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# Building the Brazilian Nation through *Futebol-Mulato*: Racial Democracy, Visual-Aural Capitalism and the Rise of Cultural Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Brazil

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**Hoyoon Jung**

*University of Hawaii, Manoa*

## ABSTRACT

*This study examines the dynamic and dialectic process through which Brazilian national identity had been constructed, and racial democracy and **mestiçagem** could become the dominant narrative of national myth throughout the twentieth century. I argue that football, among other popular cultures such as film, literature, samba, and carnival, can be marked as the most influential and powerful nation-builder which eventually enabled all Brazilians to embrace the myth of **mestiçagem** and racial democracy from the 1930s to the 1980s and 1990s to some extent. In other words, Brazilian football had significantly contributed that Brazilian people could share a commonly held sense of Brazilian-ness based on strong ethnocultural ties. This study emphasizes that visual-aural capitalism played a colossal role in this process, suggesting that the Brazilian imagined community came into being with the advent of vibrant visual and aural technologies – specifically, the dissemination of radio, film, and television – in the twentieth century.*

**Keywords:** *football, miscegenation, national identity, racial democracy, visual-aural technology.*

## INTRODUCTION

As American historian Marshall Eakin (2017: 1) observes, the history of national identities is ‘a history of myth-making.’ Twentieth-century Brazil, like many other countries in the Latin American region, witnessed the dynamic and dialectic process through which national identity had been socially constructed through popular culture. In the case of Brazil, football, among other popular cultures such as film, litera-

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ture, samba, and carnival, can be marked as the most influential and powerful nation-builder which eventually enabled all Brazilians to embrace the myth of **mestiçagem** and racial democracy from the 1930s to 1980s and 1990s to some extent. Brazilian football had significantly contributed that Brazilian people could share a commonly held sense of *Brazilianness* based on strong ethnocultural ties, largely in the absence of vibrant and potent civic identity (Archetti 2003; Eakin 2017; Leite Lopes 1997). Then, how Brazilian leaders and the political elites, throughout most of the twentieth century, took advantage of the power and appeal of football for the sake of making of imagined Brazilian community? What made football so popular that it finally became a standard set of national symbols and rituals among Brazilian people?

This study aims to address the abovementioned two principal questions by drawing primarily on modernist-constructivist accounts of national identity. While some scholars have addressed the role of football in nation-building in Brazil (*e.g.*, Archetti 2003; Leite Lopes 1997), less scholarly attention has been paid to how the development of media technology and an ensuing emergence of aural-visual cultures – notably, radio, film, and television – contributed to this process. I argue that it is unconvincing football itself, through the exertion of the State, just spontaneously captured the hearts and minds of Brazilian people in a top-down way, making all Brazilians feel strong national ties through football. Thus, unlike Benedict Anderson's (1983) ground-breaking work which argues that the formation of nation-states in Europe were closely associated with the nineteenth-century print capitalism, this article suggests, with particular reference to the American Brazilianist Marshall Eakin's classic study (2017), that in the case of Latin American countries, Brazil, in particular, the imagined community came into being with the advent of vibrant visual and aural cultures – specifically, the dissemination of radio, film, and television – in the twentieth century.

#### **SPORT AND NATIONAL IDENTITY: A MODERNIST-CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH**

##### **Nationalism Precedes the Nation: Modernist-Constructivist Theories of Nation Formation**

Modernist-constructivist view of a nation has long been the prominent trend in the studies of nationalism and national identity (Conversi 2007: 18). In contrast to primordialist and ethno-symbolist accounts, modernists-constructivist theorists of national identity claim that nationalism and national identity are distinctively modern and regard the

transitional process from a traditional society to modernity as a necessary condition for their formation. These theories in the modernist-constructivist camp focus respectively on the role of industrialization, socio-economic, political or cultural conditions in the formation and development of nationalism. These theorists have also highlighted that nations are nothing objective, real or indispensable, but a historical, social, and cultural construct based fundamentally on collectively shared cultures, myths, symbols, and rituals.

Craig Calhoun (1997: 5) asserts that nationalism is ‘constituted largely by the claims themselves, by way of talking and thinking and acting that relies on these sorts of claims to produce a collective identity.’ Likewise, Benedict Anderson (1983) conceptualizes nations as ‘imagined communities’ which embrace not only political formations but also forms of cultural representations where national identity can be consistently reproduced through discursive action. Therefore, for Anderson, national identity is a particular type of imaginative identification through which national symbols are expressed, in which all members of a certain nation never know or meet most of their fellow members. Based on this social constructivist presumption, Anderson (1983) proposes the definition of a nation as follows:

It is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion... Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined... Finally, [the nation] is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willing to die for such limited imaginings (Anderson 1983: 6–7).

He contends that the rise of print-capitalism that burgeoned in the late eighteenth century played a pivotal role in the emergence and development of nationalism and national identity, because the dissemination of a variety of literature such as books and newspapers facilitated a vernacular language to be diffused, fixing it as the ‘national’ language while rendering people to ‘imagine’ themselves and engage in inescapably shared national consciousness and experience.

In his book *Nationalism and Social Communication*, Karl Deutsch (1966 [1953]) similarly deals with the impact of modernization on nationalism. While treating the transition to modern from traditional societies as a stepping stone for the growth of nationalism, he emphasizes the overarching role played by communication in the formation of national identity. Deutsch further suggests that the massive social mobilization, along with urbanization, industrialization, and commercialization, as well as the development of mass communications, provided people effective chances to communicate with one another that facilitated the making of a nation.

The works of Tim Edensor (2002) and Michael Billig (1995) are particularly noteworthy in terms of national identity as a collective consciousness and identification deeply embedded and continually reproduced in everyday life. In his path-breaking book *National Identity, Popular culture and Everyday Life*, Edensor (2002) faults dominant theories of the nation for concentrating heavily on political economy and history, and also points out that the cultural elements that the dominant theories deal with are exclusively 'high culture' or 'folk culture' that are genuinely 'invented' for certain nationalist purposes. He pinpoints that the nation is continually experienced and represented instead through the national popular culture that includes a number of other cultural producers such as pop stars, film and television producers, fashion designers, and sporting heroes as well. The underlying theoretical foundation of his argument is based primarily upon what Billig (1995) terms 'banal nationalism' that refers to daily un mindful reminders of nationhood we ordinarily receive. Opening the door to explore the often routinely reproduction of everyday national consciousness, Billig (1995: 8) claims that national identity is seldom forgotten because 'there is a continual "flagging," or reminding, of nationhood in the established nations.' Billig specifically suggests that.

By noticing the flaggings of nationhood, we are noticing something about ourselves. We are noticing the depths and mechanisms of our identity, embedded in the routines of social life. These rhetorical episodes continually remind us that we are 'us' and, in so doing, permit us to forget that we are being reminded. And, if we look closely, we not only see reminders of 'ourselves'; we see reminders of 'them' and foreignness (Billig 1995: 175).

He illustrates how the use of banal utterances in daily life, such as 'here', or 'us' that we tend to overlook easily actually engraves us as a part of a nation. Overall, these modernist-constructivist accounts ex-

amined above are indeed best represented by Jackie Hogan's (2010) description of nations, 'Nations are more than geopolitical entities; they are discursively constructed "imagined communities."' As such, the modernist-constructivist view of the nation, by challenging primordialism and ethno-symbolism, distinctively underlines the modernist and the social constructivist nature of nationhood.

### **Sport as a Potent Tool for Nation-Building**

It has been widely recognized that sports represent a crucial cultural arena through which particular identities, such as nationality, gender, social class, or race, are formulated. Specifically, many scholars argued that sports symbolize a primary social space constructing and consolidating national identities and propagating national sensitivities. Thus, the sport has long been recognized as a means of nation-building (e.g., Archetti 1999; Bairner 2001; Billig 1995; Edensor 2002; Fox 2006; Hargreaves 2002; Hong 2011; Leite Lopes 1997, 2007; Miller and Crolley 2007). As Eric Hobsbawm notes, 'the imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people... *The individual, even the one who only cheers, becomes a symbol of his nation himself; the team becomes the physical embodiment of the nation*' (1991: 143). In the same vein, Archetti (1999) posits, 'the team becomes the physical embodiment of the nation.' Hargreaves (2002: 32) also observes, 'political elites, for some considerable time, tended to intervene in and promote sport as an important instrument for the creation of a sense of national identity.' Hong's (2011) case study also reveals that the South Korean government has employed elite sport policy via business (primarily the colossal role of *chaebol*) as a way of promoting national identity and pursuing nation-building.

Many scholars have particularly attended to the ways in which sport contributes, as a form of popular culture, to the construction and transformation of national identity in everyday life. For instance, Fox (2006) analyzes the creative ways in which sports audiences and fans consume nationalism through sporting events. After examining the case of Romanian and Hungarian university students, he argues that international sporting competitions characterize significant occasions for the display of national allegiances and nationalism. In his path-breaking book entitled *Banal Nationalism*, Billig (1995) also draws attention to the apparent parallel between sports and warfare. He suggests that sport is 'a benign reproduction of war,' which provides 'symbolic models for the understanding of war,' primarily because the sports pages of newspapers echo the language of warfare and invite us

to wave flags (1995: 122–4). Similarly, Hoberman (1984) describes sportspeople as ‘proxy warriors’ and argues that sports are among the most effective vehicles of expression of nationalist feelings. Meanwhile, Edensor (2002) elucidates that as producers of popular culture, sporting heroes are essential markers for any identification of national culture. He regards sports as ‘the most currently powerful form of popular national performance.’ According to Edensor, an organized sport is ‘increasingly situated in the mediatized matrix of national life, is institutionalized in schools, widely represented in a host of cultural forms, and is an everyday practice for millions of national subjects.’ Thus, this daily context offers ‘one of the most popular ways in which national identity is grounded’ (2002: 78).

**FROM SCIENTIFIC RACISM TO RACIAL DEMOCRACY:  
THE HISTORY OF RACE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY  
IN BRAZIL**

At the end of the nineteenth century, Brazilian politicians and elites began to contemplate the idea of the nation and race amid fractious debate revolved around those ideas, stimulated by the officially full emancipation of slavery in 1888 and the proclamation of the old republic in 1889 (Nava and Lauerhass 2006). They particularly worried about, according to Jennifer Roth-Gordon (2017), the country's lack of whiteness. The late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Brazil, in the words of Thomas Skidmore (1974), spent much more a ‘sleepless night’ concerning its far-reaching blackness, strategizing on how to upgrade their national population racially. According to Nancy Stepan (1991), leading thinkers in Brazil and Latin America obsessed over their global standing, at the same time they yearned for the whiter U.S. and European values. The elites in Brazil felt particularly disadvantaged in the realm of race vis-à-vis mostly white Argentina, their primary South American rival (Skidmore 2010: 82).

At the international level, nineteenth-century Europe witnessed the rise and predominance of ‘science’ that ‘scientifically’ maintains the Caucasian as ‘biologically’ superior to other races, which had been the base of scientific racism that went hand in hand with imperialism. This trend was not an exception to Brazil; throughout much time in the nineteenth century, after independence from Portugal in 1822 more precisely, Brazilian elites had long credited the White to racial superiority. At the same time, the Brazilian intellectual community increasingly had contacts with Europe – especially France – and hugely influenced thus by Auguste Comte's positivist philosophy. As a result, European eugenics, scientific racism, and social Darwinism

which stressed racial hierarchy and white supremacy was successfully transplanted and dominated in Brazilian intellectual life and social thought under the banner of positivism (Heise 2012; Levine 1992). However, in contrast to such dominant social Darwinism and Spencerian theories in Europe, the racial idea of the ruling white in Brazil at that time was that the white race is not only biologically, but also intellectually and morally superior to the others; the black was mainly seen as a racial degeneracy (Kim 2010). Also, in his book *Race in another America*, Edward Telles (2004) suggests that whereas British, German and North American eugenics was based closely on Mendelian eugenics which adhered to genetic inheritance and its racial impact, most Latin America and Brazilian eugenics maintained strong intellectual ties with French one, following neo-Lamarckianism which highlighted that genetic deficiencies could be ameliorated in a single generation. Thus, the neo-Lamarckian view had enormous implications for Brazilian scholars and political elites who later stick to the fact that black and mulatto inferiority could be improved through miscegenation with the White (Telles 2004).

Based on this dominant intellectual view, Brazilian elites who dreamed of constructing a modern state like the U.S and Europe finally proposed *embranquecimento* (whitening) – or what Natasha Pravas (2003) calls ‘*hibridação estratégica*’ (strategic hybridization) – as an alternative solution in order to resolve racial problems and reach a comparable level with those countries. This whitening was backed up primarily through European immigration, by promoting and financially subsidizing workers in Europe, where surplus labor was produced in the process of demographic transition (Guimarães 2012; Roth-Gorden 2017; Sansone 2003; Telles 2004). The elite in Brazil who did not want Brazil to remain as a second-class country believed that a flow of healthy Caucasian blood and an inter-racial marriage would allow Brazilians to ‘cleanse themselves of the backward population’ (Davis 2000: 19; Ferreira 2001).

The whitening policy was closely allied to the 1891 Constitution which manifested a ferocious prohibition of immigration from Asia and Africa, for fear of ‘mongolization’ and ‘Africanization’ (Hanchard 1994; Skidmore 2010: 83). The First Republic (1891–1930) made a constant effort to attract European immigration; as a result, 2.5 million European workers arrived in Brazil between 1890 and 1914, and another approximately 847,000 Europeans migrated during the 1920s paid for by state subsidies (Merrick and Graham 1979: 92, quoted in Andrews 1996: 486). Thanks to *embranquecimento*, the national census of 1920 could confirm that the white race was becoming

more elevated in the Brazilian population. However, in the 1920s Brazil witnessed a strong opposition to European immigration. George Andrews states explicitly that

By the 1920s and 1930s national disenchantment with immigration and Europeanization was abundantly clear. Right-wing xenophobia became a core element of middle-class political mobilization, culminating in the fascist-inspired Integralist movement, founded in 1932 in São Paulo, the state most affected by European immigration. São Paulo had already abolished its programme of subsidies for European immigration in 1927, and in 1930 and 1931 the federal government placed restrictions on immigration into the country, as well as on the employment of foreign nationals in commerce and industry (Andrews 1996: 486–487).

As the effort of Brazil to transform into a white society failed, according to Andrews (1996: 487), questions around Brazil's path for future development, modernity and the character of its national identity were reopened. It was at that time at the new dawn of the rise of racial democracy as an alternative view of the Brazilian nation.

As the endeavor to 'whiten' the Brazilian nation was unsuccessful, Brazil's twentieth-century dictatorships attempted to undertake myth-making strategy as a nation-building project since the 1930s: crafting and projecting a favorable image of racial democracy and *mestiçagem* (*miscegenation*), both domestically and internationally (Davis 2000). President Getúlio Vargas (dictator during 1930–1945, democratically elected and governed during 1951–1954) particularly pursued to centralize Brazil's federal system, modernize and industrialize Brazil as well as to actively promote a cohesive and shared sense of national identity through nation-building, rested on racial democracy and racial mixture (Roth-Gordon 2017: 21). Starting from the 1930s, Brazil's socio-racial relations had centered on the idea of racial democracy (Sansone 2003: 2). The Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta (1981) has famously called this national mythology as the '*fábula das três raças*.' This fable of three races represents the 'racially harmonious Brazilian national family,' which incorporated African, European, and native peoples (Davis 2000: 2).

The notion of racial democracy has been widely used to frame Brazil's racial harmony as one without racial discrimination and hierarchical race relations. It should be noted that the celebrated Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre had enormously contributed to making this idea popular, which had long been characterized *brasilidade* (Brazilianness) – how Brazilians believe themselves to be and how they



should be. In his book *Casa Grande & Senzala (The Masters and the Slaves)*, Freyre (1956 [1933]) highlighted the promising role of miscegenation and racial mixture that would eventually lead to Brazilian social development and harmonious race relations, attempting at the same time to create a Brazilian ‘meta-race,’ downplaying discussion of racial difference (Roth-Gordon 2017: 21).

It is important to note that Freyre did not directly coin the term racial democracy; the term was evolved first from the notion of ‘social democracy’ termed by Freyre in the 1930s and later developed into ‘racial’ substituting ‘social’ in the intellectual circle in the 1950s. Specifically, he speaks of ‘social democracy’ in his lecture in Lisbon on ‘Aspects of the Influence of Race Mixture on Social and Cultural Relations between the Portuguese and Luso-descendants.’ In Freyre’s lecture, published later in 1938, he specifically states that

There is, with respect to this problem of growing importance for modern peoples – the problem of miscegenation, of Europeans’ relations with black, brown, and yellow people – a distinctly, typically, characteristically Portuguese attitude, perhaps better described as Luso-Brazilian, Luso-Asian, Luso-African, which makes of us a psychological and cultural unit founded upon one of the most significant events, perhaps one could say upon one of the most significant human solutions of a biological and at the same time social nature, of our time: social democracy through race mixture (Freyre 1938: 14, quoted in Guimarães 2005: 122).

Freyre stressed that Brazil’s social democracy is not only the most original and crucial legacy of Luso-Brazilian civilization to humanity, but also it contrasts with the merely political democracy in Europe. He asserted that,

By virtue of this cultural dynamism, which does not shut off European culture from other influences; by valuing in men, to the greatest extent possible, authentic qualities independent of color, social position, economic success; through equality – as much as possible – of social opportunities and of culture for men of different origins, regions molded by the Portuguese – molded by miscegenation – constitute today an anticipation of, or, more accurately, an approximation to, that social democracy from which currently more advanced peoples find themselves distant in their practice of that often inefficient, unjust, and anti-human political, merely political, democracy (Freyre 1938: 18, quoted in Guimarães 2005: 122).

His intellectual implications, in the words of Edward Telles (2004: 33), 'transformed the concept of miscegenation from its former pejorative connotation into a positive national characteristics and the most important symbol of Brazilian culture.' According to Peter Fry (2005: 215), Freyre suggested an exuberant and optimistic vision of racial democracy and *mestiçagem*, *declaring that all Brazilians, whatever their biological and genealogical affiliation, 'were culturally Africans, Amerindians and Europeans.'*

Since Vargas, the myth of racial democracy had become at its zenith as a dogma under military dictatorships from 1964 to 1985, which also achieved Brazil's most considerable economic growth. The authoritarian regime during this period turned Freyrean vision into an uncontested and obstinate principle of the Brazilian nation (Telles 2004). *By the 1980s, therefore, all Brazilians regardless of color 'carry with them shadows in their soul, traces of Europe, Africa, and the Americas in their cultural, if not their biological, DNA.'* They shared this Freyrean vision of Brazil, *brasilidade*, which had become a 'master narrative of Brazilian culture' (Eakin 2017: 2).

#### **THE MAKING OF BRAZILIAN-NESS THROUGH FUTE-BOL-MULATO: RACIAL DEMOCRACY, MESTIÇAGEM, AND FOOTBALL IN THE SERVICE OF THE BRAZILIAN NATION, 1930–1985**

According to Livio Sansone (2003: 2), racial democracy could become the founding myth of the Brazilian nation primarily because a myth had been both accepted by the vast majority and reproduced in daily life. This became possible thanks to the consistent efforts of the State which, particularly during the Getulio Vargas regime, propagated through futebol, along with Samba and Carnival, which epitomized the creative power of racial mixture and miscegenation – as a nation-building strategy. Since Vargas, *futebol* became one of the sources of Brazilian pride, not only because of their excellence but also because this represents Brazil's positive image of multiracial harmony to the rest of the world (Telles 2004: 37).

The previous section discussed the history of race and nation in Brazil, particularly from the rise of scientific racism to the new invention of racial democracy and *mestiçagem* as a dominant and powerful narrative of Brazilian national identity. The history of futebol in Brazil parallels with the history of race and the nation in Brazil. This section will explore the history of the construction of Brazilian national cultural identity through futebol, by examining chronicles from elitist and aristocratic beginning to the appropriation of football in working-class

and non-white Brazilians along with the democratization of futebol, which brought about the creation of futebol-mulato and contributed later to the making of Brazilian imagined community based on the idea of racial democracy and *mestiçagem* and further consolidation of this narrative by the end of military dictatorship.

#### **Aristocratic Beginning of Brazilian Football: British Influence and the Elite Football, 1894–1904**

The early spread of football in Latin America was closely associated with Britain's status as a world power (Archetti 1999). Correctly, British sailors played a vital role in this process. It was thus not by accident that 'the oldest football clubs were founded in the main ports visited by sailors and traders: Rosario and Buenos Aires in Argentina, São Paulo/Santos and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, Montevideo in Uruguay, Lima/Callao in Peru and Valparaiso in Chile' (Archetti 2003: 116). Early internationalization of football followed 'the network of contacts stimulated indirectly by previously established and spontaneous relations between local elites and their institutions' (Leite Lopes 1997: 55). This was the case for Brazil as well. In Brazil, Charles William Miller, the son of a Scottish father and an Anglo-Brazilian mother, a student in Southampton who returned to São Paulo in 1894 with two leather balls and outfits, is generally considered a representative figure in the introduction and popularization of football, especially in São Paulo (Ferreira Antunes 2014; Leite Lopes 1997). He organized teams consisting of players from privileged classes, specifically dedicating himself to encouraging British residents in São Paulo. Although pursuing his career as a successor of British-owned companies, he was also eager to teach young men in São Paulo-based British community the techniques, rules, and tactics of football (Ferreira Antunes 2014). Another outstanding figure is Hans Nobling, who arrived in São Paulo from Hamburg, where he had been affiliated to the 'Germania Club.' Recruiting top business employees in São Paulo, he founded the Germania Club in that city to play against the teams consisting of British players (Leite Lopes 1997). In the case of Rio de Janeiro, the federal capital at that time, Oscar Cox played an important role similar to that Miller and Nobling did in São Paulo (Wachelke and Fernando 2008). Cox, the son of a British father and a Brazilian mother, returned to Brazil in 1897 after the completion of his studies in Switzerland. Excited by the growth and spread of football in São Paulo, Cox helped found the Fluminense Football Club and became its first president. Influenced by the spread of British technology and the growth of in-

vestment in Brazil, British workers in São Paulo and Rio brought their culture into the Brazilian sport. In some sense, English supremacy during the inception of football practices in Brazil ironically contributed to the development of football (Ferreira Antunes 2014).

Apart from the British, only upper-class Brazilian elites were able to practice the new sport. Although the equipment needed to play football was not exclusive, compared with other sports, playing football was a costly activity since all the equipment – uniforms, boots, and balls – was imported at that time. In other words, the green fields symbolized the attributes of people with greater financial resources (Leite Lopes 1997; Ferreira Antunes 2014). Playing football regularly, thus symbolized one of the characteristics of an elite lifestyle (Leite Lopes 1997). According to Leite Lopes (1997: 56–7), ‘several football clubs were made up of university students, and access to law, medicine and to a lesser extent, engineering was a form of social reconversion (via schooling) for the declining Brazilian rural aristocracy or an expanded reproduction of the new scholarized urban elites.’ Therefore, the clubs became a symbolic place for their urban socializing (Leite Lopes 1997). Because of this, football maintained an elitist and aristocratic character while remaining an amateur practice for some time. However, despite these restrictions, football gradually attracted interest among the lower classes, especially workers (Ferreira Antunes 2014).

#### **Factory Football and Workers' Inclusion, 1905–1922**

Although the first football clubs only allowed the participation of the upper class and social elites as players or counselors, they began to attract significant attention of the popular classes as well (Wachelke and Fernando 2008). The best-known workers' team in Brazil would be probably the Bangu Athletic Club, which was established in 1904 at the Companhia Progresso Industrial do Brasil, a textile factory located in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro (Leite Lopes 1997; Ferreira Antunes 2014). According to Levine (1980: 235), ‘its first team included an Italian, seven Englishmen, and a white Brazilian, but team members taught the sport to some of the factory workers, and Bangu began to draw neighborhood support and an image as a working-class team.’ Ferreira Antunes (2014) notes that workers at Bangu finally got access to the game because there were no enough British players at *Bangu* to have two complete teams to play against each other. It would be no exaggeration to say that the Bangu Athletic Club provoked the popularization of football in Rio de Janeiro as well as in other regions. In-

deed, the Bangu Athletic Club became well-known as the club that rapidly reached the top division and soon had a match against Fluminense, Botafogo, and so on (Ferreira Antunes 2014).

According to Leite Lopes (1997: 57), at that time in Brazil football was a means to discipline morally and symbolically the working-class youth. Likewise, the board of directors at the Bangu factory adopted football as a disciplinary and pedagogical technique for 'total institutions,' stimulating workers to augment their 'sense of belongings to the company community.' This was a clear example of using sport as a functionalist means. In the same vein, several factories began to encourage football among their employees and workers, and established a large number of teams in São Paulo in the 1910s, basing the Bangu as their point of reference (Leite Lopes 1997). Ferreira Antunes states in this regard, 'it was difficult to find an industry that did not have at least a small team. Amateur football, the sport played in clubs created in factories by the workers themselves, became a new tradition in the city' (Ferreira Antunes 2014: 24). The number of a mulatto and black players increased along with the increase in the number of working-class players on the team. Therefore, it was not only schools but also the case for companies that facilitated the dissemination of direct access to the game among the working classes (Leite Lopes 1997). In addition, Aquino (2002 cited in Wachelke and Fernando 2008) asserts that the prohibition of the practice of *capoeira* after the abolition of slavery for political and security purposes was another factor as well that facilitated and accelerated the diffusion of interests of working-class people in football. It was not only São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro but also Brazil's vast interior where the game spread among the lower-income population. According to Gaffney, this was enabled and empowered by the improvements in transportation as well as the advent of radio transmission. Football, finally, became a central part of centennial celebrations in Brazil in 1922 (Gaffney 2014). However, in spite of the popularization of football among the working-class people, the hegemony of amateur elites still preserved due to their better knowledge of training and tactics of the game as well as their greater resources available in comparison to the worker players' limited time and resources caused by their required involvement in factory production (Leite Lopes 1997).

### **Social Tensions in Amateur Football, 1923–1932**

However, it was in 1923 that the enduring hegemony of elite clubs collapsed for the first time. The elite clubs achieved every victory in Rio de Janeiro city championship; however, this story was broken by

Vasco da Gama's historic acquisition of the title (Leite Lopes 1997). There was a secret behind the victory of the Vasco team, which was a second division champion in 1922. According to Leite Lopes (1997: 60), the team recruited 'the best players from the working-class suburbs, whether they were white, black or mulatto, and kept them in a regimen of semi-confinement, financed by the club, so that the athletes were available to play football full time.' In other words, the Vasco team was 'the first to field non-white players in 1923 that promptly stormed to the championship, encouraging other sides to follow suit' (Giulianotti 1999: 160). Vasco symbolized the growing popularity of football, and this game was played in nearly all the working-class neighborhoods (Leite Lopes 1997).

However, this success of the workers' team triggered some social and ideological tensions in the Brazilian society. In terms of the social context of that time, social Darwinism was widely diffused throughout the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries and was immensely influenced by the European – especially French – traditions of positivist philosophy (Park 2010). In Brazil, as Megali Romero Sá (2001: 65) points out, 'during the last decades of the nineteenth century, evolutionary thought and racial theory represented guiding axes for the natural sciences and strongly influenced the ideas of the intellectuals who were involved in defining Brazilian nationality.' In this context, the theory of *embraquecimento* (the whitening process) was widely encouraged in all sectors in Brazil, treating Afro-Brazilians and the mulatto as racially and culturally inferior as well as relegating them as the subjects of damaging social cohesion. Since they were also portrayed as an obstacle for the process of nation-building, the elites at that time promoted the elimination of these components through miscegenation, seeking *Europeanization*, and systematically disqualified all 'non-white' cultural manifestations (Maranhão and Knijnik 2011).

Thus, 'the arrival of the game a few short years removed from the abolition of slavery meant that dark-skinned Brazilians who participated as clandestine professionals in an amateur game intended to reflect high culture were often viewed as unwanted reminders of the region's alleged determinist albatross' (Jackson 2014: 50). Under this social background, the big clubs counteracted the repercussion of Vasco's victory; the Rio all-star team, which was supposed to compete for the national championship did not include a single player from the Vasco's. Other measures were also taken; the clubs established a new football league that prohibited the Vasco's from joining. This new league also found a commission that plays a role in investigating players' means of survival to verify their status as an amateur. Leite Lopes (1997: 62) points out that the substance and procedures of this investi-

gation revealed a number of class distinctions and social prejudices. Besides, some individuals with occupations such as stevedores, soldiers, taxi drivers, and barbers were banned from playing in the first division. The new league even tested the players whether they could read and write properly, making them sign their names and fill in an enrollment form when they entered the field (Leite Lopes 1997). This implicit test of schooling, according to Leite Lopes (1997: 63), clearly reveals the ‘very characteristic of the indirect, euphemistic exercise of class and color prejudice in Brazil.’

### **The Professionalization of Football: Racial Democracy and Futebol-Mulato, 1933–1950**

Leite Lopes (1997: 67–8) maintains that the outside pressure significantly worsened the internal crisis in amateur football; European clubs wanted to recruit excellent players from Latin America. Specifically, Mussolini's Italy wanted to recruit Italian-Latin Americans in order to prove national superiority as a host country of the 1934 World Cup. This recruitment endangered Argentinian football the most. In response, professionalism was adopted in Buenos Aires, and soon Uruguay followed this flow. Meanwhile, in both cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, white players who were non-Italian descent overtly changed their names into Italian style names, manipulating their identification papers with the Italian clubs' connivance. The impetus and momentum for the implementation of professional football in Brazil, therefore, was accelerated to countervail such an exodus of players and professionalism finally came into Brazilian football in 1933 (Giulianotti 2014).

According to Leite Lopes (1997), whereas white players were recruited from Europe, black players became virtually non-exportable to Mussolini's Italy. Leite Lopes postulates that racial division ironically facilitated the growth of football as a professional and the ‘national’ sport as well as the social emancipation through sport. In this regard, he argues explicitly that

Many white Brazilian players who had gone to Italy ended up integrating into that society, encouraged by the Italian colony in São Paulo, who considered a triumphant return to Italy an ideal to be achieved by Brazilian-born descendants of Italians. Blacks, in turn, appeared to be ‘condemned’ to ‘local’ success, to be great local players, to be Brazil's greatest players. In this sense, they were identified as the great initiators of Brazilian national football. Football thus could not have the same meaning for both black and white players. Between them, there was a difference separating ‘good profes-

sionals,' prone to exercise their talents on the international football scene, and talented players, who – through their athletic success – were seeking their ethnic emancipation but condemned to succeed exclusively in their homeland. Professional football became a means of emancipation for black athletes, a necessary condition to establish football as a 'national' sport. This undertaking was not just a business strategy; it established an identity between players and the public, united in their adherence to a common project of social emancipation through sport (Leite Lopes 1997: 68–9).

Thus, the 1930s in Brazil can be marked by the gradual spread of football democratization. According to Kim (2010), black players gained recognition alongside the emergence of professional football, including such players as Leônidas da Silva and Domingos da Guia. These democratizing improvements stood out in the third participation in the 1938 World Cup (Leite Lopes 2007). Gaffney (2014: 189) asserts that 'the centrality of the football to Brazilian national identity was confirmed when the national team won a third-place medal at the 1938 World Cup in France and tens of thousands gathered to welcome the team home on the docks of Rio de Janeiro.'

The 1930s to the 1950s was a crucial period for the development of football, marked by the era of Getulio Vargas regime characterized as authoritarianism, populism, and nation-building (Giulianotti 2014: Preface, xiv). With his nationalistic ideology, Vargas devised socio-cultural policies to promote a collective imagined community, which would bridge the stark divisions, in terms of race and social class, in every aspect of social life. Accordingly, previously ridiculed non-white manifestations were gradually transformed into national symbols (Maranhão and Knijnik 2011). In this political and social context in Brazil, the 1938 World Cup played a catalytic role in defining Brazilianness and animating the process of the construction of national identity as a racial democracy, promoted mainly by some notable intellectuals. Among them, Gilberto Freyre's theory of *mestiçagem*, *mulatismo*, and *Democracia Racial* are particularly noteworthy. Rejecting the idea of white supremacy, he asserted that racial mixing should be considered as the quintessence of the Brazilian nation, and pride (Kim 2010). Leite Lopes (2007) points out that Gilberto Freyre provided two novel interpretations of football in Brazil: first, the actualization of African heritage in Brazilian football; and second, the invention of a beautiful game, incorporating intrinsic components of music and dance into Brazilian style of playing. In this regard, Maranhão and Knijnik (2011) explicitly state that.



Freyre's perspective was clearly and publicly demonstrated in the insightful 'Football mulato' article of 1938. At that time, the *Diários Associados* was a leading and influential Brazilian newspaper; in the article, Freyre maintained that the football played in Brazil was a kind of dance, where the human being could shine, as opposed to the football played in Europe which, he thought, was overly mechanized... After football began to take on a truly international dimension, Freyre collaborated as a contributor to newspapers and magazines, continuing to fervently advocate the advantages of the mulatto style of playing football. This mulatto football would be an indispensable condition for the creation of 'our [Brazilians'] own style' of playing football, shaping a distinct mode, constructed in a game of opposition in respect to 'the European playing style' (Maranhão and Knijnik 2011: 59–60).

In other words, football was seen as a major field in which racial coexistence modeled a new imagined community of Brazilians indeed. For Freyre, *futebol-mulato* embodied the essence of *mestiçagem* and racial democracy in sharp contrast to the rational, cold, and machine-like play of the Europeans (Eakin 2017: 175). This Brazilian style of *futebol-mulato* showed an exceptional, artistic, and skillful use of the legs and the body which created a beautiful game to watch. Racial democracy – both on the playground and in Brazilian society – as an explicit nationalist ideology played a paramount role in defining the Brazilian way of being as well as how Brazilians ought to be (Archetti 2003).

According to Jackson (2014: 51), apart from Gilberto Freyre, others in disciplines like sociology, literature and sporting journalism Leite Lopes were also active in promoting 'the idea of Brazilian race through their published interpretations of the game.' A representative figure was a Brazilian sportswriter and publisher Mário Filho, a personal friend of Gilberto Freyre.

Like Casa Grande e Senzala which manifested the prominence of *mestiçagem* in Brazilian society, Mário Filho's (1947) path-breaking book – *O Negro no Futebol Brasileiro* – had also profoundly shaped the Brazilians' idea about race and futebol. This book constructed the vision of Brazilian futebol with vivid historical narratives, adopting Freyre's concept of *futebol-mulato* and highlighting the triumph of racial democracy in Brazilian society in general, and that on the playing fields in particular. His writings and the daily journalism, in the words of Marshall Eakin (2017: 175), 'helped firmly establish the myth

of *mestiçagem* as central to the identity of Brazilian Futebol and national identity in the 1940s and 1950s.’

### **Maracanazo and Football in Military Dictatorships, 1950–1985**

Although the previous period witnessed a remarkable racial democratization of football as well as a wide array of intellectual endeavors for the construction of national identity, these achievements had not eliminated racial stereotypes in society at large; there remained ambiguous prejudices present in the Brazilian society (Archetti 2003). Leite Lopes (1997: 70) points out that at that time, ‘the lack of discipline, drinking and taking bribes were attributed more readily to blacks.’ However, to some extent for mulattos and black players, football was a relatively greater field of opportunity to make possible social and economic mobility (Archetti 2003). The explicit invention of traditions in Brazilian football was beginning from the 1938 World Cup, and it became consolidated as a ‘particular national style of football’ in the 1940s. Gilberto Freyre became ‘the prophet of the success of a new style of football, linked to national traits that he was constructing positively’ (Leite Lopes 2007: 77, 80). Therefore, the 1950 World Cup was the perfect time and place to show this new Brazilian style to the world, possibly with the victory (Leite Lopes 2007).

In this sense, the historical defeat by Uruguay in the final game in 1950, which was held in Maracanã stadium, Rio de Janeiro, was entirely traumatic for this collective construction (Leite Lopes 2007). This defeat greatly affected the construction of national sentiment; a vast range of criticisms was directed toward the many black players. According to Archetti (2003: 119), they were accused of lacking stamina and courage and targeted as ‘the scapegoats for the nation’s tragedy’ because ‘the Brazilian sense of inferiority was related to racial stereotypes.’ It was not a coincidence that the mistakes of defenders and goalkeepers, who were black, provided the decisive loss (Leite Lopes 2007).

This occasion eventually sparked the fervent comeback of the old evolutionist and the social Darwinist thought in Brazil and triggered debates on the deficiencies of mixed Brazilian ethnicity (Leite Lopes 2007). The defeat in the 1950 World Cup thus played a pivotal role in justifying these social stereotypes. Leite Lopes (1997: 71) further notes that the defeat by Hungary in the 1954 World Cup held in Switzerland also offered the opportunity for the head of the Brazilian delegation to draw up a report on the team, ‘turning to the above theories to justify Brazil’s defeat on the basis of the alleged emotional instability resulting from Brazilian miscegenation.’

However, Brazilian football successfully accomplished the reversal of social stigmas, showing a new style of excellence along with the victories in the 1958 World cup in Sweden. Beating the English, Austrians, Russians, French, Welsh, and Swedes, Brazilian football eventually contradicted the previous social Darwinist ethnocentrism, which expressed the inferiority of mestizo football. The victory in 1958 with its 'multi-racial' team and further consolidation by the triumph in the World Cup in 1962 and 1970 confirmed the excellence of the qualities of black players and the new Brazilian style of playing, providing a crucial domain for Brazilian national identity (Archetti 2003; Galeano 1995). Leite Lopes (1997) and Archetti (2003) point out that this Brazilian style of football is closely connected to physical activities and bodily techniques, which manifest ethnic Afro-Brazilian components of music, dance and martial arts such as samba or *capoeira*. This might be possible due to the democratization of Brazilian football, which accompanied the colossal influx of blacks and mulattos. In other words, as Leite Lopes (1997: 74) suggests, 'the social and ethnic origins and composition of this style is not something which can be pointed out as a substance with an underlying nature; it is rather a historical process with unplanned issues and contradictions.'

The repressive military regime, during 1964–1985, also attempted to harness the football's popularity for State purposes, recognizing the appeal and power of *futebol*. Particularly, the authoritarian leaders invested hugely in the *seleção* (Brazilian national team) in 1970 and fully exploited the crowning victory for their vision of nationalism and nation-building based on the compelling narrative of racial democracy, overwhelming all other vying narratives of national identity (Eakin 2017: 168).

**CREATING THE MYTH OF FUTEBOL-MULATO:  
FOOTBALL, VISUAL AND AURAL CULTURES,  
AND THE MAKING OF CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP  
IN BRAZIL**

Radio, film, and television profoundly facilitated opportunities to create an ongoing conversation about Brazilian national identity from the 1930s. That is, the aural and visual cultures promoted by these technologies eventually shaped a shared set of national symbols, myths, and rituals into every nook and corner within Brazil's border. In the words of Marshall Eakin (2017: 166), these aural and visual technologies helped forge 'a *mélange* of popular and elite cultures, at the same time defining and redefining the meaning of "popular."' As Eric

Hobsbawm (1996: 509) observed, ‘the common culture of any late-twentieth-century urbanized country was based on the mass entertainment industry – cinema, radio, television, pop music.’ In Brazil, according to Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson (2009: 17), ‘the mass production and consumption of radio – then television – was integral to the nation-building process, in which football played a crucial part.’ The phenomenal appeal and success of *futebol* aided by these media technologies – including but not limited to glorious victories in the 1958, 1962 and 1970 World Cups as well as sporting heroes such as Garrincha and Pelé – confirmed that racial democracy and *mestiçagem* as a central axis of Brazilianness, which produced the sense of the nation's exuberance and greatness (Eakin 2017: 166).

The 1930s to 1960s witnessed the more significant role of radio not only in making futebol a game of *povo* (the masses) but also in emerging a centralized national imagination through this football phenomenon (Fontes and Hollanda 2014). Robert Levine (1980: 239) maintains that the advent of radio in the mid-1930s also helped the transition from amateurism to the professionalization of Brazilian *futebol*, which accompanied the rise of racially democratized teams, *futebol-mulato*, and the first national star players. The emergence of professional futebol, as well as samba mediated by radio from the 1930s, initiated the creation of the so-called ‘culture industry,’ producing a shared national popular culture for the first time in Brazil (Eakin 2017: 9). Since the first live commentary of the game in São Paulo in 1931 and the first international radio transmissions in the late-1930s along with the advent of the new transistor radio, almost all Brazilians came within a radio's reach. The audiences for football and its popularity, therefore, grew unprecedentedly; it was so ubiquitous listening to the football matches on a portable radio (Édison 2014; Goldblatt 2014: 46).

In the 1950s and 1960s in Brazil the film, along with the rise of radio, generated a powerful shift with the rise of futebol as a shared national experience as well. According to Tatiana Heise (2012: 2), while the radio played a pivotal role by the 1940s, in subsequent decades film took over as ‘the preferred media for representation of national identity.’ The film especially helped promote the massification and dissemination of *futebol* throughout Brazil at those times, catching the hearts and minds of Brazilians, making *futebol* players national icons (Eakin 2017: 7–8, 176). Films for popular audiences which devoted exclusively to *futebol*, such as Osvaldo Sampaio's *The Price of Victory*, and documentaries about Domingos, Leônidas, Garrincha and

Pelé, significantly contributed to position futebol as shared national cultural symbols within people's everyday lives (Goldblatt 2014: 114–119; Mason 1995: 86).

While a form of cultural expressions, including *futebol* and Samba, became the symbol of Brazilian national identity through radio and film, this was fully realized in the 1970s with the widespread diffusion of television which acted as the chief mediator in the process of national cultural integration (Schelling 2004: 182). Although television stations in São Paulo started broadcasting football matches as early as the mid-1950s, the television epoch came only after radio remained by the beginning of the 1970s the most popular mode of consuming *futebol* for inhabitants in Brazil (Goldblatt 2014). This televised futebol successfully offered, in the words of Marshall Eakin (2017: 166), ‘the final peace’ in the decades-long construction of Freyrean vision of *mestiçagem* and racial democracy as the dominant national myth.

This was genuinely possible through the consistent policies of the military dictatorships and their close partner, Rede Globo, the emerging giant of telecommunications in Brazil which concentrated exclusively on newspaper and radio business until 1965 (Eakin 2017: 179). As the military regime attempted to develop national technology and control nationally spread mass media, television was primarily considered by the military both as ‘fitting into this technology vision and as the best way to build Brazilian national identity’ (Tunstall 2008: 19). In his book *Brazillionaires*, American journalist Alex Cuadros (2017) describes how television, with the rise of Globo, affected the vast majority of Brazilian inhabitants to share a cohesive sense of *brasildade*

Brazil became a TV nation watching Globo. By the seventies, destitute families might not have running water, but they usually had a TV set, like the low-income families in today's baixoes... For the first time – it was incredible – a kid in Copacabana saw the buffalo off in the Amazon, and he didn't know that existed in the country. And over in Belém too, the Indians could see the buildings of Rio de Janeiro. This was a big deal in a country where, for much of its history, the major cities had kept more contact with Portugal than with one another... None of it would have been possible if the government hadn't created Brazil's first national telecommunication network, which went into operation in 1969 (Cuadros 2017: 88).

It was therefore ‘the construction of a national television broadcasting system through the efforts of the military regime and *Globo* that provided the final means to transform futebol into a truly national sport of Brazil,’ by making it possible for the majority of Brazilian people to experience a powerful identification with their national team and the symbols of the Brazilian nation such as flag, national anthem, and colors. This national television broadcasting facilitated the consolidation of futebol as a dominant symbol of Brazilian identity, both at home and abroad (Eakin 2017: 171–172, 179–180).

Likewise, the dominant narrative of national identity and nationalism in the twentieth century Brazil is dominantly cultural, rather than civic. Brazilians' struggle for the making of cultural citizenship was more successful than the civic arena because, as Renato Ortiz suggests (2009: 129), ‘the inability of Brazilian society to create national civic myths was due to a lack of consciousness of citizenship.’ In effect, from the 1930s to the 1970s, Brazilians have forged ‘an increasingly rich cultural citizenship over decades in the absence of a strong civic citizenship’ and this ‘vibrant popular culture spawned contending forms of cultural nationalism and identity’ (Eakin 2017: 10). *Futebol* in radio, film, and television had been ‘major sites for the construction of a hegemonic discourse on *brasilidade* or Brazilianness, a term that encompasses the qualities that are thought to define the nation and distinguish Brazilians from other people’ (Heise 2012: 2). As Brian Owensby (2005: 339, 342, quoted in Eakin 2017: 10) has maintained, ‘in a society that largely excluded Brazilians from civic citizenship and full political participation, popular culture offered sites of unofficial citizenship where people could avoid entanglements with a politics that so often excluded them. Through Samba, carnival, and *futebol*, to be Brazilian... is to rise to a moral plane above the pettiness, corruptions, and exclusions of politics.’

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the dynamic and dialectic process through which Brazilian national cultural identity had been constructed, and racial democracy and *mestiçagem* could become the dominant narrative of national myth primarily via *futebol* as a popular culture throughout the twentieth century. Brazil experienced a white supremacist history of race and nation not only most of the time during its colonial period but also it even blossomed after independence in 1822. After independence, Brazilian political elites who admired both European modernity and European thought – particularly, Comtean positivism – attempted

to build the Brazilian nation based on social Darwinism. *Embraquecimento* (Whitening) policy was carried out until the 1920s and 1930s backed up and promoted by massive European immigration into Brazil. However, later, racial democracy could become the founding myth of the Brazilian nation primarily because a myth had been both accepted by the vast majority and reproduced in daily life. This became possible thanks to the consistent efforts of the State, particularly during the Getulio Vargas regime propagated through futebol, along with Samba and Carnival, which epitomized the creative power of racial mixture and miscegenation – as a nation-building strategy.

Brazil's historical path of the construction of national identity through *futebol* expresses a series of struggles. The historical evolution of football in Brazil, where football is regarded as 'the unofficial religion of millions' (Landau 2007: 210), has experienced dynamic processes involving social class and racial prejudices that have intersected with the national and international contexts as well as related professionalization. History shows how working-class people as well as racial minorities – specifically Afro-Brazilians – who were initially excluded in the early aristocratic practices of football, became successfully appropriated in football under struggling social circumstances that signaled the rise and fall of surrounding social tensions. The internationalization of football, triggered by Europe, promoted the spread of professionalization of sport in the 1930s, with marked democratization of football. However, the mixed-race team that modeled the new Brazil was not free from a deep-rooted social Darwinist prejudice. The defeat in the 1950s known as the *Maracanazo* incited a strong return of this old tradition. Nevertheless, this racial democracy was later consolidated through the victories in the 1958 World Cup and after during the military regime.

It is vital to finally note that the role of media was consequential to the formation of the imagined Brazilian community. Radio, film, and television profoundly facilitated opportunities to create an ongoing conversation about Brazilian national identity from the 1930s. During the military regime by the mid-1980s, the rise of national television broadcasting system, *Globo*, provided crucial 'means to transform *futebol* into the truly national sport of Brazil,' by making it possible for the Brazilians to experience a powerful identification with their national team and the symbols of the Brazilian nation (Eakin 2017: 179–180). The phenomenal appeal and success of *futebol* aided by these media technologies confirmed that racial democracy and *mestiçagem* were a central axis of *Brazilianness*.

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