

Revisiting “Family and Transition”: Family, land, and social mobility in the post- abolition period: Rio de Janeiro (1888-1940) ¹

*Revisitando “Família e Transição”: família, terra e mobilidade
social no pós-abolição: Rio de Janeiro (1888-1940)*

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RESUMO

O artigo é uma homenagem à historiadora Ana Lugão Rios, pioneira no estudo do pós-abolição do Brasil. Com base em suas contribuições, o principal objetivo é ampliar as pesquisas sobre as experiências coletivas de famílias negras e o impacto sobre seu tamanho com a entrada de produções agrícolas orientadas ao mercado na região metropolitana da cidade do Rio de Janeiro. Com a redução de oferta de terras em virtude da produção de laranjas em larga escala, famílias negras adotaram como estratégia o aumento no número de membros dentro da mesma unidade, o que, posteriormente, possibilitou, em situações limite, mobilidade social. Para tanto, serão utilizados os registros civis de nascimento do município de Nova Iguaçu, entre os anos de 1888 e 1940, que, ao contrário dos encontrados por Rios em Paraíba do Sul, são bem consistentes.

Palavras-chave: pós-abolição; família; mobilidade social.

ABSTRACT

This article is a tribute to the historian Ana Lugão Rios, a pioneer in the study of the Post-Abolition period in Brazil. Based on her contributions, the main aim of this paper is to expand the research of experiences of black families and the impact on their size of market oriented production in the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro. With the reduction of available land due to large-scale orange production, black families temporarily grew in size in areas of small holdings, which enabled social mobility in certain extreme situations. The civil registers of births from the municipality of Nova Iguaçu from 1888 – 1940 will be examined in order to achieve this.

Keywords: post-abolition; family; social mobility.

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In the defense of her Master's in Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF) in 1990, Ana Lugão Rios placed at the center of the analysis black families from Paraíba do Sul.² Using quantitative analyses of parochial and civil registries, her principal concern was demonstrating how black slave families were not dismantled after abolition in Brazil. Although she found their existence in the immediate post-abolition period, the fragility of information in the sources prevented her from accompanying the families over a longer period, or from evaluating the impact of access to land on the size of these families, since in neither the ecclesiastic nor civil records is color stated after the 1910s.

To the contrary of what happened in the sources analyzed by Rios in Paraíba do Sul, I found in the birth and death records for the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro city that color was systematically declared between 1889 and 1939. Therefore, this paper has the aim of, in the first place, expanding and continuing the analysis of collective experiences of black families and of the impact of the expansion of orange production on black family structure after abolition. To the contrary of what is initially supposed, with the reduction of the offer of land due to the valorization of properties, the families tended to expand. As a result, in second place, I intend to analyze through limit cases how the strategy of constituting nuclear and extensive families affected the chances of social mobility.

To reach these objectives I will crosscheck data referring to white, black, and mixed family structures over time – the civil status of parents, the presence of the name of the father, citation of the names of grandparents, and godparents. Moreover, the birth registers of the former municipality of Iguassú will be analyzed.³ The difference of this research in relation to what was cited previously consists of the temporal analysis, covering the following years: 1889, 1894, 1899, 1904, 1909, 1914, 1919, 1924, 1929, 1934 and 1939. At the same time I will crosscheck this information with three trajectories of blacks who were of social importance in this municipality: Gaspar José Soares – *vereador* (councilor) for five consecutive terms; Silvino de Azeredo – owner and editor of the weekly newspaper *Correio da Lavoura*; and Francisco Madeira – orange exporter.

FAMILY AND TRANSITION

Since the 1980s, the slave family and its structure over time have been the subject of research of Brazilian historians and *Brazilianists* concerned with studies of the colonial and imperial period in Brazil. Principally, they have sought to

compare the family life of free whites, blacks, and mixed people with that of slaves.⁴ The great novelty of that decade consisted of the 'discovery' of the existence of family unity in the *senzala* (slave quarters) and how it affected the relationship between slaves and owners. In other words, the possibility of possessing a family opened space both for negotiation and for conflict (Reis; Silva, 2005), as well as maintaining some stability which sometimes reflected a differentiation and, why not, social mobility within slavery (Florentino; Góes, 1997).

However, few researchers have accompanied families and the results of their actions after abolition. In the American case the analysis of various letters between black families, before and after abolition, allowed Herbert Gutman to identify "the family as the center around which the world of slaves turned, which also made possible the survival of African traditions and the creation of an Afro-American culture" (Gutman, 1976, *apud* Rios, 1990, p.48). While Gutman believes that this was possible during the period of slavery, when his analysis is extended to the later period, there is a perception that the family structure and the value attributed to it by enslaved blacks were perpetuated in the post-abolition period in the American south.

In the Brazilian case, one of the first works to pay attention to the black family in the post-abolition period and access to land was *Ao sul da história*, by Hebe Mattos. In her research in the municipality of Capivary, in Rio de Janeiro state, Mattos found various black small landholders who a memory of slavery. According to her, economic desegregation in the municipality "opened conditions for the permanence of the poor population, to a large part formed by former slaves," attracting a large part of the freed population due to the abundance of free land in which the agrarian organization was based on family labor (Mattos, 2009, p.135). However, in this book Mattos unfortunately does not examine the size, structure, and trajectories of families over the years. In her following work, concerned with the analysis of the meanings of liberty, she demonstrated that the slaves, when they created family ties, intercrossed horizontal and vertical relations of kinship, which when allied to networks of solidarity could improve living conditions (Mattos, 1995). She did not enter into details in her analysis of black families themselves in the post-abolition period, but pointed out that they were not undone at the ending of slavery.

Concerned with tracing collective family trajectories of blacks during and after the period of slavery, Ana Rios debated with the classical bibliography. Her principal aim was to demonstrate the existence of black families in the post-abolition period and used for this civil and parochial birth and wedding records in the municipality of Paraíba do Sul. There she found the existence of nuclear

and extended families from the slavery period, but ran into difficulties accompanying them after abolition. The sharp reduction of references to color in both types of register after the 1910s prevented a temporal analysis of collective family trajectories of these agents. The final chapter of her thesis “which was intended to accompany the black family until 1920, ended up being to a great extent a chapter in which there are presented some speculations about what happened to these families during this period in Paraíba Sul” (Rios, 1990, p.100).⁵

Given the difficulties in accompanying the collective experiences and trajectories of blacks in the post-abolition period, the use of Oral History is presented as one of the solutions. Around the centenary of abolition, Queiroz and Janotti (1988) held various interviews with direct descendants of former slaves in the state of São Paulo. This initiative, linked to US experiences, such as the readings oriented by Professor Allen Isaacman (1996) and the works of demographic analysis through interviews carried out by a group of researchers in the 1980s in Central Africa,⁶ could have influenced the Ana Rios’ following work – her doctoral dissertation. The application of qualitative analysis to testimonies of children and grandchildren of former slaves in the coffee-growing Southeast of Brazil resulted in the obtaining of various narrative coincidences in the narratives of individual and family trajectories (Rios; Mattos, 2005).

Later research was also dedicated to finding these individual trajectories to reach family experiences. Nevertheless, in these works there was an abandonment of the research of collective experiences, with only individual trajectories or of one or two families of former slaves and their descendants in the post-abolition period being looked at. Parochial and civil registers were only used to consult names and close family relations.⁷ Therefore given this hiatus, it became necessary to reach the collective experiences, involving more than two groups, as well as the limit situations they went through.

Different from what occurred in these works, in the former municipality of Iguassú, in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, I managed to obtain data about the collective experiences of black families. And herein lies the originality of this article. Among the years 1889 - 1939, the category color was mentioned 99.4% of the time in the records analyzed in the First Civil Register of Nova Iguaçu. In this way these records became a significant source and an important means of reaching the post-abolition experience in the region. Before analyzing the documentation, it is necessary to list certain exceptions. Skin colors in the civil registers, to a great extent, appeared to be divided into white, mixed, and black. It was also possible to locate other categories of color

which did not remain constant throughout the period, namely: *moreno* (dark-skinned), *clara* (light-skinned) and *fula* (African).

In a dictionary of Portuguese published in 1890, the colors are represented in various manners. White, as a noun means only that someone is of "the white color," while as an adjective it is the "color of lime, clean, snow, milk." Or in a better definition, "white man; opposite to mixed, black." While for mixed men there is the following definition: "a dark color between white and black; a man of color, mulatto, of mixed blood." For women there is the following citation: "a woman of color. This name is generally used in Brazil, instead of mulatto, as the latter has a depreciative or offensive meaning." According to Moraes, in 1890 the black was someone from "black race; the race of men characterized by black skin; the Ethiopian race" (Silva, 1890). In 1899, according to Cândido de Figueiredo, the definition of colors does not appear to have changed much in relation to what was previously cited, only including colors not previously listed (Figueiredo, 1899). What most calls attention, at least in this dictionary, is that in the color black reference is made to the slave past "a black inhabitant of Africa; a black slave." In Simões da Fonseca and Laudelino Freire and João L. de Campos' dictionaries, published in 1926 and 1939 respectively, no important differences emerge in the definitions of color. For white the definition remained as "what has the color of snow, of lime, of milk," with there being only a clear reference of the past of this group in the second dictionary, in which it is referenced as "Sir, Boss" (Fonseca, 1926; Freire; Campos, 1939-1944). It should be emphasized that the change of meaning of these categories, which certainly occurred between 1889 and 1939 (Correia, 2006), is not the aim of this research, therefore, it was chosen to respect the nomenclature present in the documentation – white, mixed, and black.

In relation to sub-registers – a problem of demographic history sources in Brazil –, it is possible to observe in the period in question a more intensive search of the civil register in relation to births than deaths. Despite the high mortality rate due to infecto-contagious diseases in the region, such as malaria and tuberculosis (Pereira, 1970), was well known and indeed of public knowledge, the deaths sub-registers massively surpassed those of birth. Despite this, the data analyzed accompanied the population increase compared to the censuses, and the sub-registers occurred in all the groups, without racial distinction. In this way, even if not possible to demographically analyze the region using them - as could be done for the previous centuries using ecclesiastic documentation –, it is possible to obtain interesting and important evidence of population growth and family structure between 1889 and 1940.

FAMILY IN THE METROPOLITAN REGION OF RIO DE JANEIRO

Few researchers work with slave families in the second half of the nineteenth century in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro. In his analysis of the parish registers of the *freguesia* of Nossa Senhora do Pilar, between 1871 and 1888, where the municipality of Duque de Caxias is now located, Nielson Bezerra came upon the existence of a peculiar family. Production was not on a large scale, concentrating on the manufacture of flour, while the slaves consisted of few Africans, most being Creoles. The plantations were small and mid-sized, having an average of thirty slaves per team (Bezerra, 2012, p.118). Bezerra perceived that the name of the father did not appear in the documentation for the large majority. Seeking to answer this question, Robert Slenes stated that stable unions between slaves happened on a large scale on the large properties. Added to this, there could also exist marriages called 'illicit,' which were approved neither by owners nor the Catholic Church (Slenes, 1999, p.96).

Nevertheless, the lack of a father in the records was replaced by an intense presence of godparents. Godparenthood exercises an important role within slavery, since it extended family ties and "was an instrument for recreating and adapting codes of African origin" whose purpose was to "unite people with a similar history and conditions in a common and comprehensible universe: kinship" (Rios, 1990, p.55). At times godparenting crossed the barrier of the judicial condition of those involved, since "through it [the slaves] multiplied the ties of spiritual kinship, inside and outside slavery" (Machado, 2006, p.50). As a result, adopted as a social mobility strategy, both internal and external to the plantations, godparenting tended to link the family of the baptized child to people at an equivalent or higher level in the social hierarchy (Brügger, 2007). In this way, even in the absence of the father, godparents were important figures for family configuration and were present in all the records of the region (Bezerra, 2012, p.111, 116).

Unfortunately there is no other data about the trajectories of slave families from the other municipalities for a comparison, as there is also no other information about the quantity of *alforrias* (emancipated slaves) in the last decades, or even about the amount of free slaves shortly after 13 May 1888. It is only assumed that, since the region functioned in a peripheral form in the state economy, and since the number of slaves was much lower in comparison with Vale do Paraíba, there slavery lost force much more quickly. With the crisis among the small producers of flour, sugarcane, and coffee, and the consequent fall in the value of properties (Pereira, 1977), I wish, initially, to state here that

it was possible that these black workers had access to small *roças* (a type of area to plant crops).

Before continuing the discussion about the size of families in the post-abolition period, it is necessary to identify what I will call them. There are three types of family structure: nuclear, extended, and complex. In the first case are those in which the father, mother, and children are the center of the family. Similarly, due to the large quantity of legally informal families, it is necessary to state that in cases in which children are illegitimate (the parents are not married), but the name of the father appears, the family should be configured as conjugal. As a result, the extended family is identified by the presence of other relatives, such as aunts, grandparents, and grandchildren who live with a conjugal family. Finally, there is the complex family, in which in addition to relatives, there are also ‘aggregates,’ in other words people who do not have blood ties with the conjugal family (Johnson, 1978, p.628).

With the intention of also demonstrating the existence of the black family in the post-abolition period in the metropolitan region, it became necessary to find other indicators. Initially, the repetition of names of grandparents and other relatives in the children can be highlighted. According to Rios (1990, p.49), this was a manner of “expressing, in the various slave-holding regions, an important reference in their lives: the family.” Although the citation refers to the period of slavery, the same strategy was adopted in the post-abolition period. According to Fraga Filho (2006, p.296), names and surnames were transmitted “to children and grandchildren, certainly as a form of defining and strengthening the ties between generations.” The repetition of the name is not the subject of this article,⁸ nevertheless, it is important to highlight that in the civil registers analyzed, of the blacks and mixed residents of the former municipality of Iguassú, there is a repetition of names, at least of grandparents, in 8% of entries.

Another indicator of the strengthening of the family in the post-abolition period is godparenting. As I stated, it was adopted as an important strategy for expanding family ties, as well as social mobility, during slavery. Nevertheless, godparenting, as a research theme, has not received the same treatment in the post-abolition period. Souza, in her analysis of settlements in the interior of Bahia, came upon a singularity in the parish registers in comparison with those found in the old municipality of Iguassú. In Bahia after 1888, the parish priest continued registering the ‘color’ of individuals. Crosschecking the information referring to godparents with witnesses and oral interviews, she reached the conclusion that godparenting “became a form of acquiring advantages in the

commitment assumed with godfathers or godmothers, although this did not signify a reduction of socially existing distances.” Surely, “the spiritual kinship established there was a strategy for the construction of sociabilities which aimed to exchange personal help, as well as to establish a relationship of dependency” (Souza, 2014, p.8). The practice of godparenting, even with the new clothing, remained as a social strategy in the post-abolition period.

The strength of the nomination of godparents was so much that in the first years after the opening of the notary office in Iguassú, due to the recent separation that had occurred between Church and state, could be easily observed. It is possible to observe the result of the dispute in the first civil registers of births, in which the clerks, apparently still badly informed about what to enter, registered information that was unnecessary for the civil world, such as the name of godparents and the date of baptism.⁹ Obviously, there is clearly a need to expand the study of godparenting in the post-abolition period, which can help in the re-discussion of clientelism in the Brazilian rural world (Rios, 2007). The construction of a kinship outside parental relations has to be highlighted, as it was built through godparenting, between people declared as black and mixed. Even when non-residents, it is plausible to suppose that both in Bahia and in the Metropolitan region of Rio, godparents who were not relatives were present in the lives of black families.

LAND AND FAMILY

In the first years following the declaration of the *Lei Áurea* (the law which freed the slaves), the local coffee production crisis appeared to have directly impacted families in the old Iguassú municipality, who apparently changed after the 1920s. Between 1872 and 1890, the population changed by about 20%, falling from 31,654 residents to 25,119 in the census.¹⁰ Many apparently left the region in search of more economically advantageous regions. Probably this migration had a seasonal nature, since there are no reports, much less evidence, of a large scale definitive stampede to other regions of the states of Rio de Janeiro. This appeared to change after the 1920s, when the population growth reached the former level of around 33,000 people. Nevertheless, what most calls attention in Figure 1 is the significant growth of the population in the 1940s. According to the census of this year, the population reached 140,606, a demographic increase of 300% in only 20 years, the result of migration, principally from Vale do Paraíba and the Northeast (Costa, 2013).

Figure 1 - Population growth of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu in the census – 1872 - 1940.



Source: Civil registers of births of the *1º Ofício de Registro de Pessoas Naturais* of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu: 1889, 1894, 1899, 1904, 1909, 1914, 1919, 1924, 1929, 1934, and 1939.

In the censuses it is not possible to accompany the social composition through color over the years. Apparently in the 1872 and 1890 censuses there was a movement towards miscegenation, which could have been proved if the following census, from 1920, had included ‘color’ in its data, which unfortunately did not occur. Only 50 years later would color reappear again in the census, and here whites emerged as a the large majority in relation to blacks and mixed. Even without the declaration of color, it is possible to demonstrate important information from the chart: after the 1920s large-scale migration began to the municipality of Nova Iguaçu. The analysis of migrants – where they came from, trades, and family, amongst other themes – has already appeared in a previous work, and in this article shall not be looked at (Costa, 2013). In this research, my intention is to analyze the residents of the region only.

Due to the lack of information about color in the 1920s, and in order to compare the trajectories of whites, mixed, and blacks in the municipality of Iguaçu between 1889 and 1940, I sought other sources. As I have stated, my research of the civil registers of births became an excellent and possible mechanism to overcome the lack of information for a 50 year period about the black and mixed population in the Baixada Fluminense region. One of the first questions in relation to the source refers to the permanence over time of access to

the bureaucracy of the state and the family. After all, in the immediate post-abolition period, it appears that there were no hindrances to the use of notary offices, nor to the formation of families by those leaving slavery. With the aim of understanding this process, a comparison needs to be made with the data already presented, until the 1940s.

Between 1889 and 1939, the conjugal situation of parents of children registered as white, mixed, and black appears to have changed a lot. Figure 2 compares the percentages of numbers of marriages in the years in question. It should be noted that there was a progressive increment of the conjugal family in all colors. After the establishment of the civil register of births, for all colors there was a very significant reduction of single fathers and, despite a small peak in 1939, it never returned to the level of 1889. After 1894, in almost 80% of registrations the parents of white children declared themselves married in the notary office. Mixed people began with a much lower number (30%) in 1889 and ended in 1934 with almost 70% of children having married parents. Less than 20% of children declared as black had married parents in the first year of the notary office, but for mixed persons, this figure almost reached 60%. Although the parents of children registered as black and mixed married less, even with the reduction of marriages in 1939 due to conjugal situations which will be discussed below, it is worth noting here that the amount of fathers declaring themselves married increased significantly until 1934.¹¹

If the research problem is family size, attention should be paid not only to the legitimacy of the relationship of the parents, but also the name of the father and the mother in the civil registers. A large part of children in the first years of existence of the civil register were declared as 'natural,' in other words, the child of single parents. However, this did not prevent the name of the father being declared in some registers.¹² In Figure 3, for the children registered as white, after 1894 the name of the father was present in more than 90% of cases. This number was modified for those of mixed descent, since they started in 1889 with a very low percentage; while, from 1894 onwards, the statistical similarity with white children increased. The trajectory of the presence of the name of the father of black children was no different from the others: in 1894, in less than 10% of entries was the father present or at least had the name cited; however, from 1909 onwards he appears in almost 80% of entries. In these, although a lower presence of fathers was found, this does not mean that the father was absence from the life of the child.

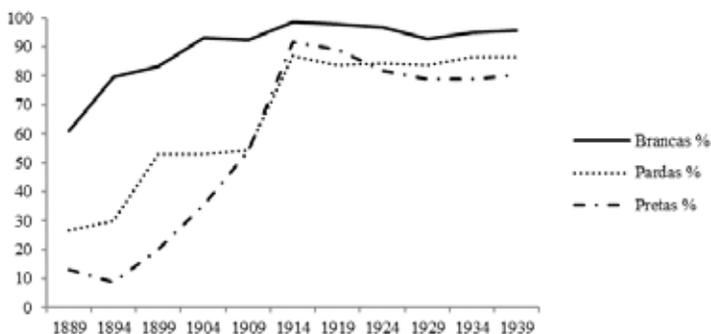
The absence of the name of the father in the register can be explained by different factors. In 1894, Laurentino Ferreira dos Santos declared the birth of his daughter, who was black and legitimate, the daughter of himself and his wife, Alice Ferreira dos Santos. Unfortunately, it was a stillbirth, and perhaps due to this fact, no name was given, however the names of the grandmothers were present on the register. On the paternal side were Ricarda da Conceição, and on the maternal, Rosa Maria da Conceição. The father was from a baker from Jacarepaguá, in the Federal District, but lived in Belford Roxo.¹³ Perhaps this register can help to explain the absence of fathers of children registered as black and mixed during the first years the notary office operated. Due to the economic decline of the region, there began to occur seasonal migrations, probably greater among men of an adult age, preventing them from being present at the birth or at the time of registration. However, other studies have also demonstrated that in the first years of the post-abolition period, a large part of the family configuration of the black and mixed population was formed of women: maternal grandmother – mother – children (Souza, 2012, p.95). What is most important to highlight in this chart is that after 1914, with the elimination of fines for late registrations, the name of the father was present in almost the same proportional for all colors.

Figure 2 - Married parents (%) per color and year in the civil registers of births. Municipality of Nova Iguaçu – 1889-1939



Key: Whites (Branços); Mixed (Pardos); Blacks (Pretos). Source: Civil registers of births of the *1º Ofício de Registro de Pessoas Naturais* of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu: 1889, 1894, 1899, 1904, 1909, 1914, 1919, 1924, 1929, 1934 and 1939.

Figure 3 - Father present (%) per color and year in civil registers of births. Municipality of Nova Iguaçu – 1889-1939.



Key: Whites (Branços); Mixed (Pardos); Blacks (Pretos). Source: Civil registers of births of the 1ª *Ofício de Registro de Pessoas Naturais* of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu: 1889, 1894, 1899, 1904, 1909, 1914, 1919, 1924, 1929, 1934 and 1939.

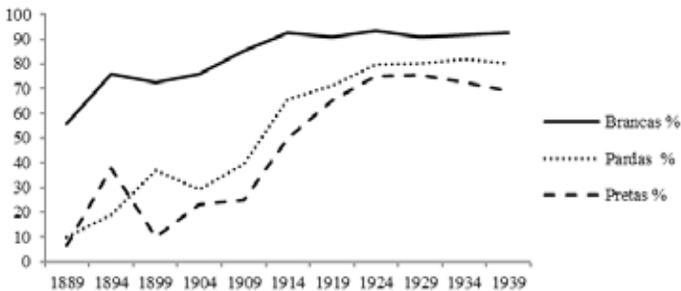
Another good indication of family configuration over the years can be found in the value given to the citation of grandparents at the moment of registration. Just to reinforce this, it should be noted that Figure 4 was constructed based on the citation of the names of grandmothers, therefore, it is not possible to establish if they were present in the daily life of the children or if they had already died when the registration was made. Nevertheless, the use of their names is a clear indication of the valorization of ancestrality, even when these relatives were not alive or lived far away. Despite few blacks and mixed citing the name of all grandparents at the beginning of the twentieth century, after 1919 the number of birth registrations in which they were cited rose gradually. It cannot be categorically affirmed, but it is possible that the increase of the citation of grandparents' names for non-white children points to an expansion of family ties, and they may even configure extended families.

As a counterpart of these analyses, looking at the final years of the civil register, 1934 and 1939, and comparing both the civil registers of births and deaths, the increase in single people of all colors in 1939, even when not so latent, was evident. In this year, the Baixada Fluminense region received a range of migrants from various parts of the country – notably from Vale do Paraíba and the Northeast – due to the expansion of the offer of labor propelled by orange exports (Costa, 2013). Most migrants were male, therefore their arrival in the region probably modified the matrimonial market, since it

expanded the ratio of males, making it harder for a large part of the male residents in the region to get married, as well as aggravating the dispute both for labor and small properties (Costa, 2014).

In summary, what it is worth highlighting after the analysis of the figures is the significant increase of people over the years indicating that they were married and the change in family structure. In other words, in the first years after abolition and until the 1920s, black and mixed families were characterized by a conjugal family. However, from the 1930s onwards this changed to an extended family. The action of registering in paper the conjugal situation of the parents is a clear indication of the valorization of the legitimacy of matrimony in itself. Comparing the groups, in first place it is clear that both mixed and, principally, blacks were much slower than whites to legitimate the family unit. Both Hebe Mattos and Ana Rios had criticized in the introduction to the book *Memórias do cativo*, the idea that the recently freed slaves did not have the capacity to form families in the post-abolition period, due to the violent process experienced during slavery (Rios; Mattos, 2005). However, none of them demonstrated the construction of families and their reinforcement over time by part of these groups in relation to access to land ownership and changes in the orientation of subsistence production towards the market.

Figure 4 – Citation of all grandparents (%) per color and years in the civil registers of births. Municipality of Nova Iguaçu – 1889-1939.



Key: Whites (Branças); Mixed (Pardas); Blacks (Pretas). Source: Civil registers of births of the *1º Ofício de Registro de Pessoas Naturais* of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu: 1889, 1894, 1899, 1904, 1909, 1914, 1919, 1924, 1929, 1934, and 1939.

Based on these figures it is possible to delimit some stages in the change of family size during the implementation of large-scale orange production in

Iguassú. In the final years of the nineteenth century, the current municipality of Nova Iguaçu underwent a large crisis in coffee production. The local administration was still based in the old town, which centered its commercial exchanges in the river with the same name, serving as a commercial entrepôt between the city of Rio de Janeiro and the interior of the state. However, during the nineteenth century, more specifically in the second half, the old *Villa* de Iguassú lost importance, with the principal villain being the train. At the end of the nineteenth century, the train accumulated the functions of passenger transport and, principally, carrying coffee production to the port of Rio de Janeiro (Pereira, 1977, p.53-54). Despite its secondary role, the old municipality also produced some coffee. Although the Baixada Fluminense was on the path of migrants to Vale do Paraíba, at the turn of the twentieth century, it was much more economically devastated than the latter (Pereira, 1977, p.86-87). There was no great projection of the region in comparison with the cities of Vale do Paraíba, and the planting of coffee that still existed there had been stagnating from much earlier, which even caused the departure of people, as I have demonstrated.

From this data, it can be affirmed that in the first years of the twentieth century, due to the economic stagnation, there was abundant cheap land in the old Iguassú municipality (Silveira, 1988). Compared with the figures of family structure, in the initial years, due to the economic context, it can be concluded that in non-commercial areas of plantations, where land was abundant and controlled by few landowners, it was common to find conjugal families in each settlement. This happened due to the ease in obtaining lands, since younger children or newly-weds left their parents' house more quickly. In turn, this meant that they were all separated in their own landholdings: grandparents, parents children, and grandchildren.

This family structure changed considerably at the beginning of the 1920s, since although coffee growing was declining, orange production was gaining importance. Oranges had long been planted in Rio de Janeiro. Produced on small landholdings, called *chácaras*, in the second half of the nineteenth century they were only sold in the internal market. At the turn of the twentieth century, orange production spread through Rio de Janeiro. Plantations which had been in economic crisis were abandoned and/or subdivided. This was a typical scenario which the production of oranges required, in other words, the small landholdings called *chácaras* (Pereira, 1977, p.114).

Comparing the charts presented above, the commencement of orange production in the 1920s had little impact on family size. The population

remained on small properties; after all, since commercial production was only beginning, it was possible to link subsistence farming and extra work on producing properties. This occurred because of the seasonal demand for labor in the orange groves, since efforts were concentrated in planting and harvesting. As a result the expansion of the population in areas of small landholding and the growth of market production was symbiotic: small properties provided most of the seasonal labor for harvests, while the orange market grew, permitting small farmers to complement their subsistence production (Johnson, 1978, p.638).

With the increase of orange exports there was an impact of family size, since due to land valorization there was a concentration of landholdings. It is worth noting that the majority of orange plantations were concentrated in the central district of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu, which in 1932 held 83% of orange groves (Pereira, 1977, p.125), something corroborated in the 1920 and 1940 censuses. Despite the increase in the quantity of small landholdings, at the same time there occurred a process of land concentration. With this it became easier to perceive that the properties located in these regions became more valorized; therefore, the stabilization of the poorest part of the population was hindered.

With greater difficulty in obtaining small landholdings, as can be observed in the comparison of the mentioned figures with the economic context, it can be noted that the black and mixed family structure was modified. Due to these factors, possibly in Iguassú “the traditional family in commercial agricultural lands [came to be] normally composed of parents, children, married children and their wives, and other relatives” (Johnson, 1978, p.630). This type of organization in an extended family in the same property could have permitted black and mixed families, as poor peasants, to expand individual responsibility for survival. With the difficulty of obtaining access to small landholdings, the strategy of forming extended families – which at times had the support of non-parents, such as godparents – in market oriented areas, probably allowed survival and, in some cases, the social mobility of individuals from these groups

SOCIAL MOBILITY AND INDIVIDUAL TRAJECTORIES

Family organization became an important strategy for social mobility in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro city. Family size “could influence the possibilities of saving money and acquiring property” (Monsma, 2010, p.527). While in the immediate post-abolition period individuals of different colors

already had the experience of the conjugal family, this allowed not only permanence in the *Baixada Fluminense* region, but an improvement in material living conditions until the 1940s.

In the first years of the post-abolition period, Rios found three trajectories of freed slaves and their descendants. The first referred to temporary migration between plantations in search of stable employment. In the figures presented above this is clear, since due to the coffee crisis in the coffee area the black and mixed population seasonally migrated to other regions, including the city of Rio de Janeiro, with the aim of maintaining possessions and family. The second trajectory dealt with the so-called 'lands of the black': rural black communities which possessed the property and the collective use of the land.¹⁴ However, the trajectory which most interests us here is the third one, of individuals and/or families who obtained small properties at the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁵ Blacks and mixed, landholders living on subsistence agriculture in the municipality of Nova Iguaçu, found themselves in a privileged situation when the commercial and export production of oranges began. They were neither expelled from large properties nor did they have to migrate to other regions in search of seasonal work. In their small *roças*, they were able to live with adult children and other persons.

Analogous experiences have demonstrated how in the peripheral regions of the city of Rio de Janeiro the existence of family and access to land became important strategies for social mobility.¹⁶ In the *Baixada Fluminense* there was a possibility for social mobility for blacks, motivated by family legitimation and organization. Similarly, it was possible to find three trajectories of blacks who ascended socially in the region: Silvino de Azeredo, Francisco Madeira, and Gaspar José Soares.

Silvino Hypollito de Azeredo founded in 1917, in the old Iguassú municipality, the weekly newspaper, still functioning today, entitled *O Correio da Lavoura*. Using genealogical research, Álvaro Nascimento did not manage to find evidence that proved the slave descent of Silvino; however, his grandson, Robinson de Azeredo, current editor of the newspaper, stated that his grandfather was a "mulatto, almost black." Silvino studied until the third year in the courses of Pharmacy and Medicine, taught mathematics and was elected president of the *Caixa Auxiliadora dos Empregados das Capatazias* (Assistance Fund of the Employees of Capatazias). In the newspaper, the principal reports encouraged improvements in the region in the areas of health, hygiene, and education, amongst others. However, in the pages of the newspaper, there is

no indication of a racial identity discourse, although every month there was an article reflecting on the *Lei Áurea* (Nascimento, 2013b).

Francisco Madeira was principally concerned with the economic aspect of local society. According to his daughter, Almerinda, they lived in a distant part of Nova Iguaçu, called Cabuçu, but after her father’s life improved they moved to the center of the municipality, where she still lives. There Francisco was able to invest in the education of his daughters, one of whom had having a long career in the judiciary (Nascimento, 2013a). Francisco himself was a lieutenant in the army, where he was involved with the Revolt of Copacabana Fort, and imprisoned for this. As a producer and exporter of oranges, he managed to buy some trucks, as well as travelling to Argentina with the authorization of the federal government in the 1930s (Nascimento, 2013a, p.4). However, following the decline in orange production in the 1940s, he moved on to other activities. Apparently he sold his part in the citric business and his trucks, and opened a small commercial business in the center of the current municipality of Nova Iguaçu, in 1947.

The third trajectory is that of Councilor Gaspar José Soares. Born on 17 June 1864, son of the Portuguese José Maria Mendes Soares and the local resident Maria José da Conceição. Due to the constant repetition of names in the registers, it was not possible to obtain more information about the mother’s origin, but it is presumed that Gaspar received the inheritance of color from her. He married twice. His first child came from his first marriage; Alberto de Freitas Soares born in the post-abolition period on 17 August 1894. At the age of 34, on 29 July 1899 he married for the second time, to Maria de Sá Bittencourt, with whom he had three more children. Gaspar José Soares died at the age of 90 on 13 May 1955 (Pessoa, 2014). To the contrary of the two other life histories, Gaspar was active in local politics. He was a councilor in the old Iguassú municipality from 1889, remaining there for five consecutive mandates. Even though he was well known, he never achieved a position within the council chamber, losing various times in internal elections. Unfortunately, it was not possible to monitor his struggle in politics, as the minutes of the Council are lost. Outside of politics he exercised various economic activities in the region as a businessman, a sub-chief of police, a school *delegado*, lieutenant in the National Guard, orange producer, landholder, and owner of the telegraph building in the municipality (Pessoa, 2014).

In none of these trajectories, analyzed from various sources, was there any mention of a family memory of slavery. It is enough to remember that the quantity of slaves existing there in the final quarter of the nineteenth century

was nothing compared to Vale do Paraíba. Probably their ancestors were freed much before 1888, which could have help their relatives obtain properties before the weakening of slavery. Added to this, as Hebe Mattos states, the distancing of the memory of slavery and the stigma of the being enslaved meant that this was lost in the human mass, facilitating integration and later ascension (Mattos, 1995).

It is still not possible to state how solid and lasting was the social mobility of these three example trajectories. For Francisco Madeira, apparently, the small grocery store he bought in 1947 was not at all safe, since the police acted with enormous vehemence to curb illegal games nearby. What remained of his fortune was the house where his children and grandchildren still live (Nascimento, 2013c). For Gaspar José Soares, the political and economic capital were apparently lost during the Vargas administration and were not perpetuated by his children. For this reason it was not possible to accompany his family trajectory until the present, and his actions as a councilor were silenced in the memory of the city of Nova Iguaçu. While for Silvino Azeredo and his descendants, social mobility was converted into political *status*. The journal is still published and is quite influential; nevertheless, it operated in a badly kept warehouse and seems not to have resulted in material gains for his descendants.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this article, in tribute to Ana Maria Lugão Rios, I sought to expand the research about the collective experiences of black families and the impact on their size of the entrance of market oriented production in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro city. To the contrary of the bibliography cited – which is dedicated either to the slave family or individual trajectories –, this work intends to contribute historiographically to the comprehension of collective histories of the lives of blacks, whether or not they were the direct descendants of former slaves, in the post-abolition period.

Part of the originality of the text consisted of the analysis of civil registers of births in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro. In this region it was possible to encounter references to the category ‘color’ in practically all the records, which was not observed in other research about the same period and theme. With the purpose of demonstrating both the existence of the black families and their permanence and transformation in the first decades of the twentieth century, I observed in the records references to the legitimacy of the couple’s matrimony, the presence of the name of the father and grandparents.

It was thus possible to observe that both black and mixed families were present and expanded over the years.

The impact of family size could be linked to economic changes in the region. In the first years following abolition and until the 1920s, black and mixed families were characterized as conjugal, but after the 1930s they became extended. In the first cohort analyzed there was an abundance of vacant land, many plantations were subdivided and/or abandoned, which to an extent allowed all family members to possess a small piece of land. Entering the 1930s – at the peak of the commercial production of oranges – there was a reduction in the offer of land, due to the valorization of properties. As a result few managed to keep their properties, obliging the rest of the family to concentrate in the same household.

The strategy of creating nuclear and extended families affected the chances of social mobility in the region. For the old residents who managed to organize themselves in extended families and to obtain small properties, social ascension was possible. I thus found three individuals of importance in the region: Silvino Hypollito de Azeredo, Francisco Madeira, and Gaspar José Soares – founder of the newspaper *O Correio da Lavoura*, an important citric trader, and a councilor for five consecutive mandates, respectively. For blacks and mixed persons, whether or not direct descendants of former slaves, in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro city, the family was the axis around which their world turned. The existence and perpetuation of the family over the years made possible the survival, creation, and transmission of their social and cultural traditions (Rios, 1990, p.48), at the same time that the obtaining of extensions of land allowed the social mobility of some, even if this was fragile.

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NOTES

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² Professor Ana Maria Lugão Rios belonged to the teaching staff of the Department of the Post-Graduate Program in Social History in UFRJ until 2012, when she died. Among her works, *Memórias do cativo* stands out as it expanded the discussion about the post-abolition period in Brazil (RIOS; MATTOS, 2005).

³ The former municipality of Iguassú consisted of the current municipalities, emancipated from the 1940s onwards: Japeri, Queimados, Duque de Caxias, Belford Roxo, São João de Meriti, Nilópolis, and Nova Iguaçu.

⁴ I do not intend to debate all here, but it is enough to cite the classic works: MATTOSO (1982); FLORENTINO (1997); SLENES (1999); MOTTA (1990); ROCHA (2004); REIS (2007).

⁵ This difficulty in the analysis of the birth and death registers, which impeded a temporal analysis prevented a temporal analysis of the family structure, was also encountered by Hebe Mattos (MATTOS, 1995).

⁶ During the colonial period in Angola no consistent demographic censuses were carried out and the few existing records are extremely flawed. With the aim of resolving these problems and implementing future public policies, this group organized and created a new work methodology which, based on interviews, made population estimates for the colonial past (FETTER, 1990).

⁷ See: MOSNMA (2010); PALMA (2013); NASCIMENTO (2013a); WEIMER (2013); SOUZA (2012); SIQUEIRA (2012).

⁸ For a more profound reflection on the role of the name during the period of slavery and later, see: GUTMAN (1976); WEIMER (2007); AZEVEDO (1983).

⁹ “Number one. Birth Certificate. On the second day of January in the year of the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ ... whose child was baptized with the name of Maria, as there was no time to bring it to church, maternal granddaughter of Juniana do Espírito Santo, with the godparents being the declarant and Rozalina Luiza Xavier, he a newspaper seller and she a domestic worker, resident in this parish...” (Registro Civil de Nascimento de Nova Iguaçu do 1º Ofício (RCN), livro 1, p. 1 reg. 1, de 1889, emphasis added).

¹⁰ In the 1872 and 1890 censuses the municipalities of Iguassú and Estrella were added, which on the occasion consisted of almost all of Baixada Fluminense.

¹¹ Among the single men it was possible to find promises of marriage in the civil registry. In the 14 registers found, all concentrated in 1889, those present referred to the consented matrimony in the Catholic Church and not to civil marriage. Five white couples and one only mixed registered their intentions in a notary office.

¹² One of the few cases in which a child is declared as ‘natural’ and the father is cited is that

of Carmello. His father, José Baroni, went to the notary office on 2 February 1899 to declare the birth of his child, of the male sex, white, and 'natural' legitimacy in the location of Rangel. The father is from Italy and the mother, Josélia Maria da Conceição, from this state; the paternal grandparents are mentioned and only the maternal grandmother is on the register (RCN, livro 6, reg. 355, ano de 1899).

¹³ RCN, livro 4, reg. 58, ano de 1894.

¹⁴ In the region of Baixada Fluminense, it is possible to find some of them, such as Maria Conga, in the municipality of Magé. In relation to the question, cf. GUIMARÃES (2009); MATTOS (2005, 2006); ALMEIDA (2002).

¹⁵ Previous research has shown that in the metropolitan and rural regions that it was possible for former slaves to obtain small properties (MATTOS, 2009).

¹⁶ See: LONER (2011); DANTAS (2010); NASCIMENTO (2013c).