. 10639 of 2003.

of improved material inputs that are expected to raise school quality. The valorization effort of the black consciousness movement regards these experiential processes as the true measure of access to quality education.

Activists are especially critical of the new “politically correct” history, which details the brutality of slavery and the horrendous treatment blacks have historically been subjected to, because it denies Afro-Brazilian historical agency and portrays the black identity as one that is passive and intrinsically linked to victimization (Nascimento 2006:230).<sup>9</sup> Academics tend to focus more on how racial prejudices are imbued in classroom and pedagogical language (Da Silva 2008), or unconscious complicity in racialized social relationships between students and teachers, among students, and between parents, teachers, and students (Cavalleiro 2000). All of these factors combine to establish a stigmatization of blackness and has a destructive effect on nonwhite students’ self-esteem.

In addition to the fact that educational content contributes to racial subjectivities, it is important that we regard the educational environment as one that cements racial subjectivities and translates them into real racialized differentiation. Ferguson explains how racial subjectivities become determinants of educational outcomes, noting that

as students immerse themselves in the routines of schooling, perceptions and expectations both reflect and determine the goals that they set for achievement; the strategies they use to pursue the goals; the skills, energy, and other resources they use to implement the strategies; and the rewards they expect from making the effort (1998: 274).

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<sup>9</sup> See above for psychology of oppression and the reluctance to self-identify. Also, attempts to provide alternative histories of black leadership and action as part of the cultural valorization are detailed in the case study below.

Reductions in student aspirations contribute to the racialized nature of classroom environments, and teachers may become discouraged by the propensity of blacks' disengagement with education. Ferguson also notes that if teachers perceive black children to have less potential, they are likely to search with less conviction than they should for ways to help these children improve (p. 312).<sup>10</sup> This racialized differentiation in teacher expectations and the resultant reduction in aspirations means that the burden of cultivating and maintaining motivation to succeed in school are inadvertently transferred to the student.

This shift in burdens from teachers to students occurs in conjunction with a pattern that has emerged from studies of education in the developing world. Heyneman and Loxley (1983) found that across 29 countries, material inputs had a far greater bearing on educational outcomes than did family and social background characteristics. This appeared to contradict an earlier finding by Coleman et al in 1966 that, in the United States, family and social background were more important factors. While the Heyneman and Loxley findings may have invigorated confidence in the impact of education spending and inspired or supported the contemporary Brazilian educational expansion, subsequent studies have suggested that there is a limit to how far material inputs can improve educational outcomes universally before they begin to accentuate and reproduce differences in family and social background characteristics. (Baker and LeTendre , 2005: Chapt. 3; Buchmann and Hannum, 2001). Thus, one can infer that as Brazilian education

continues to “improve” without appropriate attention to remedying the racial differentiation in classrooms, race will actually play an increasingly greater role in educational outcomes, as will family and social background characteristics.

The fact that black students are more likely to come from lower socio-economic status (SES) households means that they are likely to have fewer resources to help them stay motivated to excel, or to keep up when they begin to fall behind (Buchmann 2002: 170). De la Rocha (2001) notes that under the rubric neo-liberalism, cyclical and informal employment can erode social networks, leaving individual families with fewer resources to augment their parenting capacities. Lacking access to broader sources of academic and social aspirations, students from such backgrounds “are more likely to reinforce the low expectations that society assigns to low-income youths” (Carnoy 2007: 50).<sup>11</sup>

A related issue that affects black students’ capacity to stay motivated and attain high rates of achievement is that their tendency to come from low SES families may result in pressure to help support their families financially. Rational Choice model studies show that low SES can negatively affect both short-term and long-term decisions that families make about the value of educational effort. The tendency to leave school to pursue opportunities in the labor market affects enrolment rates, but achievement rates

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<sup>10</sup> Rist (1977) also demonstrated how teacher expectations of students based on labeled categories such as race affect whole groups of students’ perceptions of themselves and their achievement.

<sup>11</sup> The erosion of social networks has important ramifications for the racial mobilization effort beyond the strain on educational motivations. Community networks are greatly important in combating social exclusion because they promote collective action, peaceful politics, and the ability to help shape institutions (Wood 2005: 305). Also, Roberts suggests that social capital reduces the transaction costs and facilitates people working together, enabling them to collectively pressure for their greater inclusion (2002: 117). Thus, cultural organizations’ efforts to reestablish community bounds that have been strained by neoliberal

are also jeopardized when attitudes about the meaning of school performance in relation to future employment prospects affect the vigor with which families encourage students to meet academic challenges (Buchman 2000). In other words, if returns to education are not expected to increase or decrease dramatically with educational achievement, one of the major impetuses to try in school is undermined.

On top of their low SES affecting perceived rates of return to education, pessimism about Afro-Brazilian exclusion in the job market can mean that poor blacks are doubly affected by returns-to-education logic. The concurrent processes of rapid educational expansion and neo-liberal restructuring have resulted in an overqualified workforce (De la Rocha 2001).<sup>12</sup> Therefore, low SES families may worry that hiring decisions among the surplus labor force will revert to reliance on old social network patterns, and concerns about racial discrimination abound when marginalized groups consider whether educational investment in education will pay off. Telles provides data confirming that even when controlling for human capital, class, region, and a “money – whitening” effect on self-identification, it is “strikingly clear” that race is an important determinant of occupational outcomes and labor market discrimination (2004:145). Several studies on education and minority groups indicate that these groups may develop unfavorable attitudes toward education if they do not perceive or observe tangible returns

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restructuring can be expected to have a broad beneficial impact beyond the realm of educational aspirations among community youth.

<sup>12</sup>According to Shavit and Blossfeld (1993), expanding access to education usually facilitates the persistence of inequality of opportunity. Without accompanied mobility or the means to think critically about their marginalization, newly included groups in the expansion project remain merely a smarter workforce that dominant groups can exploit to develop a more competitive position in the global industrial economy (p. 22).

to education among members of their own communities (Buchmann 2000; Hannum 2002:111). Thus, in order to provide comparable levels of encouragement and support for their students' education, low SES black families "need at the same time to make heavier sacrifices and have relatively stronger ambitions than families which are better off" (Gambetta 1987: 80).

The fact that the burden of education motivation falls upon these families with so many other concerns means that alternative sources of motivational support have the potential to drastically improve the sharply differentiated educational outcomes between Afro-Brazilians and other groups. Community social capital networks offer that alternative, helping families keep their students motivated by valorizing their identity and combating the negative subjectivities that hinder student motivation in the first place.

Thus, while education is a site where so much racial inequality is produced and reproduced, it is also a realm in which community cultural organizations feel they can mediate and redress racial differences. They accomplish this in two key ways. The first is their attempt to provide community youth with supplemental and alternative educational content, which is designed to valorize blackness, rather than stigmatize it. This valorization was initially motivated by the effort to counter the reluctance to self-identify as Afro-Brazilian that is propagated by schools. Yet valorization is now also expected to help students in their educational ambitions and motivations, as their subjectivities as Afro-Brazilians become less of a handicap. Secondly, most community organizations provide some sort of social capital that helps mitigate the structural factors that might disadvantage low SES black students. The range of services is diverse and includes



obvious programs such as tutoring, study resources, and study space and time, but also less tangible provisions such as educated adult role models, and educationally inclined peer-groups. I specifically examine and evaluate the effectiveness of different methods of valorizing blackness and supporting community education in the case study that follows, looking at the ideology and methods of community cultural organizations in Salvador da Bahia.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that unlike some of the other heavily politicized issues in Brazilian education (affirmative action, redressing regional disparities in education funding, and conditional cash transfers, to name a few), community organizations tend to focus on valorization as an issue that can be addressed locally and incrementally. Taylor argues that the dominant culture often has little sense of what constitutes the values and priorities of other cultures, and this furthers the sense that excluded groups ought to present their contributions according to their own understanding of worth (1994: 67). Thus, communities are naturally better attuned to the best practices to help valorize their own identity. They can best conduct this valorization as a local project because it is done on behalf of local people. In other words, community members are much more interested in helping students from their own community respect and be respected for their identity, and there is little concern with whether or not similar respect is generated further afield in other cities and regions which do not impact the subjective experiences of local youth. Thus there is no need to engage higher levels of authority or seek wider dissemination, whereby the project might encounter the hegemonic powers that appear unwilling to adopt what might be considered controversial and radical challenges to the prevailing order. Indeed, valorization is best conducted as a local project by communities that have the flexibility to make the changes that they decide are most pertinent, and to do so without becoming embroiled in broader political debates.

### **Chapter 3. The Supplemental/Alternative Dilemma**

The theoretical basis of this case study concerns the role of community-generated educational initiatives and their relationship with the state-generated education system. According to Kymlicka, to avoid perpetual marginalization in multicultural societies, minorities must either integrate into the majority culture, or seek the sorts of rights and powers of self-government needed to maintain their own societal culture (1997: 29). For Bahia's cultural groups, the decision to either foster integration into mainstream Brazilian education by supplementing community members' educational experiences, or to exist as stand-alone alternatives to a (perceived) racist and unredeemable formal education system, has formed the basis of the discourse and ideologies behind educational initiatives. It is therefore crucial to understand the organizations' various positions at various points in time regarding their attitudes about functioning as supplemental or alternative sites—sometimes formulated with regard to the broader mobilization project rather than education specifically— if we are to truly understand their goals and begin to critically evaluate their achievement of these goals

The alternative/supplemental dilemma might be phrased in other ways and viewed in accord with the previous chapter. Referencing education literature, we can comprehend this theoretical dilemma as conflict among competing definitions of “quality education.” Specifically, there are different conceptions over whether quality education is evaluated based on its capacity to facilitate critical consciousness and ideological formation (a goal

associated with the alternative position), or whether quality education ought to foster equal opportunity for fuller participation in socio-economic networks (associated with the supplemental position). Also at stake is the question of whether the goal is to address the ideological substance of education or to ensure equal access to education.<sup>14</sup> The dichotomy between alternative and supplemental orientations can also be understood in terms of a dispute between advocacy and service delivery models of civic assistance, and whether the best way to help people is to work toward changing the nature of the society that excludes them, or to furnish them with the tools to excel in the society as it exists. This chapter introduces the hypothesis that these two orientations were altered significantly as democratization reshaped the relationship between state and civil society. Although Olodum embraced the supplemental model in all its manifestations, Ilê Aiyê eventually recognized that they could adopt a position that was supplemental institutionally but and still maintain their alternative ideology and goals.

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON RACIAL THEORY**

The historical setting that gave rise to this alternative/supplemental dilemma within the Afro-Brazilian culturalist movement resembles the cultural context in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s. Attempts to construct a black cultural identity and determine how it would interact with Brazilian hegemony mirror the creation and expression of the new black aesthetic during the Harlem Renaissance. At that time, the question was posed whether black artistic expression could exist within the dominant

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<sup>14</sup> “Access” is used here in a manner similar to Chapter 2, keeping in mind that students’ subjectivities drastically condition their educational experience, and that factors like self-esteem, cultural capital, and sense of belonging in the classroom may indeed preclude some students from experiencing education as fully as others.

paradigm and function in a supplemental role, as W.E.B. Dubois envisioned in his “Talented Tenth” model, or whether, as Langston Hughes feared, hegemonic power structures would co-opt and corrupt any supplemental expression. The latter demanded the creation of a distinct alternative that would only have meaning for the black sensibility and thus remain firmly under the control of black artists.

Dubois proposed that nurturing the most talented blacks would allow them to rise in social status and then work for all blacks from within the hegemonic power structure. He and Alain Locke asserted that the elevation of black music to the level of prestige of white concert music would legitimize the intellectual merits of blues and African American artistic capabilities. More importantly, “racial uplift theory” held that following dominant American cultural aesthetics’ embrace, there would be a reevaluation of the merits of the African-American people. The “Afro-American Symphony” by William Grant Still, and Scott Joplin’s “Treemonisha” opera are examples of how Locke expected racial uplift to work. These works each introduce black artistic sensibility to pre-existing symbols of refinement. If blacks could prove capable of writing great symphonies and operas, the theory held, respect for their cultural capacities would eventually elevate the status of the black identity in American society (Locke 1936).

Hughes, on the other hand expressed concern that white hegemonic power would never allow the Talented Tenth to achieve racial uplift. He referred to white culture’s control over artistic values as a “racial mountain,” which served as a major obstacle and restraint on the directions in which African-American culture could expand. The fact that young artists tended to “desire to be as little Negro and as much American as possible” suggested that part of the racial mountain was the idea that to be American one must distance himself from Negro characteristics. This was, in a way, similar to the Brazilian problem of the Mulatto Escape Hatch and the reluctance to self-identify as black. Hughes

observed that the Talented Tenth method was failing because the racial mountain tended to prevent the upwardly mobile blacks from remembering the value of their African-American heritage. As they became more affluent, the pressures to ascribe to the hegemonic value system and aesthetics meant that they were “never taught to see that beauty, or taught to be ashamed of it when it is not according to Caucasian patterns” (Hughes 1926: 55). The other problem posed by the racial mountain was that when affluent blacks forsook African American culture, they further thrust the white aesthetic upon the black community. It was as if, instead of channeling a black aesthetic into white America as Dubois envisioned, the racial mountain meant that upwardly mobile blacks might actually be responsible for further imposing whiteness on African-American culture. Thus, as long as the white aesthetic remained the standard for evaluation, black music would only be accepted when it conformed, and it would always lose its primary meaning during that conforming process. Thus, a distinctly alternative standard was required.

Concerns over misrecognition would eventually lead to a clearly alternativist stance asserted a generation later by the members of the Black Arts Movement. At the forefront of the movement, Amiri Baraka (1963) argued that it was imperative that black artists resist the temptation to change based on the demands of so-called expert critics. Whereas Dubois, Locke, and the camp calling for supplementation would have argued that ascribing to dominant aesthetics would benefit the black community because the prestige would elevate black arts to a more respected position and valorize black culture and identity, Baraka insisted that allowing whites to decide the merits and characteristics of black artistic expression would only reinforce a racial hierarchy wherein whites held the privileged position of defining and evaluating blacks. It is in this position of privilege

that Taylor identifies the abuses of misrecognition in order to keep minority groups subordinate (Taylor, 1994).

The most significant contribution of the Black Arts Movement, then, was its dismissal of integrationist poetics and the model of black expression as a supplemental component of existing art paradigms.<sup>15</sup> The iconic phrase of the movement, “poems are bullshit unless they have teeth,” called for aesthetics that were activist and could protect against hegemonic takeover. Black art was no longer expected to merge with white art (to become the legitimate, non-polarizing American art). Rather, it should “have teeth” in order to establish an oppositional alternative identity that would operate independently from the cultural arenas where misrecognition occurred. The notion of an actively oppositional alternative would be expanded by the Black Nationalism movement to include not just aesthetics and artistic identity, but all of black cultural and political identity. From Black Nationalism were born Black Power and the Black Panthers. Each of these movements recognized the potential of artistic and cultural expression as a means for blacks to achieve self-determination, and they were extremely influential on attempts to construct racial consciousness worldwide.

The creation of *Ilê Aiyê* occurred at the moment that Black Nationalism was embracing the idea of the radical alternative, and that ideology is apparent in its early language. *Ilê Aiyê*'s founder, Vovô, conceptualized several initial objectives, starting with the carving out of a space for blacks to exist on their own terms (Guerreiro 1999).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Integrationist Poetics is a concept best illustrated by Richard Wright's sentiment that America was progressing toward a state in which an artist would no longer be defined as a black artist or a white artist, but rather both would be appreciated equally, and that the art could exist without necessarily impacting or being impacted by racial discourse (Baker, 1984).

<sup>16</sup> The strict delineation of distinct racial boundary appeared necessary because of “the siege of some sectors of white society” which reacted with hostility to the *bloco*'s presence in carnival. Commitment to the ideology of a black alternative protected by exclusionary practices would later become a main point of contention among the movement's leadership.

The notion of re-Africanizing Carnival resembled emulation of the Harlem renaissance – establishing a more genuine presence and alternative consciousness. Their discourse echoed that of North American Black Nationalists, who had fully adopted a stance of alternative expression, in part to protect the cultural products of the Harlem Renaissance from being overtaken by America’s hegemonic narratives. Ideological foundations were also drawn from the Movimento Negro Unificado, which saw black cultural expression as particularly vulnerable in Brazil because of the way Brazilian historical narrative had co-opted all prior supplemental black identities.

Re-Africanization was regarded as a primary concern because of the way Afro-Brazilian practices had been historically co-opted and employed to instill the hegemonic narrative of cultural syncretism and racial harmony. The cultural nationalism enacted in the 1930s under president Getúlio Vargas formed the basis of much of the syncretic cultural practices that are used to corroborate racial democracy, and social cohesion and cohesiveness (Borges 1995; Nava and Lauerhass 2006; Williams 2001).

During his early leadership, Vargas demonstrated a keen understanding of the relationship between racial cultures and nationalism. Despite his roots in Brazil’s last rigidly Eurocentric generation, he recognized the mobilizing potential of a decidedly distinct national culture, and as his presidency became increasingly authoritarian during the 1930s, he mastered the art of cultural manipulation to shape and sustain political and economic ideologies that continue in Brazil to the present day. In other words, in embracing popular culture, especially Afro-Brazilian culture that had heretofore been considered destructive to Brazilian national identity, Vargas demonstrated an unprecedented acceptance of Afro-Brazilians. Syncretic symbols and practices were carefully constructed so that they obscured the extent to which Vargas’ economic and political policies were upholding and even strengthening the prevailing order. What

emerged by 1937 can be best summed up with the following brokerage: blacks received cultural acceptance and gave in return submission to the political and economic framework dominated by white ideologies.<sup>17</sup> Vargas vigorously pursued cultural projects that consecrated and legitimated Afro-Brazilian identity to capitalize on the nationalist and populist appeal.

The cooptation of festive aspects of the Afro-Brazilian culture in urban Rio de Janeiro is a telling example of how Vargas' cultural nationalism played out. In 1931, the government created the Department of Official Publicity to promote and exert control over cultural productions (Duarte 2000: 196).<sup>18</sup> In 1932 the government brought Rio's Carnival under official sponsorship, transforming it into a national festival. The Vargas regime attempted to bring Afro-Brazilian popular culture into the national spotlight through the commission of new sambas for middle class consumption. According to the design, when Afro-Brazilians saw their popular culture embraced by other sectors of society, the hegemonic vision of social solidarity would be realized. Cultural acceptance would stand in for, or imply, economic and political integration.

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<sup>17</sup> A substantial amount of work has been done to analyze how Afro-Brazilians were (and still are) simultaneously embraced culturally and yet retain their subordinate status in society. The following analysis by Eduardo Diatay B. de Menezes is particularly useful:

“There are three stages in the process of cultural domination in which hegemonic culture orients itself with regard to popular culture. At first there is a *rejection* of the elements that are seen as “offensive” or “disorderly”; then, the repressive apparatus of the state (such as the police) is used against them. In the second stage – *domestication* – the scientific apparatus of the dominant classes is used to separate the components of popular culture considered dangerous from those that are considered merely decorative, and exotic, or useful. This is a phase of symbolic domination, characterized by registration, conceptualization, categorization, interpretation, theorization, and the formation of models. In the third stage, that of recuperation, the simultaneous action of the ideological apparatus and the culture industry transforms the beneficial components into cultural expressions of the dominant classes which are codified in museums and expositions, in exotic elements to sell to tourists, and in ideological instruments for education and other functions (Oliven 1984:104).

<sup>18</sup> As an indication of the direction of this type of mobilization, this department would eventually become the Department of Propaganda and Cultural Dissemination in 1939.



During the 1930s government commissions helped develop the *samba-canção* repertory. Celebrated middle class composers such as Noel Rosa, Ari Barroso, and Dorival Caymini were contracted to create samba songs that emphasized melody and harmonic accompaniment, as opposed to the more rhythmic sambas of Carnival dance processions (Murphy 2006:16). The compositions of *samba-canção* were useful to the state because they spread popular culture to a wider audience (a result of the combination of their musical accessibility and their widespread dissemination through government-supported media channels). But they were also important because they divorced the music of samba from the controversial social commentary of the Carnival scene. *Samba-canção* songs typically used lyrics that glorified the beauty of a particular *mulata* or Brazilian beach. They are clear examples of how, in a hybrid popular art, the dominant white group can extract certain elements of the Afro-Brazilian culture and recast them in a less-threatening environment. This hegemonic cooptation is exactly the sort of threat to Afro-descendent culture that Hughes and Baraka feared. Michael Hanchard would later observe that within the Brazilian narrative, a distinct afro-identity could not exist without being subjected to misrecognition and manipulation (1994).

The fundamental orientation toward alternative rather than participatory identity would be challenged in 1979 when several members of the Ilê Aiyê leadership left to form the new organization, Olodum. The split reflects a clear ideological conflict over the way a burgeoning black identity would interact with the existing Brazilian identity. The question of supplemental or alternative orientation influenced the way each organization expanded from a carnival group to a multi-faceted community organization during the 1980s. Education was a domain that each group was determined to address, and the same ideological differences are apparent in the organizations' efforts to provide the community with education that was supplemental or alternative to existing educational

frameworks. Ilê Aiyê would remain committed to its position of alternative education provider throughout the 1980s and 1990s while Olodum, retained a basic commitment to its role a supplemental provider of education adopting the project of *cidadania* following significant political and economic changes to the region after 1988.

During the 1990s Ilê Aiyê began to articulate a new stance on community education as it made strides to expand its services as part of its Projeto Extensão Pedagógico. The nature of these projects indicates a shift toward a supplemental model of community education. The following chapters argue that this shift and much of the rest of the trajectories among Salvador's community groups has in fact had less to do with actual achievements in redressing racialized differentiation among learners, and much more to do with the quest to maintain institutional viability in the complex world of Bahian cultural politics. Thus Ilê Aiyê's adoption of a supplemental position has had more to do with their effort to emulate the institutional gains Olodum garners through its partnerships with the state rather than to emulate measured educational achievement. The fact that both organizations are increasingly oriented toward, and accountable to their institutional partners rather than the learners in their communities is an indication of the precarious circumstances community organizations face under neoliberalism.

## Chapter 4. Methods and Data

There are several challenges inherent in studying the ideology and output of community organizations, and these challenges call for a carefully constructed methodology. First among these is that unlike state-run programs, the local nature of community organizations generally allows them to evaluate their effectiveness and progress internally. Ilê Aiyê, for instance, often cites informal conversations with local mothers about perceived changes in students' behavior as indicators of success (Santana and Conceição 1995). Evaluation that is local, internal, and informal has proven adequate for the organizations themselves but is much more difficult for scholars to access than the evaluation mechanisms that typically inform formal studies. In some instances, funds-seeking has resulted in more formal data, but these figures must be regarded cautiously, because they are presented specifically to attract funding and are therefore unlikely to be unbiased (Edwards and Hume 1996). Analysis is further complicated because, as noted above, community groups exist to fulfill specific localized needs. An analysis must therefore be careful to consider the contextual setting of these programs if it is to grasp the importance and meaning of the results. The subjective experiences of racialized education are indeed best evaluated by the organizations themselves, given their intimate understanding of the subjects' contexts. However, iterations of the self-evaluations can be challenging to trace and interpret. It is because of these factors that this study consists primarily of analysis of output content by individual community organizations, in order to understand the purposes and goals behind their actions. Before elaborating on the details of the analysis procedure, it is worth explaining one further dimension of the methodology employed herein.

Though critiques of community organizations are numerous, production of materials by the organizations themselves that are self-critical is particularly lacking. The local nature has meant that leadership can address shortcomings through the same informal evaluations and discussions by which it measures its successes. These concerns however, are less likely to be publicized through the channels that produce other public content. At any given time, then, the available materials produced by the cultural organizations reflect the most positive iterations of the project, while shortcomings and ideological shifts are left unreported. The internal reworking of strategies and conduct is often entirely missed when looking at the external production. This study seeks to address this problem by tracing changes in organizational output over time. By tracking development of discourse and comparing organizations' perspectives at different points in time, it is possible to gain insight into the internal evaluations and ideological shifts that have gone unreported in the produced materials.<sup>19</sup>

Data includes materials published and distributed by two lineages of Afro-Brazilian community organizations, Ilê Aiyê and Olodum. These materials include mission statements and manifestos, publications by and interviews with leadership, and cultural artifacts including song lyrics, poems, and educational pamphlets and notebooks. Production of these materials has generally been designed to address overlapping groups ranging in scale from organization participants, neighborhoods, the Afro-Bahian

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<sup>19</sup> Similarly, accounts of past activities considered in retrospect are generally re-interpreted to conform to the contemporary ideological position when they are written. Thus when an organization writes, years later, "we founded this organization in order to accomplish..." we are likely to understand that event differently than if we are to look at what the organization was saying about its founding at the time. The inquirer must

community, the Afro-Brazilian community, the Afro-Diaspora community, and/or the worldwide community of victims of oppression. However, this analysis is restricted to those materials that deal with the role of the organizations in supporting community children in achieving better education.<sup>20</sup> Data is analyzed chronologically from 1974 to 2010, with special attention to significant moments when ideological shifts are apparent in the materials. Many of these shifts are marked by the establishment of new programs, which were introduced with clear iterations of organizational intent. This allows the observer to compare organizational philosophy over time and hypothesize about internal evaluations, discussions, and critiques that are unreported in the published content of these organizations.<sup>21</sup>

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therefore be aware of teleological self-histories and concentrate on discourse produced from content at the time.

<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that a focus on children's education was not a specific endeavor from the beginning, and thus early materials are analyzed in terms of what they illustrate about the formation of educational ideologies that were expressed later. Community education also does not always involve typical settings and thus much of the early educational material considered here involved informational content presented to the public in outreach campaigns. The use of public space as a classroom is especially important in Carnival, and the information presented there forms a major component of this study.

<sup>21</sup> The author acknowledges that the materials available to researchers should not be regarded as a complete or uninterrupted sequence of the organizations' educational output. However, the materials employed to investigate the pivotal moments of institutional and philosophical transitions that inform the author's argument are particularly comprehensive.

## Chapter 5. The Development of Alternative and Supplemental Orientations

### ILÊ AIYÊ: A SITE FOR ALTERNATIVE EXPRESSION, 1974-1979

The origins of Bahia's community cultural organizations can be traced to 1974, when Ilê Aiyê was founded as a Carnival *bloco*.<sup>22</sup> In developing an alternative role for blacks in Bahian carnival and the more general Bahian public sphere, Ilê Aiyê's founder Vovô, conceptualized several initial objectives, starting with the carving out of a space for blacks to exist on their own terms (Vovô 1975). The group was created specifically as an alternative to the folkloric *afoxês*, which had become the only processions available to Afro-Brazilians following the prohibition of the *blocos indio* in 1973.<sup>23</sup> Afoxês were religious processions associated with Candomblé temples that experienced growing toleration and celebration as symbols of Brazilian racial mixture during the 1950s and 1960s—a continuation of the promotion of syncretism begun under Vargas. As the public presence of afoxês came to dominate the landscape of Bahian Carnival, their image came to represent the primary means of consumption of Afro-Brazilian culture. Thus the themes and representation they chose to address had a significant impact in shaping discourse about what issues were important to the Afro-Brazilian community. However, their commitment to Candomblé and the spiritual meaning of their processions meant they refrained almost entirely from addressing contemporary political and social issues in

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<sup>22</sup> A *bloco* in Bahian Carnival is a group procession that incorporates music, dance and costume into a theme for the year, which it presents to the public. The procession remains the groups' most visible and participatory activity to this day, and the multiple artistic dimensions allow the organization to explore various aspects of Afro-Brazilian song, dance, costume, and other artistic ideas.

<sup>23</sup> Blocos indio paraded during the late 1960s and early 1970s. During that time, they were Afro-Brazilians' alternative to the religious afoxês and the racially or financially exclusive standard processions. They became an outlet for the sort of revelry and social inversion typically associated with pre-Lenten festivals, but their growth and increasingly chaotic and rowdy nature provoked a panic amongst Salvador's dominant and middle class, leading to their prohibition in 1973. For more on blocos indio, see Dunn 1992.

their processions. Under the rubric of racial democracy, their presence indicated the freedom and celebration of African identity in Brazil, though this was obviously a conditional freedom and celebration that was granted only while the *afoxês* did not challenge racial norms. The *afoxês* of the early 1970s can thus be regarded as the sort of supplemental Afro-Brazilian identity that was absorbed and controlled by the dominant Brazilian racial narrative.

The development of Ilê Aiyê was conceptualized as the prototype for a new category, the *bloco afro*, and more broadly, an alternative black identity. The song “Que Bloco é Esse?” which Ilê Aiyê performed during its first Carnival procession in 1975, illustrates how the group understood its role as a distinctly alternative manifestation of blackness:

What bloco is that?  
I want to know.  
It’s the black world,  
That we came to show you. (Camafeu 1974)<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, Ilê Aiyê’s leadership wanted to stress the newness of its approach. While the *bloco afro* would still look to Africa for its aesthetic inspiration, the pursuit of Afrocentric rather than syncretic and characteristically Brazilian modes of expression was completely at odds with the *afoxês* and dominant discourse of racial democracy. Ilê Aiyê’s approach to the African heritage was quite the opposite of any cultural precedents in that instead of supplementing the picture of a syncretic nation, they intended to contradict it.

Ilê Aiyê restricted its membership to the black population in order to construct what Vovô called an “ethnic specificity” (Guerreiro 1999: 109). Celebrating difference

was among the first steps in acknowledging that black identity need not be evaluated by its congruence with dominant notions of Brazilian identity. The lyrics of “Que Bloco é Esse?” continue:

Whitey if you only knew  
The worth of the black man  
You would take a bath in tar  
And become black too.

We are *crioulos doidos*<sup>25</sup>  
We are pretty hip  
We have *cabelo duro*<sup>26</sup>  
We are black Power.

Under the rubric of racial democracy, the only identity available was Brazilian. Being racialized and gendered identity, it consequently it construed Afro-Brazilians as inadequate and subordinate members of the identity. By making an alternative identity available, Ilê Aiyê made a place for those Afro-Brazilians who could never “pass for white,” no matter how hard they tried, thus valorizing them for their difference, rather than alienating them for it. They could be hip and black, unashamed of their appearance, and empowered by solidarity. Ilê Aiyê’s strategy also involved the positive affirmation of the African aesthetic features that had been cause for derision in white society. The re-signifying of condescending concepts about “cabelo duro” and “crioulos doidos” involved choosing to affirm a black identity that embraced these realities not as insults, but as simply facets of the self.

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<sup>24</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations of song lyrics are made by the author.

<sup>25</sup> Crioulos Doidos was a derogatory term for blacks but it is used here provocatively. The idea behind the inversion of meaning is that if one is proud to be black, then being called black is neither false nor an insult.



This was, of course, radical and provocative, and Ilê Aiyê's refusal to accept all but the darkest-skinned blacks was an attempt to enhance their shock value and presence. Indeed, the oppositional posturing had a profound impact on the public. The lead story of Salvador's newspaper *A Tarde* criticized Ilê Aiyê for making a mockery of Carnaval with their misguided attempt at choosing North American racism as their theme—obviously they could not have been talking about Brazil because Brazil was a country without a racial problem (12 Feb 1975). This blatant misrepresentation of the bloco is to be expected as typical misrepresentation of a counter-hegemonic narrative. However the tone of the article illustrates that Ilê Aiyê had indeed infuriated many onlookers (*Ibid.*).<sup>27</sup> Internally, provoking scathing criticism was regarded as a success, because Ilê Aiyê had made its presence known. Vovô insisted that any attention was good attention (1975). According to the alternative aesthetics model established by Black Nationalists and espoused by Ilê Aiyê, the inability of dominant groups to misrecognize the bloco as anything but controversial meant that Ilê Aiyê had indeed carved out a space in which it could operate free from hegemonic cooptation.

Thus the educational platform that would grow from the Ilê Aiyê project would embody an alternative, rather than a supplemental discourse. In the eyes of leadership, supplementing the narrative of Afro-descendants in Brazil was not a viable option because it was exactly that narrative which needed to be undone. The co-optation of

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<sup>26</sup> The same goes for *cabelo duro*, a derisive description of the kinky hair that blacks typically have. Again, the strategy attempts to undo the derision by affirming that blackness is not something Ilê Aiyê wants to shed or hide, but is something they embrace and celebrate.

<sup>27</sup> The brief article included the phrases “ugly spectacle” and “lack of imagination,” and warned Ilê Aiyê that it would not be welcome next year unless it made drastic changes.

black cultural characteristics and their employ to reinforce racial narratives and hierarchies simply meant that any attempt to supplement the discourse would have been co-opted as well.

Initially the bloco's Carnaval procession formed the sole basis of Ilê Aiyê's educational outreach. While a singing and dancing drum troupe is not traditionally what comes to mind when thinking about alternative education, in the sense that such a procession had the capacity to re-make racial meanings, it was very much an educational project. Bahian carnival was not a neutral cultural space, but rather one that had been racialized and politicized from its inception. Further, it was historicized to reinforce the myth of racial democracy and inclusion. As other blocos afro were formed and followed suit, they came to exert an enormous influence on the Bahian Carnaval, especially as it was rising to become a national and international spectacle. Ilê Aiyê was able to forge an alternative public sphere that became a strong presence in Bahian society, and it was impossible to ignore. There is perhaps no better indication that these groups were able to impose their alternative discourse than the sheer presence of the drummers; the blocos afro played without amplification and nonetheless physically and symbolically dominated all other aspects of the Carnaval scene.

Songs presented at subsequent Carnaval proceedings through the late 1970s illustrate the organization's effort to present alternative historical narratives in order create and teach a different conception of the African heritage that black Brazilians had inherited. Later iterations of this strategy would attempt to remodel the meaning of significant Afro-Brazilian narratives including *quilombos*, slave revolts, and abolition.

However, the early examples focused on presenting and re-presenting narratives about Africa that showcased positive aspects of Africanity.<sup>28</sup> Lyrics from the song “Negrice Crystal” describe the rich historical empire of the Ashanti king Osei Tutu:

Long Live King Osei Tutu  
Ghana, Ashanti  
Ilê Aiyê comes to present  
The Ashanti, black people!  
Such a rich region  
The Ghana empire  
Of Gold and cocoa

The Ashanti influence spread  
To Togo, Dahomey, the Ivory Coast.  
Sudan, Upper Volta  
and West Africa  
Long live its king! (Crisôtomo 1976)

These stanzas represent a particularly salient iteration of the alternativist stance. The image of the Ashanti, a black people, ruling an expansive and rich empire was fundamentally incompatible with the narrative of the time that it is set against. The new historical narrative attempted to introduce Bahia to another Africa. This was not the Africa of the politically aloof traditional figures of Candomblé and *afoxês*, whose agency and power were mysterious and otherworldly. This was the Africa of powerful emperors,

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<sup>28</sup> Reflecting on the early re-creation of Africa and African narratives in retrospect, Ilê Aiyê described their early global outlook as an effort to generate a broad-based solidarity movement and capitalize on the momentum of the African anti-colonial resistance (Santana and Conceição 1996). Elsewhere, Ilê Aiyê professed that under Brazil’s authoritarian dictatorship, challenges to Brazilian historical repertoire would have been read as anti-nationalistic and fomenting social discontent and thus we ought to read the early re-telling of African history as a substitute for the reworking of Brazilian narratives that Ilê Aiyê could not get away with at the time (Ilê Aiyê 2009a). However, these later accounts likely seek to compensate for the fact the Ilê Aiyê would be relatively late to the scene terms of adopting the re-telling of domestic history to make valorization of blackness more locally relevant. As described in the next section, Olodum’s move to

who were once mighty and whose powers were now being drawn upon to repel colonial occupiers. The song formed part of the 1976 theme *Alto Volta*, a former French colony that had established self-governance and then independence during the previous decade (Ilê Aiyê 2009c).<sup>29</sup> The attempt to connect contemporary anti-colonial and revolutionary struggles to powerful black ancestors that Afro-Brazilians share with Africans represents an attempt to shift the conceptualization of the Afro-Brazilian self. Not only had blacks once been politically and economically powerful; these traits could easily be traced through the generations to their descendents, whether African or Afro-Brazilian. Most importantly, these traits could be drawn upon to engage in the struggle of resistance.

African kings also formed an important part of Ilê Aiyê's early alternative rhetoric that drastically conflicted with traditional narratives. In addition to King Osei Tutu in "Negrice Crystal", another important early song produced by the bloco celebrated black kingship in Africa. "Um Canto de Fé por um Mundo Melhor" celebrates the historical king Sundiata of Mali:

It was in Mali  
That King Sundiata  
Created a beautiful empire  
Foundation of Culture  
The infinite power called Ilê Aiyê comes from Mali  
And from Curuzu  
Comes a song of faith in a better world (Colombiano 1982)

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link the re-creation of Africa with the existing local climate represented an ideological break from Ilê Aiyê at the time.

<sup>29</sup> The country of Upper Volta has since changed its name to Burkina Faso.

Again there is an indication that Brazil's blacks have inherited the traits of powerful rulers, and the sense that in subscribing to an identity that incorporates these traits, local blacks can achieve a better existence.

It is important to consider the fact that although African kingship would later become a topic with which cultural groups would try to supplement the existing historical curriculum in formal schools, Ilê Aiyê's African kings were intended to contradict racial narratives. This is because the submissive status of blacks in Brazil's racial narrative was significantly gendered, as enslaved Africans were supposedly incorporated gradually into Brazilian society as the progeny of "intermixing" – a process that scholars point out ought to be read as "rape", as racial mixture always implied a powerful white male and a weak black female.<sup>30</sup> Thus in reconstituting blackness with an image of the powerful black male, the bloco attempted to use African heritage in a new way. This version called for an alternative interpretation of reality in which Afro-Brazilians could conceive of themselves as the agents of history with the power to intervene in the reality that encompasses them.

### **OLODUM: TOWARD A MORE INCLUSIVE DISCOURSE, 1979- 1988**

Thirty years of co-existence, trial-and-error, and inter-community dialogue has contributed to a convergence of thinking and approaches to the role of community organizations in Salvador. This contemporary cooperation and symmetry has affected the

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<sup>30</sup> This observation that contemporary racial harmony is contingent on generations of sexual exploitation of black women contributes to a victimized and submissive black subjectivity is a point several authors have made in arguing the extent to which symbolic violence exists within the racial democracy narrative (Caldwell 2007; Gonzales 1982; Nascimento 1976).

way current members describe the conflict that Olodum's break away from Ilê Aiyê in 1979 represented. Thus contemporary recounts generally describe the founding of Olodum as an exportation of Ilê Aiyê's model in the Liberdade/Curuzu neighborhood to the Maciel/Pelourinho community where Olodum would establish itself. Tonho Matéria, current leader of Olodum's Capoeira instruction program, recently stated in an interview his intention to eventually build his own clubhouse in his neighborhood of Pau Miúdo, "to do something like Brown did in Candeal" (Magalhães Pinto 2008). In referring to Carlinhos Brown's *Pracatum* project, an offshoot of Olodum established in the Candeal neighborhood, Matéria reflects the contemporary thinking that the model for developing community organizations follows Olodum's original example: leadership learns the ropes in a pre-established organization and eventually breaks away when they are able to establish their own project in a different locale. However this collective memory of Olodum breaking away to replicate Ilê Aiyê in a new neighborhood is greatly influenced by a long process of ideological reconciliation between Olodum and Ilê Aiyê. At the time, the departure of several key leaders, including João Jorge Santos Rodrigues and Neguinho do Samba, was about much more than mere expansion into a different neighborhood.<sup>31</sup>

Olodum's position during the early 1980s indicates a profound ideological conflict over how the mobilization of an Afro-descendent consciousness could best be achieved. Early leadership expressed their frustration with Ilê Aiyê's militancy and strict policy of allowing only black participants in its activities.<sup>32</sup> In a work presented to his

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<sup>31</sup> Much scholarship from the following decades tended to locate the breakaway of Olodum within a broader political realm, considering relationships and orientations toward broader factions of Brazil's black movement (Dunn, 1992; Crook, 2005; Guerreiro 1999). Here, the author interprets the split as fundamentally linked to the ideological conflict over whether black consciousness was a supplemental or alternative project.

<sup>32</sup> As mentioned above, part of the attempt to carve out a space for blacks required strict boundaries in order to protect the emergent black identity from co-optation by the Brazilian mainstream.

former colleagues at Ilê Aiyê in 1982, Santos Rodrigues argued that to exclude mestizos and whites who were interested in Afro-Brazilian culture from participating in the bloco or to bar their intellectual involvement was an error, because without a broad and diverse membership, the black consciousness would never have strength or relevance in mainstream society (1982: 35). He argued that whatever Ilê Aiyê was accomplishing internally, its polarizing militancy ensured that they were still regarded as “the bloco of whores, drug dealers, and thieves” (*Ibid.*, p. 36). In their militant assertion of an alternative and incorruptible black identity, Ilê Aiyê was neglecting the importance of recognition and legitimacy in mainstream society. As Kymlicka notes, it does not do to assert autonomy part way. Santos Rodrigues recognized that the black identity ought not to exist in a separate world where it could be crafted freely under neutral conditions because it would always still have to negotiate within the Brazilian world of patronage networks, both political and economical. This sentiment was poignantly manifested in the municipal elections of 1982, when all the consciousness that had supposedly been raised amounted to almost no change in the number of votes given to Afro-Brazilian candidates even in the Liberdade/Curuzu district (Dunn 1992: 18).<sup>33</sup>

In 1983 Santos Rodrigues again lambasted Ilê Aiyê for imposing its color barrier on all of Salvador. He argued that the blocos afro had made a severe mistake in distancing themselves so far from the white Carnaval of the *trios electrico*.<sup>34</sup> Refusing to cooperate with minor aspects of Carnaval protocol by insisting on their autonomy, Ilê

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<sup>33</sup> During the 1990s, the Afro-Brazilian Margareth Menezes underscored this point, explaining her reluctance to identify with the blocos afro and the black movement. She told *The Beat*, “I tried to be a member of Ilê Aiyê and I couldn’t because I wasn’t black enough in their opinion” (Dunn 1992: 15). The alienation of potential bridges to mainstream Brazilian society would prove a significant drawback of the strict differentiation strategy. Ilê Aiyê would eventually have to amend this to retain its institutional strength and cultural relevance (see below).

<sup>34</sup> Trios electico were the other emergent fad of the time which catered to the wealthy and tourists. Ilê Aiyê refused to compete against the trios electrico, demanding a separate category and standards for blocos afro.

Aiyê had cost the blocos the endorsement of Bahiatursa and the municipal government. Thus, while the trios electric were subsidized by the state, the marginal poor communities who made up the blocos afro had to cover the expenses themselves. Santos Rodrigues argued it was sometimes necessary to engage the state and parlay cooperation into funding and backing. With skillful maneuvering, this could be done without compromising the integrity of the organization's mission. (Santos 1983). This approach of strategically negotiating relationships with the city's power structures as an institution also applied to the individuals and the black identity Olodum was trying to cultivate. The organization would thus adopt a stance of supplementing (working alongside preexisting conditions) to modify the way black identity interacted with Brazilian identity, as much as to modify the black identity itself.

The strategy of teaching blacks to advocate on behalf of themselves to politicians and employers, and to actively amend structures of misrecognition that justified their subordination, would inform the educational project of Olodum and distinguish it from Ilê Aiyê. Olodum began to put its ideology of supplementing mainstream Brazilian existence into practice, working to help its constituency operate more fully as participants in the socio-economic landscape in Salvador.

The Rufar de Tambores was a program that Olodum developed in 1984 to train young people in the Maciel neighborhood for participation in the bloco. It offered free percussion classes that were interspersed with lessons on Afro-Brazilian culture (Santos Rodrigues 1987). Community members were encouraged to participate in a certificate program on Afro-Brazilian culture by attending the lectures and participating in other activities, including CineClub, where educational movies were presented and discussed in preparation for the development of the bloco's Carnival theme (de Melo e Silva 1987: 117). However, while valorization of Afro-Brazilian culture was clearly one aspect of the



Rufar de Tambores, Olodum's director of education Kátia de Melo e Silva recognized that the identity Olodum was constructing remained disconnected with students' actual experiences with the education system. The true value would be in developing connections and points of references so that the skills, discipline, and sense of self could be transferred to other aspects of childrens' lives (*Ibid.*, 118).<sup>35</sup> With the intent of developing better channels to connect the local Afro-Brazilian neighborhood with the institutional world of schools, markets and politics, de Melo e Silva helped establish the Escola Criativa in 1987, a more structured platform from which Olodum planned to launch various new educational initiatives.

That same year Olodum used its growing presence in Carnaval masterfully to present Afro-Brazilian identity as an integrated and relevant component of a broader Brazilian consciousness. The development and presentation of their 1988 Madagascar theme illustrates this innovation quite well. The song "Madagascar" was presented to radio stations well ahead of Carnaval so that the public might learn it and know it when the bloco paraded.<sup>36</sup> The beginning of the song resembles other bloco afro songs, written in the same vein as Ilê Aiyê's celebration of Africa, using themes of African kingship and referencing anti-colonial resistance.

Madagascar created various kingdoms  
Imerina was consecrated  
When the youthful warrior Ranbosalama  
Protected the holy city

Queen Ranavalon stood for life and youth  
Majestic sovereign over black society  
Though stripped of his powers,

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<sup>35</sup> This thinking appears to represent a combination of Olodum's supplemental approach with the education theory discussed in Chapter 2, which holds that the discontinuity between a learner's cultural background and the content of the curriculum is a chief factor that hinders learning (Au and Mason 1983; Fuller and Clark 1994).

<sup>36</sup> The practice of introducing songs well ahead of time had become standard at this time.

King Radama was considered a true leader  
Leading his kingdom to dance (Zulu 1987).

However, the tone changes somewhat in the next verse, which continues, “Bantus, Indonesians, Arabs integrated to form the Malagasy Culture” and eventually concludes, “I am the Malagasy rainbow”. Choosing to celebrate Madagascar as a mixed-race nation and emphasize the coexistence of three races there contrasts sharply with Ilê Aiyê’s strict association of Africa with blackness. Played out in the didactic song repertoire of Carnival, Olodum attempted to address Salvador with the message that an Afro-Brazilian consciousness need not be restricted to just blacks. Afro-Brazilian consciousness should also involve and promote the interest, respect, and love of black culture, and could be shared and integrated into mainstream Brazilian society. It did not have to exist as a polarizing opposite; it could supplement and enhance Brazilian identity.

Olodum’s new formulation of the Afro-Brazilian mobilization essentially turned racial democracy on its head. As opposed to the older construction that blacks in Brazil could “pass for white,” Olodum presented a picture in which whites can “pass for black” if they so choose. Granting the choice of subscribing to the afro-descendent identity as a supplement to a broader Brazilian identity was at the crux of Olodum’s valorization strategy. The true valorizing potential of the argument is that Afro-descendent identity represented characteristics with which all Brazilians might want to identify.

When Carnival eventually arrived and it was time to parade the theme of Madagascar, Olodum made a bold move that again illustrates its departure from Ilê Aiyê’s alternative model. Understanding the crucial need to tie in black consciousness

with Brazilian reality, the bloco introduced the song “Protesto do Olodum.” Although the song had nothing to do with Madagascar, it was an attempt to bridge two discourses and illustrate that ideas about issues in Africa and experiences of issues in Brazil were similar.

The nation declares  
Pelourinho against prostitution  
Staging protests and demonstrations  
And there go I...

AIDS has spread  
And already terror grips Brazil  
Olodum Pelourinho denounces  
And there go I...

Leadership Brazil  
Elite force in the pollution  
Most notorious the Cubata terror  
And there go I...

There and here in Nordestopia  
In Bahia exists Ethiopia  
The Northeast  
A Nation turns its back  
And there go I...

Mozambique hey  
Each minute a black person dies  
Without bread or water to drink  
And there go I ...

Desmond Tutu  
Against apartheid in South Africa  
Comes Saluting Nelson Mandela  
Olodum (Tatau 1988)

Collectively these verses spell out Olodum’s ideological stance: people in a state of suffering exist both far away in Africa, and right here at home. The juxtaposition of

locales of suffering is tied together by the refrain that Olodum goes to protest all of these issues at once, and underscores that they are all components of an anti-racist struggle.

The ideology is collapsed ingeniously into one word, Nordestopia, combining the Brazilian Northeast and Ethiopia into a single terrain in which racial exclusion and racial struggle occur. The importance of understanding large structural problems on a local or even personal scale cannot occur unless the narration of these problems is intertwined with relevant connections to daily life. As Santos Rodrigues had put it, “the [metaphoric] trip to Angola is neither a vacation nor an escape, but a cultural and political realization and commitment” (Santos 1983).

The year 1988 clearly marked an important moment for Olodum in the assertion of a mobilization strategy that involved supplementing the Brazilian experience with the thinking and tools to modify that experience. As mentioned above, Escola Criativa was emerging in conjunction with this sentiment with the understanding that community education would be the mechanism by which Olodum would supplement and enhance Afro-Brazilians’ experiences. However, before much could be formalized, the year 1988 brought several more important changes that would shape the direction of Olodum’s project. Escola Criativa’s newness granted some flexibility to take advantage of the changing landscape in 1988, but it was mostly Olodum’s objective of supplementing broader societal experiences that allowed for the timely formulation of community education centered on the concept of *Cidadania*.

## **CIDADANIA: DEMOCRATIZATION AND SOCIAL LEARNING**

Following the financial success of several hit records at the end of the 1980s, Olodum was able to establish a wide number of social programs based out of its Pelourinho-Maciél headquarters.<sup>37</sup> The one unifying element of nearly everything that has gone on under the auspices of Olodum's leadership is a striving for *cidadania* as an ultimate goal. The term, which translates roughly as citizenship, has, in the context of democratization and the restructuring of political meanings, come to represent far more than merely a synonym for a role as participant, inhabitant, or member of society in general.

The production of a new Brazilian constitution in 1988, the "Citizens' Constitution," reflected a dramatic shift in the political landscape associated with the return to democracy after a long period of rule by authoritarian dictatorship. The implementation of new democratic avenues, such as the participatory budgets, represents a broadening of democratic control of the state through the effective participation of citizens in the exercise of power. However, political theorists observing the transition to democracy have noted that there has been relatively little attention paid to preparing the population for their new citizenship roles (La Belle 2000: 32). Reinforcing the principles of checks and balances, and freedom of speech, press, and assembly, are regarded as extremely important during this transition to prevent demagogues from agitating and mobilizing the poor with promises of short-term compensation while sacrificing long-term growth (Sloan 1998). *Cidadania* thus involves responsible, measured participation. Beyond the formal-legal acquisition of a set of rights under the political judicial system,

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<sup>37</sup> In 1987, the group's first LP *Egito, Madagascar* sold more than 50,000 copies

cidadania has also come to mean a “more egalitarian basis for social relations at all levels, and new rules for living together in society” (Dagnino 2008: 63).

The importance of the emergent concept of cidadania for Afro-Brazilian movements is twofold. The first involves the fact that newly democratized groups must adjust to their new responsibilities of articulating their grievances through appropriate channels, and ensuring that political actions taken on their behalf, such as anti-discrimination legislation, are actually realized and enforced. An example of the adoption of this strategy was a testimony organized by Olodum’s leadership before the Legislative Assembly in support of the creation of a chapter on Afro-Brazilians in the new State Constitution of Bahia (Santos Rodrigues and do Carmo 1989). That fact that such a chapter (Capítulo XXIII “Do Negro”) was indeed included verified the potential for pursuing the sort of participatory mobilization that had characterized Olodum’s ideological position as a supplement to state processes, rather than an alternative.

The second aspect of Cidadania that is relevant to the Afro-Brazilian movement involves a reordering of what Dagnino defines as a “social authoritarianism,” a perception of the political relevance of cultural meanings that has been embedded in the social practice of daily life.

The cultural deprivation imposed by the absolute absence of rights, which ultimately expresses itself as a suppression of human dignity, then becomes constitutive of material deprivation and political exclusion (2008:63).<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Dagnino argues that as part of the authoritarian hierarchical social ordering of Latin American societies, to be poor means not only to experience economic, material deprivation, but also to be subjected to cultural rule that conveys a lack of recognition of poor people as bearers of rights.

If the new roles imposed on marginal groups by the democratization process are in fact to be utilized, social movement organizations bear the responsibility for equipping their constituents with the principals of civic engagement associated with cidadania. This effort has become realized as an educational project of social learning.

For Olodum, cidadania has formed a core basis of the community education project because the construction of an identity that belongs to the nation and is entitled to inclusion and participation had been the basis of their consciousness-raising effort even before the democratization process began. While Olodum originally concentrated on a cultural identity that would supplement mainstream Brazilian society, the adoption of Cidadania as an educational goal required only the inclusion of political and civic consciousness within their pre-established supplemental framework. In both cases, members of the Afro-Brazilian community are encouraged to recognize how to fit and work within the state as subjects who supplement ongoing cultural and civic processes.

Cidadania is often used in Olodum's rhetoric as a concept that speaks for itself, though leaders have offered several elaborations on its meaning that help to define the educational context. In one instance Marcel Gentil offered, "new social subjects actively identifying what they consider their rights and struggling for recognition" (Gentil 1993:142). The link to Freire (1970) and Critical Pedagogy is clear, as learners are taught to interpret their role in the society they inhabit and to develop strategies on how to improve it. The rhetoric also often includes the importance of preservation and recognition of Afro-Brazilian identity. As Dagnino points out, the new citizenship in Latin America includes not only the right to equality, but also the "right to difference,

which specifies, deepens, and broadens the right to equality” (2008: 64). Educative cidadania attempts to develop these traits in Afro-Brazilian youth using several methods.

Carnaval would remain an important arena in which Olodum conducts its educational outreach, and the new approach of education toward the aim of Cidadania is evident in the repertoire of 1990. Similar to “Protesto do Olodum,” the 1990 theme broke away from the traditional representations of African nations by celebrating the Northeastern region of Brazil itself. The Northeast is generally associated in the Brazilian imagination with two characteristics. The first, backwardness, stems from the agricultural and human crisis of a region racked by drought, where desperate characters wander. Representing an impasse of failed modernity, the Northeast has extremely low per capita income, and higher mortality rates than any other region in Brazil (Bentes 121). Secondly, the Northeast is linked to racial mixing and it formed the basis of one of the most influential studies on race in Brazil, da Cunha’s *Os Sertões* (1902).

In the song “Revolta de Olodum”, authors Domingos Sérgio and José Olissan attempt to refashion the history of the Northeast as one where leaders have combated the backwardness through various expressions of oppositional politics. The implicit connection with cidadania is that racial exclusion, like the Northeastern backwardness, involves the impetus to engage the state and agitate for better treatment.

Migrant rural caucus, workers.  
Northeastern Limpião, Salvador  
Homeland backcountry  
Antonio Conselheiro, leader of Canudos



Zumbi, who commanded in Alagoas  
In the name of ideals  
Liberator...  
I am Malê!  
I am the Revolt of the Buzios!  
Oh lightning, Maria Bonita is calling you  
It is the legacy of Limpião (1989)

The lyrics invoke many figures of historical resistance. From the Northeast, Zumbi was the leader of the Quilombo of Palmares, a colony of runaway slaves; Conselheiro was a prophet who established a community at Canudos that drew in thousands of religious followers; Limpião and Maria Bonita were bandits who eluded authorities for years. From Salvador, the revolt of the Buzios and the Malê rebellion were uprisings by urban blacks and slaves. Although all of these figures engaged the state in adversarial roles, they were in fact exercising the type of transformative resistance the *cidadania* demands. Participatory citizenship is a call to action, and Olodum presents these figures as models of the action. Further, while race plays a role in some of these stories, neither Conselheiro nor Limpião and Maria Bonita are particularly associated with Afro-Brazilian identity. Their inclusion as models for engaging the state indicates that the *cidadania* project involves more of the population than just blacks. Under the new constitution, anyone who suffers from repression or exclusion can exercise the right to participatory democracy.

As mentioned earlier, Olodum had recently established Escola Criativa Olodum in 1987 and was in a perfect position to model this school toward the development of *cidadania* with its students. A manifestation of the school's approach was its "interethnic pedagogy," which involved changing prejudiced attitudes and racial discrimination through the elaboration of a school curriculum based on the values of misrepresented and

underrepresented groups (Almeida Cruz 1989: 59). A key difference in the attempt to introduce a broader curriculum, however, was that unlike the earlier models of empowerment through the valorization of Afro-Brazilian culture, the interethnic-pedagogical approach encouraged students to recognize structures through which various groups had been systematically marginalized and to regard the moment of democratization as a key time to confront those marginalizing structures again before they adjusted to the new climate. Thus interethnic pedagogy at Escola Criativa intentionally presented Afro-Brazilian culture as a means through which the Afro-Brazilian community could realize the momentous opportunity that cidadania presented. The critical nature with which Afro-Brazilians were expected to regard their place in society is embodied in Olodum's 1994 hit song, "Samba Rap", which included the lyrics,

Without transportation,  
Without health  
Without education  
How will the people work to earn their bread?  
While the children of the politicians  
Study in Europe  
The misinformed ones remain here  
Commemorating the [World] Cup (Veneno)

In addition to the school's pedagogy, its relationship with the formal education system also embodied a participatory stance. Most students in the early Escola Criativa were students who had not been able to keep up with their grade. Whether because family poverty had forced them to miss too much school, or foreignness of school's relevance and meaning had led to disengagement, Escola Criativa functioned as a place where students could re-enter the education process in a familiar neighborhood context with an

atmosphere and curriculum that students could relate to (King-Calnek 2003: 116). The school was clearly not set up to function as complete alternative for any and all neighborhood children – it would take nearly five years before the school even began to operate with the appropriate bureaucratic staff and planning to constitute any state recognition (*Ibid.* p.117). For the most, part students were re-oriented with localized conceptions of the importance of schooling, especially as a means of fully exercising one's citizenship roles, and ultimately delivered back to the formal school system when possible.

While interethnic pedagogy and the hopes of returning newly empowered students to the education system where they might excel represents Escola Criativa's attempts to address the ideological substance of education, the ideology of cidadania also involved educating students in the real world skills that could practically improve their lives and allow them to comprehend themselves as civic contributors. A second and far more successful tract of Olodum's education program came to involve training for a workforce which valued skills that community children were not getting from the formal schools.

In addition to the new citizenship roles that democratization had created, neoliberal restructuring of the state had resulted in a growing subsistence and informal-sector workforce to which schools were poorly suited to relate (La Belle 2000: 27). Supplementing schoolchildren's education with real world skills emerged as Escola Criativa's most successful enterprise. Job-training and job-hunting were forms of education that children were eager to learn, parents were eager to support, and Olodum regarded as improving the life-chances of community youth if even by a little (Santos

Rodrigues 1999). Cashing in on the growing tourism sector became a particularly fruitful endeavor as the Pelourinho-Maciél community found itself at the center of Salvador's urban development program, which was designed to capitalize on foreign interest in Afro-Brazilian folklore.<sup>39</sup> Thus, students trained as artisans in a number of media would find work selling crafts and showcasing their skills to wealthy visitors. Activists would lament that such support of the folklorization project destroyed the consciousness-raising project, abandoning the ideological merits of critical pedagogy for menial handouts from the tourism industry and doing nothing to improve the overall marginalized condition of Afro-Brazilians (Hanchard 1994; Conceição 2006). However, to a community where children were malnourished and at risk for turning to drugs, prostitution, and violence, Olodum's entrepreneurial training seems to have made a significant, if local, impact.

#### **ESCOLA MÃE HILDA – THE ALTERNATIVE**

Meanwhile, as Olodum developed its education for cidadania model within the newly fashioned Escola Criativa, Ilê Aiyê remained committed to its alternative aesthetics and mobilization model, establishing the Escola Mãe Hilda to implement a series of new educational endeavors. Founded in 1989 Escola Mãe Hilda was intended to help children feel safe, at ease, and at home, by allowing them to come as they were without trying to conform to the integrationist demands of racial democracy (Wagner 1998). Like the Rufar de Tambores, Escola Mãe Hilda began with just a few students who were struggling with regular school and sought help from the bloco. Seeing an

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<sup>39</sup> The commoditization and folklorization of Afro-Brazilian culture enacted by Bahian government and board of tourism is well chronicled, especially regarding Afro-Brazilian religious practices (Butler 1998; Matori 2005; Selka 2005).

opportunity to implement its ideological goal of community mobilization, leadership helped create a school to “help students apply themselves toward spreading and preserving African and Afro-Bahian culture” (*Ibid.*). The Escola Mãe Hilda represented a commitment to an alternative site for racial formation in several important ways.

First is the school’s affiliation with the Candomblé terriero out of which it began to operate. Mãe Hilda Jitolu, who is herself a Candomblé priestess, claims that she founded the school on the principals of the only pedagogy she knew, which was the learn-by-doing approach of initiates to a religion that has no written record (Ilê Aiyê 2009b). While students have never been required to practice Candomblé, the use of Candomblé cosmology as a didactic paradigm to conduct lessons about principals such as compassion, perseverance, and community, are simultaneously presented as the basis of the African culture with which young Afro-Brazilians are taught to identify. The inherent distance of Candomblé spirituality from the contemporary problems of society is a criticism that activists have raised repeatedly (Hanchard 1994; Conceição 2006).

The connection to the Ilê Aiyê bloco and its position as a racial alternative also effected the educational nature of Escola Mãe Hilda. Like Escola Criativa, administrators at Escola Mãe Hilda recognized that an important aspect of drawing in and re-motivating students who had become disengaged with formal schooling was the prospect of participation in the music and dance programs and going out with the bloco during Carnival. Thus, while Mãe Hilda attributes the draw of her school to the nurturing affection and spiritual affinity, the school continues to refer to its arts programs as a “reward” for ample commitment to schoolwork. Interestingly, in materials published by Ilê Aiyê and by Escola Mãe Hilda itself, there is little reference to scholastic or academic improvement among students (Ilê Aiyê 2009b). What has been celebrated is the black

identity that the school has helped foster, as in the song, “Proud to be Black”, written by an Escola Mãe Hilda student in 1996.

Who am I?  
I'll tell you  
I am Curuzu  
I have my feet on the ground  
I am Ilê Aiyê

I do not put on makeup  
To deny my color  
I am proud  
To be black  
And born in Salvador (Pinto).

The construction and affirmation of a positive identity among students in the school is indeed an accomplishment worth celebrating, but privileging such a triumph over academic skills acquisition marks an important characteristic of Ilê Aiyê's educational project. It should be noted that even in 1996 Escola Mãe Hilda was achieving at most basic literacy training among its students, many of whom were aspiring toward either advancement in the Candomblé hierarchy or involvement with the bloco. Thus the educational content of the Escola Mãe Hilda offered few channels for students to develop socially beyond the small local network that embraced the polarizing Afro-consciousness they embodied. While such an education certainly avails the distinctiveness and merits of Afro-Brazilian identity, it does so in terms that are self-reflexive. That is, the valorization and consciousness do not easily translate into the civic and economic roles that participants play in their daily lives—roles that are still structured by the racial meanings of the status quo.

These problems associated with Ilê Aiyê's alternative approach to education would be addressed in 1996, when Ilê Aiyê unveiled an entirely new educational philosophy grounded in a much more integrative, supplemental philosophy. Though Ilê Aiyê tried to present it as a continuation of its original project and remembers 1996 as such, the Projeto de Extensão Pedagógico marked a significant ideological shift toward education as a supplementary rather than alternative endeavor.

## **Chapter 6. A Confluence of Philosophies to What End?**

The previous chapter described how one process associated with Brazilian democratization—the construction of new citizenship roles—lead to a new approach to education within Olodum that attempted to utilize the participatory citizenship to garner consciousness and mobilization. This describes a second process that characterizes Brazilian democratization and illustrates how it effectively established Olodum’s supplemental, participatory approach as the model for new community education initiatives, even though this approach was fundamentally incompatible with some groups’ ideological positions about racial mobilization and cooperation with the state. It considers Ilê Aiyê’s Projeto de Extensão Pedagógico (PEP) and the philosophical framework it lays out in relation to its similarities with Olodum’s education for cidadania model, and theorizes about the role of neo-liberalism in driving this convergence.

In addition to conferring new rights on citizens and allowing them to advocate on their own behalf, the democratization process of enacting participatory citizenship also involves a shrinking state that shapes processes but relies on other institutions to enact them. Under this rubric, participation comes to mean involvement in program implementation but not in design (Bebbington, Hickey, Mitlin 2008: 18). Thus, from a neoliberal perspective, the project of establishing participatory citizenship does not necessarily involve the radical change toward effective power sharing through the exercise of deliberation within new public spaces, in the way that it does to the social



movement organizations that covet it. In the Brazilian case, neoliberal democratization has frequently resulted in mere a shift the burden of social well-being to civil society, a project marked by a growing rhetoric emphasizing solidarity participation, volunteer work, and social responsibility of private enterprises. (Dagnino 2008: 61) When joint actions by the state and civil society do occur, they tend to involve managerial approaches imported from the realm of private administration (Tatagiba 2002). Neoliberalism, therefore, involves a clear preference for civil society organizations that take a service-delivery, rather than an advocacy approach.<sup>40</sup>

Olodum's education programs that focus on cidadania embody this cooperative, complimentary position—which this work refers to as a supplementary stance—by offering practical ways of dealing with the world as it is, rather than as it ought to be. In other words, in spite of their rhetoric, most of Olodum's concrete programs at the Escola Criativa concentrate on changing the way Afro-Brazilians participate in society, rather than on changing the way society is constructed. This approach to working within the system, as a supplement, fulfills the criteria that the neoliberal project seeks in a partnership. According to Fisher (1997), governments are more likely to endorse organizations that exhibit a service delivery approach because they offer real, doable solutions and function as a complimentary rather than oppositional force.

Partnership and complicity in the neoliberal project, more than anything else, explains Olodum's enormous institutional success throughout the 1990s. The

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<sup>40</sup> Advocacy in this case means appealing to the state on behalf of under-represented populations for policy changes rather than providing the services that the current policy does not adequately provide.

relationships that Olodum cultivated with the state in education, but even more so in establishing a tourism infrastructure, translated into state sponsorship in several senses.

Olodum was celebrated as a barometer of Brazil's changing ways and received state funding as well as preferential treatment and positive attention on a national scale.<sup>41</sup> Olodum was able to parlay its cooperative, non-confrontational status into several major recording contracts that had been unavailable to more polarizing factions of the samba-reggae movement—such as Ilê Aiyê. Thus, while black music had generally been marginalized by the music industry, Olodum's cooperation with the state and its status as an official Afro-Bahian culture-bearer translated into visibility and cultural marketing on an unprecedented scale.<sup>42</sup>

The initial success of the 1987 album *Egito Madagáscar* carried over to a major breakthrough when Paul Simon initiated a the collaboration for *Rhythm of the Saints* in 1990 that launched the musical group into worldwide stardom. Olodum's leadership expressed dismay that neither Simon, nor the international or mainstream Brazilian public was willing to acknowledge the musical group or the organization it represented as racially politicized (Browning 1995: 143). Heralded in the world music arena as champions of social justice—a politically innocuous label used more for driving sales—Olodum would continue to struggle to simultaneously maintain visibility and socio-

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<sup>41</sup> This can be read as very similar to the adoption of Afro-Brazilian symbols to support the racial democracy narrative during the Vargas years, discussed above. Ilê Aiyê's concerns about the hegemonic cooptation seemed to occurring right before their eyes.

<sup>42</sup> While breaking through the racial barrier of the recording industry would prove Olodum's most lucrative result of the state's endorsement, other partnerships are worth noting. These include recognition and funding from municipal agencies such as Prefeitura de Salvador and state agencies Bahiatour and Governo

political commentary. In 1994 the album *Filhos do Sol* sold more than 250,000 copies, earning a platinum record, but dealt mostly with politically neutral themes of love and happiness. In conjunction with the album, the Olodum band went on tour in the United States, and their presence alongside the victorious Brazilian soccer team at the World Cup reflected their new position as cultural ambassadors devoid of racial commentary (Crook 2005: 297).

It was certainly difficult for Olodum's intellectual leadership to ignore the financial rewards of such partnerships. Santos Rodrigues tried to rationalize the dilution of racial and political meanings by drawing parallels to Olodum's overall ideology of working within the Brazilian reality as a supplement to ongoing processes. He claimed the Afro-Brazilian movement "had to have institutional strength and Olodum would fulfill this organizational role" (1999: 47).

The group entered its next major collaboration with more discretion, hoping to redeem its cooperative enterprises in the eyes of critics. The involvement of the band, students from Escola Criativa, and the entire Pelourinho-Maciel neighborhood as participants and extras dancing in Michael Jackson's 1996 music video for "They Don't Care About Us" was regarded as a success in a self-congratulatory assessment after the video gained worldwide appeal (*Ibid.*). Unlike other songs, which only tacitly mentioned racial exclusion, and usually only in language that was not translated, the music video actually gave visibility to the poverty and exclusion that Afro-Brazilians experience in

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da Bahia; NGO funders including the Ford Foundation; and corporate sponsorships from Bradesco, Universo Online, PetroBras, and American Airlines.

Salvador. Also, unlike other major projects, this one did provoke concern from Brazilian authorities, who worried that scenes of poverty in Salvador and Rio de Janeiro would harm Brazil's image, especially in the midst of its bid to host the 2004 Olympics (Schemo 1996).

However, critics point out that the portrayal of poverty may have introduced another Brazil to the exterior world, but it merely reinforced what many Brazilians already knew. It also offered no real intervention, "turning poverty into just another banality". (Bentes 2003:123) Especially troubling, given Olodum's efforts to frame exclusion as a racialized process, none of the uproar generated by the event had anything to do with race. Olodum again attempted to rationalize these shortcomings, claiming that the Afro-Brazilian community could commiserate in worldwide suffering and engender solidarity with a global population of the victimized poor.<sup>43</sup> These sorts of lofty, abstract connections to an imagined community of global victims represent an apparent sacrifice of the concerns of the real local communities that gave rise to organizations like Olodum and expected to see concrete results. President of Santa Marta Resident's Association would remark about Jackson's filming in Rio, "the conditions in the favela do not depend on Michael Jackson, they depend on the government" (Schemo 1996).

Nevertheless, the discursive footwork with which Olodum defends its relationships with state and market powerbrokers has cemented its ideology of supplemental cooperation as its organizational trademark. Santos Rodrigues remarked in

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<sup>43</sup> This position reflects a clear pattern of falling back on Diasporic and global issues when criticized about their inability to affect real local change.

1999, “previous revolutions and rebellions had taught us that it is not enough to acknowledge the value of our blackness and to say that we are beautiful. Above all we had to be strong” (p. 47). Commitment to this position has produced an educational philosophy that is rooted in this logic. The revised 2010 mission statement of Escola Olodum uses much of the same language as when it was founded as Escola Criativa in 1987 (de Melo e Silva 1987; Olodum 2010). Regrettably, it appears this continuity in approach is not the result of decisions based on programmatic efficacy. Olodum’s ongoing complicity and cooperation in the neoliberal project appears to be more about maintaining lucrative partnerships and privileges than it is about clear, replicable successes in the realms of education and social justice.

### **PROJETO DE EXTENSÃO PEDAGÓGICO, 1996**

Whether or not an evaluation of students would have shown Olodum’s participatory education to be working in terms of educational achievement, Ilê Aiyê clearly could not ignore the institutional successes that the organization’s cooperative approach was generating. In 1996, while Olodum was reaching the crest of its state and market sponsorship, Ilê Aiyê introduced a completely new approach to its outreach and education efforts that appear conceptually modeled after Olodum’s education for cidadania. The Projeto de Extensão Pedagógico (PEP) was presented early in 1996 at the heart of the bloco’s Carnival procession, which constructed its theme around the slogan, “Ilê Aiyê: 22 Years of Resistance and Educative Action.” This section argues that the PEP was Ilê Aiyê’s attempt to significantly redesign both its image and its relationship with the broader public, and that it represents a perception within the organization that in order to achieve its goals, Ilê Aiyê had to establish the sorts of channels to the power

structures of Salvador that Olodum had. The PEP was a new supplemental approach to the formal education system that would carry over into other realms of the organization's activity. As Ilê Aiyê elaborated upon the PEP, its commitment to operating in an alternative and uncompromising position gave way to a supplemental status that greatly resembled that of Olodum.

According to the mission statement of the PEP, Ilê Aiyê would begin to concentrate on

the dissemination of a better approach to the African studies curriculum in the schools of Bahia, supporting the valorization of Afro-Brazilian culture, and spreading to the entire school community the values of respect for the rights of citizens, practices for a non-violent society, and denunciation of prejudice of any kind (Ilê Aiyê 1996).

Each of the three projects established to carry out the organization's goals in 1996 were designed to supplement institutional programs and ongoing processes, rather than oppose them. The first was the attempt to establish a critical pedagogy to better convey the relevance of African and Afro-Brazilian studies in the formal education system. The second involved developing better networks for the dissemination of information and ideas about afro-descent identity being generated within Ilê Aiyê to a broader population of youth and adults. The third would be the publication of an annual *Caderno de Educação* that could package the extensive literature on Afro-Brazilian topics generated within the organization for reference by scholars, students, and other interested individuals. Each of these components represents a shift in ideology toward the attitude that building a network of broader relationships would be beneficial, even if the cost was forfeiting some control and embracing a new supplemental status.

The first element most clearly resembles educational activities that were already going on at Olodum, and again, it is unclear if this type of strategy was adopted for its actual educational results or the gains to be had institutionally from establishing

collaborative relationships. Nonetheless, the PEP's effort to collaborate with the state secretary of education and schoolteachers in the formal education system is a clear indication that Ilê Aiyê sought the type of supplemental role that Olodum had. The PEP established a *Curso de Capacitação* for local teachers in the Liberdade-Curuзу schools. This course was certified by the secretary of education, which offered incentives for teachers and administrators who attended. It consisted of 120 hours and ran from the symbolically important dates May 13 to November 20.<sup>44</sup>

First, the teachers conducted an observation and analysis of the didactic material they were using, and they were encouraged to think critically about how the curriculum impacted the racial settings and meanings that were constructed in their classrooms (da Silva 1997:142). It is important to note that the PEP was interested in making better use of the existing teaching materials, rather than insisting on the introduction of alternative materials. The willingness to concede control of the content to the state and focus on supplementing that content with interpretation and praxis is an indicator of the new ideological direction of Ilê Aiyê.

The course also involved learning to recognize and ameliorate situations where racial subjectivities were negatively affected. Part of this involved understanding the vulnerabilities of young blacks' self-esteem. As discussed in Chapter 2, a major criticism of the state's attempt at a multicultural curriculum had been that the reasons behind its inclusion were not always comprehended by the teachers, and thus not conveyed to the students. Within the PEP course, teachers were taught to regard the multicultural

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<sup>44</sup> May 13 being the date when the Brazilian state celebrates the abolition of slaves, and November 20<sup>th</sup> being the day Zumbi, leader of the Palmares Quilombo was killed, which the black movement claims is a more appropriate event to represent Afro-Brazilian identity. While May 13 represents an illusory emancipation and a passive status bestowed upon slaves by a benevolent princess, November 20<sup>th</sup> represents an ongoing active resistance that the black movement is trying to channel. Participants in the course are expected to cultivate an understanding of the formative impact that these different narratives have on black subjectivities.

curriculum as a crucial vehicle for valorizing Afro-Brazilian heritage. According to PEP instructor Valdina Pinto, for the multicultural curriculum to have meaning, teachers had to convey the contemporary relevance of the Afro-Brazilian heritage.

A black student has to be regarded with all the tradition he has and the value of his accumulated knowledge. The teacher has to understand that African descent does not mean descended from slaves, but from black men who had their own languages, history, and ways of thinking. And the teacher has to see a student with all that. (Ilê Aiyê 1996)

Again it is important to note that under the rubric of the PEP, Ilê Aiyê recognized that ceding control of the content and focusing on better interpretation and implementation of that content would have stronger and broader effects. Rather than insisting that processes in the formal education system had to be rejected outright, the PEP attempted to supplement those processes with critically conscious teachers.

The second component of the PEP involved the recognition that the polarizing discourse and uncompromising position may have been protecting Ilê Aiyê from cooptation, but it was marginalizing the organization to a realm that was increasingly irrelevant. In light of Olodum's apparent ability to command some aspects of the socio-political landscape, Ilê Aiyê elected to move toward greater involvement in the civic realm by offering cultural workshops to youth and adults as an outreach and dissemination effort.

These workshops were largely depoliticized and seem to represent an acknowledgement that in the particular context and moment, the cultural mobilization effort needed to emphasize quantity over quality. Whereas participants in previous cultural programs were expected to make extensive ideological commitments, the PEP



workshops targeted a population that had been reluctant to identify with Ilê Aiyê's militancy. While leadership wrestled over how much dilution was acceptable, the moderators from the PEP designed the workshops with the intent of eventually conducting them within local schools as supplements to the regular arts curriculum (Ilê Aiyê, 1996).<sup>45</sup>

The workshops involved teaching the standard Afro-Brazilian cultural practices popularized by Ilê Aiyê and other blocos, including singing, dancing, and percussion, but also involved some notable innovative programs. Among these was a course on black aesthetics, which taught local youth how to create and manage various hairstyles, and to embrace the hipness of their “kinky hair.” This effectively put into practice the message Ilê Aiyê had championed over 20 years earlier with the lyrics about *cabelo duro* in “Que Bloco é Esse?” Another significant innovation was a series of workshops in anticipation of Carnival that taught interested community members about the production of fabrics and African styles of dress that the bloco wore in its processions. Participants would be shown how to make their own costumes so they could look like Ilê Aiyê even if they were not members of the bloco. This willingness to let people ease into involvement with the organization indicates a completely new approach to the Afro-Brazilian mobilization.

The third development created as part of the PEP was the publication of an annual fact book called *Caderno de Educação*. From its inception the *Caderno* was a collaborative process that was designed to encapsulate all of the scholarship and analysis

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<sup>45</sup> The integration of PEP workshops into the arts curricula at local schools was indeed realized within several years (Lourdes Siqueira 1999: 159).

that went on at Ilê Aiyê. (da Silva 1997: 143) This included research conducted to form the basis of the Carnaval theme and also discussions surrounding the workshops and lectures that Ilê Aiyê had held throughout the year. While the production process itself has merits as an educational project, by encouraging accumulation and synthesis of knowledge about Afro-Brazilian topics, the more significant aspect of the *Cadernos* is the way they are intended to engage their audience.

Several components of the *Cadernos* illustrate a change in Ilê Aiyê's thinking about its relationship with a broader public sphere. The first is that each *Caderno* is generated and released in conjunction with the bloco's theme for the year. The decision to link the two projects reflects the fact that much of the research is driven by preparation for Carnaval, but it also the recognition that during Carnaval, Ilê Aiyê can capture the attention of a lot of people who will soon return to a realm where the Afro-Brazilian consciousness message is contradicted by their experience in school, the media, the job market, etc. The *Cadernos* are thus a way that Ilê Aiyê can keep people engaged with their message even if they are not involved in the organization, which is an important ideological concession.

Besides the tie-ins with Carnaval, the content of the *Cadernos* is more inclusive in other ways. The combination of short texts, accessible language, and visual accompaniment indicate that the *Cadernos* are meant for a much different audience than other books that outline a similar project. That is, most works that deconstruct Eurocentric and ethnocentric narratives and incentivize and valorize the formation of a black identity do so on the academic and elitist side of the discursive disjuncture between

the intellectuals doing the mobilizing and the people they are trying to mobilize. The *Cadernos* instead attempt to speak to people in a language that they understand, in the same way that the *bloco*'s songs and cultural manifestations do.

What sets the *Cadernos* apart from earlier Ilê Aiyê projects is that by presenting a more popular, accessible language, Ilê Aiyê allows readers to retrieve and interpret these materials without the activists guiding them through it. This is an important point because throughout Ilê Aiyê's existence the organization had carefully guarded its content against misrepresentation and hegemonic manipulation. In putting the *Cadernos* in the hands of distant affiliates where hegemonic forces can undo Ilê Aiyê's message or even turn it against the black movement, Ilê Aiyê takes a significant risk. With the *Cadernos* the responsibility for thinking critically and protecting against cooptation lies with the reader, rather than with the author, and Ilê Aiyê cannot be there or follow up to ensure such critical thinking takes place. Thus, while the other measures of the PEP and the move toward supplementing schools may be more about pragmatism and mimicry of Olodum's institutional success, the *Cadernos* demonstrate a fundamental philosophical shift about where critical consciousness is generated and protected.

### **THE CONTEMPORARY PROJETO DE EXTENSÃO PEDAGÓGICO**

When it was introduced in 1996, the PEP was primarily designed to restructure the relationship between Ilê Aiyê and the greater community and institutions, moving from an alternative to a more supplemental role. Once again, ideology and decision making about educational efforts seem to have had more to do with institutional challenges and orientations than with actual measures of student achievement. A clear

indicator of this is the fact that the original development of the PEP involved plans to conduct a “quarterly assessment of qualitative and quantitative results of the project, monitoring participants in the classroom and review sessions with their teachers and principals;” yet such formal evaluation apparently never occurred.<sup>46</sup> However, more recent developments that have been introduced as part of the PEP are more concerned with the way education affects the participants in terms of its meaning and applicability in their experiential reality.

Beyond the PEP, Ilê Aiyê had expressed interest in developing individual entrepreneurship among its youth to prepare them for the expansion of opportunities associated with Bahia’s tourism boom. However, under the PEP, leadership recognized that there would never be enough jobs in the arts to sustain the community. There was also a longstanding concern by MNU activists that if Afro-Brazilians continued to settle for compartmentalized inclusion in just one sector of the Bahian economy, they would never be able to penetrate the types of social and economic networks in which they needed to immerse themselves to have meaningful presence in the city beyond the realm of cultural politics (Viera 1984; Hanchard 1994). The PEP thus insisted that in addition to attendance in school, another precondition for young people interested in drumming, dancing, etc. would be participation in some sort of job skills acquisition program. Leaders began designing programs that could capture students’ artistic enthusiasm and engagement and translate them into other skills and characteristics that would give them more opportunities for employment.

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<sup>46</sup> As discussed in the methodology section above, even if such evaluations had occurred, they probably would have been for the benefit of the collaborators or funding agencies, as community organizations tend to have their own internal evaluation schema. The fact that all three iterations of the project are still ongoing after almost 15 years might be taken as evidence that these components are serving the organization well in some way.

In the realm of professional training for an industry apart from the arts, one of the first programs the PEP established was “Cozinha da Cidade”. Recognizing that the growth of the tourist industry had sparked a huge increase in the number of restaurants in the city, Ilê Aiyê anticipated that food services was an industry with significant potential for mobility if young people could secure jobs in the network of restaurants that catered to tourists. To train its members, Ilê Aiyê would open up a shelter for local residents in which young people would learn to purchase ingredients, prepare meals, maintain health and customer service standards, and develop managerial skills, all while helping the members of the neighborhood who were suffering from hunger. With the experience they gained, workers in the program would make better candidates for the competitive restaurant jobs in the tourist sector (Ilê Aiyê 2006).

No formal data exists to show whether involvement with Cozinha da Cidade actually enhances a candidate’s chances a landing a better job in the food services industry. However, the program has generated interest from donor agencies and Ilê Aiyê has managed to establish partnerships with Extra Supermarkets, Petrobras, and Brasilgas to offset the cost of the program. Also, unlike some of Olodum’s initiatives criticized above, where unclear results were a significant problem, Cozinha da Cidade at the very least helps local families who suffer from hunger and encourages young people to partake in activities that help others in the community. The program has also recently partnered with nutritionists to help teach participants and clients about nutrition (*Ibid.*). The supplemental ideology is apparent not just in the willingness to accept corporate partnerships, but in the program’s goal of integrating participants more fully into Bahian society so that they might eventually be able to make an impact on its development.

Since 2002, Ilê Aiyê has launched several other programs that attempt to diversify Afro-Brazilian involvement in the job market. The organization runs a boutique that

opened with the intent of training participants for the high-paying, specialized jobs in the garment industry that produce merchandise for tourists (Ilê Aiyê 2008). From shoes and handbags to clothing, participants learn all aspects of production from buying machinery and materials to marketing. Like the neighborhood kitchen, some of the products manufactured by students go to needy community members, especially those who cannot afford carnival costumes. Also, the courses in Afro-beauty and aesthetics described above have been connected to a salon where young people learn and practice the trades of hairstyling and make-up. Community members have access to the salon and are encouraged to embrace their Afro-Brazilian identity with styles that accentuate rather than mask their black features.

In 2006, Ilê Aiyê completed a new community center, which the author visited in late 2007. The structure symbolically represents the group's full embrace of a more participatory, supplemental model of involvement and support for Afro-descendants in the Liberdade-Curuzu neighborhood. The Centro Cultural Senzala do Barro Preto is an eight-story 4,500 square meter building that houses nearly all of Ilê Aiyê's activities, including the Escola Mãe Hilda, the PEP workshops, Cozinha da Cidade, and the boutique and salon. In addition, the grounds function as a meeting hall where the musical groups perform regularly and carnival rehearsals are held. With support from Ford Foundation, the organization has built several state-of-the-art facilities and staffed them with professionals who are committed to training young apprentices. These include a recording studio where a professional sound engineer works with the bands, and medical and dental clinics, where doctors and nurses offer medical treatment but also teach members about their work and how to navigate the processes of becoming a professional.

The idea of bringing professionals into the community as role models, in the same way that musicians and artists have served as role models, represents an important

strategy that Ilê Aiyê is employing to orient the community toward taking advantage of existing educational opportunities. The sense of pride that community members take in the organization and its new facility is perhaps the most tangible valorization yet accomplished in Bahia. To what extent this valorization is shaping educational achievement and social mobility remains unclear, but given the proven importance of positive self-image on performance, one can hope that it has been great.

## Conclusion

This work has attempted to show that supplemental and alternative visions of social change have each been significantly affected by the democratization and globalization processes occurring in Salvador da Bahia. As these developments continue in Brazil and other so-called multicultural societies, cultural politics appears to play an increasingly important role in mediating the relationship between the state and the multiplicity of separate interests in civil society. Ilê Aiyê's progress as an organization and as a community resource illustrates that despite the challenges associated with these processes of change, nimble institutional and ideological negotiation can be parlayed into local triumphs. In attempting to develop supplemental institutional relationships through the Projeto Pedagógico de Educação, and at the same time pursuing their alternative vision of social inclusion and empowerment, Ilê Aiyê represents a model of success for social movement organizations grappling with their place within changing political and economic landscapes.

Ilê Aiyê has learned to present a double-face, blurring the boundaries between supplemental or alternative, educational access or quality, and service provider or social advocate. The organization embodies the reliable interlocutor and quick fix solution that the neoliberal state demands in a partnership, and has outwardly attached itself to the depoliticized discourse of empowerment that enables lucrative cultural marketing. For groups that face social, political, and economic exclusion, learning to manipulate these aspects of the prevailing order seems to represent a significantly more pragmatic



approach than outright resistance. Yet locally, much of Ilê Aiyê's methods and messages convey a sense of urgency in achieving widespread structural change in the Brazilian racial hierarchy. The organization has managed to maintain a dialogue with the local community that remains vehemently critical of the very system into which it facilitates inclusion.

This analysis supports a commitment to viewing social organizations and movements as fluid processes of contestation, overlap, and change. Local and community projects are particularly capable of pursuing these processes because their closeness to their constituencies means they can more easily adapt to changing contexts. They can also skirt the susceptibility to routinization and disconnectedness that disrupt this fluidity. Organizational fluidity can protect against the cooptation that has so often characterized counter-hegemonic resistance.

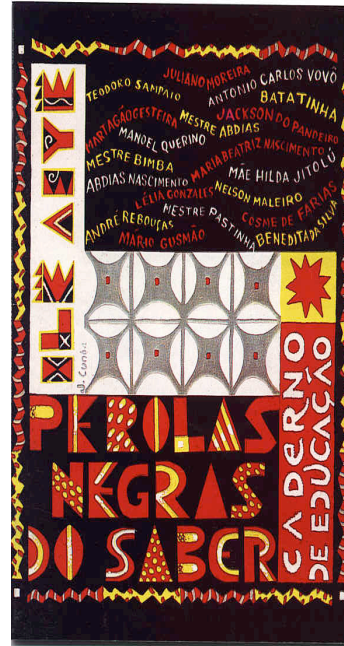
However, further investigation of community-level projects and processes of change remains necessary. The ability to sustain institutional viability and constructive discourse and practices is not a complete measure of success. This analysis has traced the projects of community organizations that mediate the relationship between political, economic, and social structures, and local community members. Knowing to what extent this mediation has contributed to a meaningful impact on the status of marginalized people remains unclear. Does valorization as educational project contribute toward improving the lives of young people in these communities of Salvador da Bahia? We cannot yet insist that it does, and yet, to sustain our commitment to social justice as scholars and as people, we cannot let this uncertainty discourage the hope that it has.

## Appendices

### APPENDIX A. EXAMPLES OF CADERNOS DE EDUCAÇÃO



1<sup>st</sup> Caderno de Educação – 1995  
*Organizações de Resistência*



5<sup>th</sup> Caderno de Educação – 1997  
*Pérolas Negras do Saber*



14<sup>th</sup> Caderno de Educação – 2006  
*O Negro e O Poder*

**APPENDIX B. PHOTOGRAPHS OF ILÊ AIYÊ AND OLODUM**



Students from Escola Mãe Hilda, rehearsing.  
Photograph taken by the author, November, 2006



Recreation and Performance Hall, Centro Cultural Senzala do Barro Preto  
Photograph taken by the author, November, 2006.



Students from Escola Olodum, performing at Carnaval 2009.  
Source: “Carnaval Escola Olodum,” <http://olodum.uol.com.br/>



Director of Olodum João Jorge Santos Rodrigues (center) meets with municipal officials.  
Source: “Encontro Deputado Danial e João Jorge,” <http://olodum.uol.com.br/>

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## **Vita**

Zachary Zoeth Brown earned a BA from the University of California, San Diego, with majors in history and religious studies. His academic work culminated in two theses, the first on the history of political mobilization in Brazil, and the second on the construction of hybrid identities during the formation and development of the Brazilian religion, Umbanda. His primary academic interest is education, especially the development history and arts curricula, because of their role in the formation of identity. He is also interested in the arts and their relationship with the development of social and cultural capital. An extended stay in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil spent teaching Afro-Brazilian music helped generate much of his research direction. Having completed his MA, he plans to return to California where he will begin his career as a high school history and music teacher. His life experience makes him ideologically bound to the idea that students with a positive self-image will perform better and be able sustain the motivation to work hard toward overcoming inequality and improving their lives.

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