

explaining motivation and behavior: it is imperative that both states achieve strong economic growth because both have made big promises that remain to be fulfilled. Similarly, issue is more important than regime type in explaining society. Regardless of whether they find themselves living under a dictatorship or in a democracy, citizens in Brazil and China have higher expectations now, and if they aren't satisfied, they have shown that they will not be shy about pressuring the state to meet their demands. As a result, Chinese leaders pledge to promote social harmony and the so-called "Chinese dream." With promises of zero hunger, access to health care for all, and the eradication of poverty, Brazilian leaders promise that Brazil will finally achieve its potential. Authoritarian or democratic, leaders of states at opposite ends of "the messy middle" often do speak in ways that sound remarkably similar. For example, urged on by citizens, Brasilia and Beijing both promise ardently to clean house on corruption and endeavor to prove how tough they can be on crime. It is only on softer, less contested areas of policy where these states have indicated any significant level of receptivity, perhaps to distract attention away from less negotiable issues. Again, one thing is clear: if we rely too heavily on simple narratives about regime type to predict state-society relations and issue outcomes, we'll be surprised as often as not at the way things really are.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As of 2015, both countries' economies were slowing. What ramifications do you think this will have on state-society relations in terms of human security?
2. When it comes to human security, it could be said that society in Brazil and China is reacting to exclusion, impunity, and lack of responsiveness. Are these problems in your own country? And are they attached to any particular issues of human security? Explain.
3. How did Brazil set out to become a human security superpower—and why hasn't China done the same? In what ways is Brazil found wanting in this regard and what explains this?
4. Much of the story of human security, in terms of "freedom from fear," is a story about the relations of citizens and police. Compare crime and the criminal justice systems in the two countries. Which is a more dangerous place to live? Why? What role does regime type play in this? What are the most prominent forms of activism in this regard and their aim(s)?
5. Why, in explaining state receptivity and resistance on human security issues, is it not simply a case of "China moved to the right / Brazil moved to the left"? When it comes to migration, crime, and health care, in what ways are the two states more alike than different? Ultimately, in what ways do both treat their citizens very similarly?

4

POLITICS OF SOCIAL DIVERSITY

Branca para se casar (A white woman to marry)

Mulata para fornicar (A mulata woman to fornicate)

Preta para cozinhar (A black woman to cook).

—An adage in Brazil (Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves*)

This society is so full of inequalities. Family background, opportunities, rights, development . . . even sex is unequal.

—Tweet from Liumang Yan during her day providing free sexual services to migrant workers (Kenneth Tan, "Blogger-Activist Liumang Yan Turns Prostitute for a Day to Speak Up for Sex Workers")

INTRODUCTION

Every government struggles to accommodate contention over ethnicity, religion, and sex. In democratic and non-democratic societies alike, there is give-and-take between leaders and the led, albeit usually with degrees of difference accounting for levels of risk. Again, we argue that regime distinctions capture only part of this vital state-society dynamic. Both China and Brazil are richly pluralistic, with extremely diverse societies of multifaceted ethnic groups, spiritual traditions, and means of expression. Within both countries, we see behaviors that belie simplistic explanation. We also observe a dynamic similar to what we have identified in prior chapters: contentious politics play out differently depending on the issue. Whereas democratic Brazil and authoritarian China

have both shown themselves to be receptive on some claims against the state, the most highly contested matters are core issues, on which the state will not budge. Therefore, when it comes to identity, we observe some significant differences in receptivity and resistance between Brazil and China.

In this chapter, we examine some of the significant areas of individual and group expression in Brazil and China as a window on state-society relations. We observe both social activism and social stress. To capture some of the most significant trends within social politics in both countries, we examine ethnicity, religion, and sexuality in both states. Social actors are dynamic interpreters of a variety of messages: traditional mores, contemporary trends, and personal aspirations. Each of the topics we examine in this chapter shows how difficult it is to capture state-society dynamics in one sweep, and each also demonstrates that in both states, the boundary lines of authority and influence are consistently being redrawn by a variety of actors on both sides of the metaphorical state-society dividing line.

Transnational actors, movements, and organizations also play important parts in influencing the state—in as much as the state seeks to influence these actors. China remains sensitive to and resists the involvement of outside forces, and in the case of formal religious institutions, strictly forbids association with external organizations. Some of this comes from China's fairly recent history of semi-colonialism and control, yet much of it derives from the regime's defensive posture about the contagions of change, especially in light of the 2011 Arab Spring. So the changes that we observe in China (the decriminalization of homosexuality, for example) are rarely traced back to pressure from international organizations—the perception of external interference can doom any movement in China. Many of the changes that have occurred in Brazil can be attributed to the state's interest in cultivating the illusion of inclusion. This inclusivity is no small part of Brazil's national identity and self-image as a liberal, modern, progressive democracy (Pagano 2006). Analysts disagree over whether the social changes in Brazil over the last few decades are remarkable, or whether they are largely symbolic. At best these changes are only a start; because there is little if any institutional foundation for them, any progress that has been made could easily be turned back—although civil society in Brazil, now roused, would likely fight.

BRAZIL

When it comes to social issues regarding religion, race, and ethnicity (or, as they say in Brazil, “color”), as well as sexual orientation and gender relations,

Brazil's national identity is said to suffer from multiple personality disorder. One image has long been projected to the world and it coexists with an alternate reality. When it comes to bringing the former more into line with the latter—in other words, what needs to be done for Brazil to live up to its image—there is no consensus. Nor is there consensus on (as Htun puts it) “how ideas drive policy change” or how best to characterize the contentious politics in Brazil (Htun 2004, 60). There is near universal agreement that domestic and international civil society play at least some role in the evolution of state policy. Although some analysts argue that the state has mostly taken the lead in a shift of social policy, or was at least an equal partner in the trajectory of change that we have witnessed over the last few decades, the majority view contends that since the re-democratization that began in the mid-1980s, favorable conditions were created so that the state has largely acceded to a combination of domestic and international pressures (Htun 2004; Pagano 2006). The dominant view today is that on these controversial but less contested issues, the state has been led. Actually, when it comes to issues of color, gender, and sexual orientation, the greatest tension has been not between state and society but between progressive (often but not always secular) and conservative (usually but not always religious) groups. Thus, countervailing pressures within society have cross-pressured the state and slowed the pace of change. This effect is particularly pronounced in regard to issues of sexuality and reproductive rights, but in Brazil even color has become part of the “culture wars.”

Layers of Identity: Color in Brazil

Brazil's evolution on “color” or race relations is the result of the push and pull of state and society. Although the matter is hardly settled, over the last two decades Brazil has made an about-face and experienced a paradigm shift when it comes to how the state constructs and how the nation understands race and race relations. Since at least the 1930s, Brazil had prided itself on being unique in the world when it came to race; for most of the twentieth century it basked in the glory of being known worldwide as a racial democracy. With approximately half the population today claiming some African descent (the actual figure is widely believed to be much higher in this country where racial intermarriage is the norm), Brazil has the largest African-descended population of any country in the world (except Nigeria). A point reiterated throughout this book is that Brazil is unique—or at least views itself as such. Certainly one major part of Brazil's self-identity is that it has never suffered from the divides

that plague other multiracial societies such as the United States. Whereas the United States has largely adopted a racial dichotomy (that one is either black or white) and the racial divide in the United States has until recently been delineated by “the one drop rule”—anyone with one drop of “black blood” is considered black—Brazil’s understanding of race is very different. For Brazilians, there has been no simple dichotomy and (until recently at least) most Brazilians haven’t identified in terms of race. Rather, they speak of color, and instead of just two, it is said that Brazil’s population is made up of more colors than a Crayola box. The official narrative and one expressed (until recently) by most of its citizens is that the country has many colors—some say over one hundred—but only one race and culture (Pagano 2006).

More slaves were brought to Brazil than any other country in the world (approximately four million), and Brazil was the last country in the Americas to outlaw slavery, in 1888. However, the official version of history (one that apparently nearly all Brazilians bought until recently) held that Brazil is different because its history is different. Some argued that the Portuguese (because they were once conquered by the Moors and had a long coexistence with them) were uniquely enlightened colonizers. Consequently, Brazilians have long argued that the form of slavery practiced there was more humane, more benevolent than elsewhere. Most famously, sociologist Gilberto Freyre (who came from a family of plantation owners) in 1933 put forward the view that it was the permissive attitude toward miscegenation, the mixing of the races throughout the country’s history, that produced a unique, hybrid, *mestiçagem* population. This view became accepted as doctrine in Brazil, as Freyre and Brazil’s opinion leaders celebrated this mixing as the essence of Brazilianism, arguing that it was the blending of European, African, and indigenous populations that gave Brazil its exceptional national character and made it a model for the world (Daniel 2006). The dominant paradigm cast Brazil as a racial paradise compared to the United States; Brazilians considered racism to be patently un-Brazilian. This part of Brazil’s national identity granted Brazilians a feeling of moral superiority over countries riven by race divides, like the United States. It certainly did build in Brazilians a strong sense of unity. But it also had a deracializing effect; not only did it blur racial divides, the dogma of racial democracy forbade any discussion of them (Daniel 2006). The ideology of racial democracy diffused discontent and lulled Brazilians of all colors into believing that any inequities were a matter of class or individual initiative, not race.

Nonetheless, such arguments are hard to sustain when one examines a few statistics. According to Minority Rights Group International,

Evidence of the exclusion of the vast black minority is rampant. Nearly 80 per cent of Afro-Brazilians live below the nation’s poverty line, compared to 40 per cent of white citizens. Afro-descendants in Brazil earn half of what white groups earn; life expectancy is 6.5 years lower for blacks than for whites; and one half of all Afro-Brazilians are illiterate—some two and a half times the number of whites who cannot read or write. Only 4 per cent of Afro-Brazilians between the ages of 18 and 24 are in universities, compared to 12 per cent of whites. Three-quarters of all Afro-Brazilians have not completed secondary school, and 40 per cent of blacks have not completed elementary school. (“World Directory of Minorities” 2007, 6–7)

In the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI), a composite measure of well-being, Brazil ranks 69th. According to the report, if Brazil’s HDI were calculated just for its black population, it would come in 101st, while a white Brazil would rank 46th (“World Directory of Minorities” 2007). As it became increasingly difficult to explain away the overall disparity in life chances between whites and Afro-descendants as simply due to class, not race, Brazil began a paradigm shift (Daniel 2006).

Although 2001 is often identified as the turning point, the origins of this paradigm shift can be traced much earlier, and is due to the political opportunity structure created by the confluence of three factors: domestic pressure; a receptive, democratizing state led by a president interested in the issue; and international pressure. There is no agreement on the precise mix that explains the resulting change in the official discourse and how the government came to adopt reforms aimed at promoting racial equality, namely affirmative action. Htun (2004, 60) describes the turnaround as “a dialectic between social mobilization and presidential initiative framed within unfolding international events.” The way she sees it, the ideas were put forward by Afro-Brazilian activists, legitimized by transnational actors at international conferences, and made salient by then president Cardoso, who happened to be a sociologist specializing on race (Htun 2004).

Still, just bringing forward the ideas to spark the dialectic seemed an impossibility during much of the twentieth century because so many Brazilians, of all colors, had accepted the dogma of racial democracy. Racism exists in Brazil, but it is said to be veiled; it is a cordial, informal racism in which motives are hidden by code words and blatant racism is rare. It is commonly said, “If in the United States, racism is like a gun pointed between the eyes, in Brazil it is pointed at the back of your head.”

Imagine how difficult it is to fight an enemy that most of the population says doesn't exist. Sure, informal racism certainly is real, but Brazil never had legal segregation. There was never a ban on interracial marriage; rather, it was—and is—quite common in Brazil. Although the standard of living for blacks there was even lower than it was for blacks in the United States in the mid-twentieth century, it has been harder to mobilize the population to rally against racism because there has never been any Brazilian Jim Crow, no Ku Klux Klan (Daniel 2006). Correspondingly, while Brazil has had some great black leaders, they have never had the stature of a Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. or Malcolm X. And Brazil has yet to create and sustain an organization with the power of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) or a civil rights movement like the ones in the United States. In part this is because earlier in the twentieth century such groups were outlawed and censored. During the military dictatorship (1964–1985) those who questioned Brazil's racial democracy were considered threats to national security, and subversives faced torture and imprisonment (Daniel 2006).

However, during the political liberalization known as the *abertura* in 1978, Afro-Brazilian activists formed the *Movimento Negro Unificado* (MNU, or Unified Black Movement). Although it is said that Afro-Brazilians have a “thick” black cultural identity, they have a “thin” sense of themselves as a racial collectivity (Daniel 2006). The MNU has played a vanguard role in changing that. It put the issue of race on the agenda and, using the tactic of co-sponsorship, joined with black cultural organizations, women's groups, and others to enter the political arena. The largest black consciousness organization in the history of Brazil, the MNU had a main goal, among others, to challenge the ideology of racial democracy, expose hypocrisy, and develop alternative public policy (Pagano 2006; Covin 2006). Still, even since Brazil's return to democracy in 1985, those who raised discussions of race were themselves accused of racism, and groups like the MNU have had a hard time appealing to the majority of Afro-descended Brazilians, who, as a sign of how entrenched racism actually is, don't even necessarily identify as black.¹ Poor and poorly educated, most

blacks consider the middle-class academics of the MNU to be elitist and out of touch with their real, day-to-day concerns. Consequently, the MNU has never been considered a mass-based movement. However, after decades of work, by the late 1990s, a more diverse, heterogeneous, race-based “issue network,” or critical mass of engaged groups and individuals, had combined their energies to shift direction from consciousness-raising to a focused campaign making demands of the state—just as the state was becoming more receptive to such demands (Htun 2004; González 2010).

Although the democratic state was not totally unresponsive to these pressures prior to this time, it was not until the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) that there was a significant shift in policy and discourse. A sociologist who spent time in exile for his criticism of the dictatorship, Cardoso had long written about inequality. Interestingly, in an early address as president, FHC himself awkwardly claimed to be *mulatinho* (“slightly mulatto”) and to have “a foot in the kitchen”—a reference that dates back to slavery. This made him the first president in Brazil's history to characterize himself this way—although it is highly unlikely that he was actually the country's first African-descended president. There is disagreement about whether FHC was the catalyst for the paradigm shift or simply another contributor to it (Pagano 2006). There are some who believe that the change in state policy was individually based and elite-led, not due to the pressures of the social movement. For example, Cardoso orchestrated the opening and became a champion for affirmative action. According to one human rights activist, “If FHC had not been president, the debate would not have started” (as cited in Htun 2004, 80). Others give the president less credit, saying that his enthusiasm for the issue was always limited and had fizzled out toward the end of his term (Pagano 2006).

such ideas were offered up as “proof” that Brazil wasn't racist, many characterize the promise instead as ethnocide: it purged Brazilian culture of African (and indigenous and other non-European) traits by assimilating them until they disappeared (Daniel 2006).

These ideas, predicated on the view that inequality was based in class, not race, preserved white privilege and effectively stifled any nascent racial identity. The effect was divide and rule, as the majority of the population (all colors) accepted such arguments. However, despite claims that none of Brazil's problems had to do with race, the very idea of social whitening and its tenets resulted in an internalized racism. For decades the black movement has worked to overturn such ideas. The MNU encouraged more Brazilians to identify as *preto* (black) rather than *pardo* (brown), not only to promote black pride but to unite Afro-descendants to better claim their rights in Brazil. Although only 7 percent of Brazilians self-classified as black in the 2010 census, it appears that this rethinking is catching on, at least in the media, government, and among academics, which are phasing out use of the term *pardo* (Phillips 2011a; Pagano 2006).

¹ A central tenet of the ideology of racial democracy was the idea of social whitening, as expressed through the common saying in Brazil, “money whitens,” and a belief in social mobility through “the mulatto escape hatch.” Since the days of slavery, there had been a social differentiation of mixed race (then known as *mulatto*) people from blacks (and whites), with preferential status granted to mulattoes over blacks, including a significant degree of white social acceptance for those with the lightest-colored skin. The mulatto escape hatch therefore refers to the vertical mobility offered to those who whitened through miscegenation. Although

At the very least, there is agreement that a number of forces converged to produce this outcome. In 1995, after conducting an investigation of race relations in Brazil, a Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Human Rights Committee released a report that embarrassed the country in front of the whole world, seriously questioning Brazil's long-held claims of being a racial democracy (Pagano 2006).² Later that year, Afro-Brazilian activists marched to Brasilia to mark the 300th anniversary of the martyrdom of the African resistance leader Zumbi, in the biggest demonstration of its kind (Covin 2006). In response, the federal government—for the first time—created an office to initiate a discussion of remedies for racial inequality (Htun 2004).

But the moment of reckoning for Brazil—and the end of the myth of racial democracy—is widely believed to have come five years later, when a mirror was held up to Brazil and the country saw itself in a new light. In 2000, a government body, the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), released groundbreaking reports about the pervasiveness of racism and inequality in Brazil. What struck most Brazilians was that for the first time, this information wasn't coming from "black militants"—the source was a textbook example of conventional politics: prestigious white economists working for the government. As the press published these findings, illusions were shattered and it became increasingly impossible for the state—and most of the public—to remain in denial (Htun 2004).

International civil society, in the form of the 2001 World Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa, also played a catalytic role in this paradigm shift because it built stronger networks between black organizations in Latin America, the United States, and South Africa. Most crucially, perhaps, Durban reminded the world of what is expected of democracies when it comes to race. It legitimized not only the debate on racism but also discussion of reparations. Inside Brazil, the Durban conference is most remarkable for the role it played in "waking up" the Brazilian media and stimulating public interest. Suddenly, the topics of racism, racial inequality, and affirmative action were being discussed as never before. Moreover, the strategic partnerships that coalesced as Durban mobilized civil society and strengthened the political will necessary

² Such a report was especially galling for many Brazilians because in the 1950s UNESCO visited Brazil to see what it could teach the world about avoiding racism. Although the study reported that blacks were disproportionately represented among the poorest in Brazil, it also found that Brazil was unique in that blacks who attained wealth and education were fully accepted by whites (Daniel 2006).

to push for new policies to combat discrimination. In the end, according to Htun (2004), civil society, presidential initiative, and international events arose independently but were mutually reinforcing. Each of the three variables shaped and was shaped by the other two. Collaboration between domestic and international civil society persuaded the state to take their claims seriously and changes in the political opportunity structure, most notably, the presence of an ally in the executive branch, certainly had a positive impact on the ability of domestic and international civil society to mobilize, thus setting the country on a trajectory for change (Htun 2004; Pagano 2006).

After 2001, the environment was ripe for change and the result was a significant shift in policy. It is important to point out that this adjustment did not occur simply because it was politically expedient. When the state finally abandoned the dogma of racial democracy, it wasn't because it felt threatened, and it didn't do so for material incentives or because it would win votes. Rather, according to Htun (2004), the reform occurred because the state was receptive and because it was no longer much of a contested issue, for two reasons: 1) because more people were finally convinced by the idea that Afro-Brazilian activists had been arguing for decades, that racism was pervasive and something that needed to be addressed; and 2) because Brazil was concerned about its image and the new democratic government wanted to prove its credentials to the world.

Society led the state, but the state claimed center stage, not only to proclaim how it has changed, but to show that it is a world leader in the fight against racial discrimination. The Lula and Dilma governments have built on the start provided by the Cardoso administration, leading a variety of efforts to address racial inequality. Most of these have centered on affirmative action programs, promoting the use of quota systems in university admissions and government hiring. Taking the arguments of groups like the MNU to heart, to varying degrees these executives have been the champions of programs of positive discrimination, which also include non-quota initiatives targeting black populations such as health programs and preparatory courses for the vestibular, all-important college entrance exam (Pagano 2006). As we will see again and again, for controversial causes, executive leadership is a necessity in Brazil. However, for the most part, the federal government has promoted affirmative action, but not imposed it (Htun 2005; Daflon 2011). There have been some remarkable gains; most public universities now have sizable black and brown populations. But implementation has been pursued "in the Brazilian way," allowing for a great deal of flexibility in how each institution enforces the policy.

As a result of this accommodating approach, affirmative action is practiced in a variety of ways and only in some government agencies and universities. Moreover, the legislative and judicial branches of government have largely proven less enthusiastic about such interventions. Some proposed measures have never been passed, while others have been tied up in the courts (Pagano 2006).³ One could argue that the uneven implementation of the reform means that it amounts to a new version of *para inglês ver*—mostly for show.

Such a policy reflects countervailing pressures within society. In terms of private discourse, there are still plenty of Brazilians arguing about whether racial democracy is a myth. Public opinion polls suggest significant support for affirmative action, particularly among the young.⁴ Although a 2008 survey found that a majority (64 percent of respondents) admit that color or race does affect one's life, there are many, on the left and right, who cling tenaciously to the ideal of racial democracy and insist that if racism exists in Brazil, it is nothing like the problem anywhere else ("Survey of the Ethno-Racial Characteristics" 2011; Chang 2007). According to a 2013 *Economist* article, a recent poll found that two-thirds of Brazilians supported affirmative action for university admissions ("Slavery's Legacy" 2013). But earlier polls report that one in six Brazilians strongly oppose racial preferences, and as one might expect, there has been some backlash against it. Whereas many on the left insist that the problem of inequality is more about class than race, the right rallies nationalist sentiments by condemning affirmative action as "un-Brazilian," an import not suitable for their country. Both groups worry that such policies will create racial conflict in a society where it did not exist (World Directory of Minorities 2007). Beyond their philosophical objections to affirmative action, these authors, who include some of the wealthiest and best-educated Brazilians, also point to practical problems in implementation, particularly in determining who is white and who is non-white. (Interestingly, affirmative action's supporters counter that the police certainly have no difficulty determining who is black.) But not

³ Although Article 5 of the 1988 constitution declares racism to be a crime, in reality bringing forward a charge of discrimination is an exercise in futility. It is extremely unusual for anyone to be punished for the crime of racism because it is so difficult to prove it. Only the most egregious acts are outlawed, and even then the punishment is so severe that judges have been reluctant hand down guilty verdicts. For example, one study found that only 394 of 651 discrimination cases brought forward ever went to trial, and of those not one single case ended in a conviction ("World Directory of Minorities" 2007; Pagano 2006).

⁴ According to a study by the Latin American Opinion Project, more than two-thirds of Brazilians view affirmative action favorably (Smith 2010).

even all advocates for racial equality support such measures, fearing that quota systems reinforce racism and ignore the roots of inequality. They argue that universalist—as opposed to race-based—programs like Bolsa Familia have had more of an impact on reducing inequality than affirmative action ever will (Daniel 2006).

Although the debate on affirmative action continues, there is near universal agreement that a paradigm shift on race has occurred in Brazil. The ideology of racial democracy has been dismantled, and even if it is largely discursive—and the glaring inequities remain intact—Brazilians have snapped out of denial and the change is significant, palpable. For decades in Brazil, it had been heretical to talk about race or even suggest that racism existed (Htun 2004). Now the conversation has begun and it is about national identity. And while advocates of racial equality still wait for more profound institutional changes, in Brazil private and publicly held conceptualizations of race do appear to be transforming (Reiter and Mitchell 2010; Htun 2004). That Brazil is finally looking critically at itself and recognizing that there might be a problem is huge, and that is thanks to contentious politics: the back and forth between state and society, or the interplay of citizen activism, executive leadership, and world events.

Sexual Politics and LGBT Rights

Let's cut to the chase: like most of the world, Brazil is a patriarchal, heterosexual society with highly restrictive ideas about traditional families and gender roles.⁵ In Brazil, traditional gender ideologies are based around the concepts of *machismo* and *marianismo*. These powerful worldviews assign males and females to perform distinct gender roles and teach that the result is harmonious gender relations, as the roles are complementary. Men are believed by nature to be macho: powerful, fearless, dominant, and sexually aggressive. They are the breadwinners and heads of the family, and they have traditionally dominated the worlds of work and politics. Women, on the other hand, were traditionally taught to model themselves on the Virgin Mary, for whom *marianismo* is named; whenever possible they have been relegated to the home and their primary role is as mother. According to Neuhouser (1999), *machismo* and *marianismo* divide

⁵ As is the case elsewhere, there has always been more variation in "the family" than traditionalists would have us believe. This is particularly true of Brazil, where diverse family forms are known to exist and the expression of gender roles has always been complicated by race and class (Adelman and de Azevedo 2012).

the world into male and female spheres and are like scripts that individuals must follow closely at the risk of social ostracism. Proof of this is that traditionally in Brazil, the worst thing a woman could do is abandon her children. Interestingly, working as a prostitute might be deemed acceptable if she is doing it to provide for her children. A “bad” man is a homosexual, whereas drunkenness and infidelity are tolerated. Historically acts of what was considered “gender deviance” were often punished harshly, and sexual stereotypes and double standards of sexual morality are built into the law and culture (Neuhouser 1998). For years, Brazil’s laws on sexual harassment, rape and intimate partner violence reflected patriarchal norms—and arguably its strict prohibitions on abortion still do. But even as legal codes have changed to punish gender violence, implementation of them has proven difficult. The idea that females are sexual objects and the property of men is so normalized that sexual harassment, rape, and intimate partner violence is believed to be inevitable (Portela 2014).

These traditions in Brazil date back to colonialism and remain strong; however, this is also a country that has been experiencing rapid social change, particularly in regard to gender relations and family life, since the return to democracy in the 1980s.⁶ Today, traditional gender ideologies are increasingly questioned, particularly by younger women; urbanization, industrialization, and economic growth have accelerated these trends (Neuhouser 1999). The result is yet another set of contradictions in Brazil, as tensions play out between contending civil societies that duke it out for influence over the state. This is the arena for contentious politics in regard to women’s rights in Brazil: in one corner, the reigning heavyweight champion, the Catholic Church, has joined with evangelicals to fight against “a crisis of the family” and to maintain the status quo, or even turn back the clock.⁷ In the opposite corner it faces the

⁶ The Church upholds abstinence, heterosexuality, and a vehement opposition to abortion, but in reality, when it comes to these issues most Brazilians are relatively progressive and increasingly secular, although the majority of them remain silent on abortion—even those who have had one (Rosenberg 2011; Cardoso 2010).

⁷ Evangelicalism is the fastest-growing religion in Brazil (it has grown from 4 percent of the population in 1960 to 15 percent in 2000). While Catholicism’s influence is waning (it is still significant, claiming 70 percent of the population), evangelicals in particular have had great success in developing a media empire, and both conservative Catholics and Protestants have harnessed the political power of their congregations by sending more of their representatives to Congress, who have combined to form a formidable voting bloc. These near hegemonic forces argue that they are fighting a defensive war, defending the traditional family against all who seek to “rethink” it (Ogland and Verona 2011; Bevins 2012). The result is a struggle over a highly contested terrain, and all bets are on that it will continue for some time to come.

challenger: what has been described as perhaps the largest and most lively feminist movement in Latin America, which is seeking to, according to Adelman and de Azevedo, “redefine gender relations and to transform ways of thinking about men, women, sexuality, and family—just to name a few” (Adelman and de Azevedo 2012, 73).

Although organized forms of women’s activism date back at least one hundred years in Brazil, much of the progress that has been achieved is attributable to the country’s second-wave feminist movement of the 1970s, which joined with other civil actors in taking an oppositional stance to fight the authoritarian government, unseat it, and reestablish democracy. Since then, Brazilian feminists have taken a more conventional approach, using protest as pressure to broaden understandings of democracy by questioning ascribed gender roles and contesting women’s juridical and social inferiority. Just as the MNU had challenged racial democracy as a myth, Brazilian feminists challenged as imaginary assumptions about the harmonious nature of male-female relations (Pitanguy 2002). They had a lot on their plate. The 1988 constitution declared, for the first time in Brazil’s history, equality between husbands and wives, but prior to that time a woman “only had power to make decisions in which her husband was incapacitated, could not work without his permission and a pre-marital loss of virginity was a basis for marital annulment if the husband so desired” (Adelman and de Azevedo 2012, 67). Working with the system, the women’s movement in Brazil lobbied hard to have these and similar laws overturned in the 1988 constitution. They largely succeeded; the state proved receptive and reforms were made. When it comes to women’s rights, Brazil’s constitution is considered one of the most expansive in the world.

As a result, a number of indicators suggest that when it comes to gender relations and gender inequality, Brazil is changing, albeit slowly. It is ranked 62 out of 136 countries in the 2013 Global Gender Gap report, which offers a snapshot of how women are doing. Brazil’s ranking has improved over the last few years mostly because of strong showings for female health and education. However, Brazil is still ranked very low, particularly on wage equality, as women on average earn two-thirds of what men do. Brazilian women have been entering the paid workforce in larger numbers since the mid-twentieth century, more women are unionized than ever before, and more are entering formerly “male” professions, such as physician. But occupational segregation is still the norm and women are concentrated in the less valued jobs. Meanwhile, despite the fact that they are entering the workforce in ever-greater numbers, women (or for middle- and upper-class women, their maids) continue to be responsible

for nearly all the housework ("The Global Gender Gap Report 2013" 2013; Simões and Matos 2008).

Of all the indicators, it is ironic, given that Brazil has a female president, that some of the country's worst scores are for female political participation. Although parties are supposed to reserve a minimum of 30 percent of their slots for females, the gender quota has not made much of a difference in breaking this glass ceiling. As of 2013, women composed only 9 percent of federal legislators ("The Global Gender Gap Report 2013" 2013; Simões and Matos 2008). Thus, as Simões and Matos (2008) conclude, there have been some improvements in women's status since the mid-1980s, but gender inequality persists, and is compounded for some women by simultaneous oppressions based on race and class.

Although feminists describe Brazil's reality as changing very slowly, it is much too fast for conservative religious groups, who chastise their counterparts for breaking taboos in discussing sexuality and who characterize feminists as promoting divorce and promiscuity, as pro-abortion and pro-homosexual. As these two social actors battle to the death over whether the traditional family will be protected or historic systems of power and inequality dismantled, the state finds itself caught in between, often working pragmatically with one side but unable to ignore the political clout of the other. The resulting clash is frustrating for all involved and has left Brazil with a policy that some have characterized as bordering on the schizophrenic (Adelman and de Azevedo 2012).

The struggle over abortion is a good example of the power of countervailing pressures within society and how society can lead the state—to maintain the status quo. As is the case with race relations, the state finds itself cross-pressured, this time by the clash of traditional and modern gender ideologies and understandings of human rights. Since 1940, abortion has been defined as a crime for which a pregnant woman or the person performing the abortion can spend up to three years in prison. Brazil currently has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world: it is only legal if the pregnant woman's life is at risk or if the pregnancy was caused by rape.⁸ Even under these circumstances, time-consuming and difficult bureaucratic obstacles (e.g., until 2005, a police report was required for an abortion to be permitted in cases of rape) greatly impede women's access even to legal abortion (Simões and Matos 2008).

⁸ In 2012 the law was expanded to allow abortion in cases of severe and fatal fetal impairment, such as anencephaly ("Brazil Lifts Ban" 2012).

Brazilian feminists and health-care advocates press the government for the decriminalization of abortion because abortion may be illegal, but it has hardly been abolished. Approximately one million illegal abortions occur each year in Brazil. Many of the women receiving them never recover from the physical and psychological wounds associated with self-induced or kitchen table abortions. It is estimated that every year hundreds of thousands of Brazilian women seek emergency treatment for these clandestine abortions, where they are often "punished" by health-care practitioners who suspect foul play and neglect them or refuse them painkillers (Garcia 2010; Vianna, Carrara, and Lacerda 2008). Untold numbers delay seeking medical care because of shame or fear of the legal consequences. Although no one knows the precise number, it is estimated that five thousand women die each year in Brazil from complications due to unsafe abortion (Garcia 2010). We do know that most of the women at risk are relatively poor and likely to be brown or black since middle-class and relatively affluent women (mostly white) can afford to pay for still illegal but safer abortions performed in private clinics (Guilhem and Azevedo 2007).

It was against this backdrop that groups like the Feminist Health Network have utilized conventional approaches to agitate for change. Much of the work of pro-choice groups prior to 2000 is described as "firefighting," with feminists lobbying Congress to maintain at least their limited, established rights to abortion. But they have also employed protest as pressure. For example, they have engaged the media with creative and artistic interventions and promoted a dialogue by bringing in opinion leaders, including supermodel Gisele Bündchen ("Model Gisele Slams Church" 2007). And over the years they have put forward many legislative proposals for decriminalization—all of which have been rejected by Congress. By 2002, feminist groups decided to take a different tactic: to work more directly to create conditions ripe for the legalization of abortion. They adopted the slogan, "Abortion: Women Decide, Society Respects the Decision, the State Ensures its Execution," and actively campaigned to help elect Lula, an executive they believed would lead on their cause (Soares and Sardenberg 2008, 57). In 2005, President Lula affirmed Brazil's international commitments regarding reproductive rights and appointed a commission to review the country's abortion legislation.⁹ The result was a bill to decriminalize abortion until the third month of pregnancy.

⁹ Such international commitments included the 1994 United Nations Conference on Population in Cairo and the 1995 Fourth World Beijing Conference on Women.

The response was a holy war, declared by the Catholic Church and supported by other religious conservatives, who view abortion as a moral issue and threat to the family, not as a privacy or health issue (Simões and Matos 2008). As mentioned earlier, the Catholic Church has long been a powerful institution in Brazil. The Brazilian state has been considered secular since the 1891 constitution, but throughout history it has been strongly influenced by the Church, especially on decisions concerning sexual and reproductive rights. More recently, conservative Catholics, led by the Brazilian Bishops' National Conference, have been joined by evangelicals in Congress to form a faith-based movement that has not only blocked all legislative reforms of the abortion law but even sought to make abortion completely illegal in all circumstances.¹⁰ Abortion is a grave sin and a paramount concern for both religious groups—and such a bold move is a good indicator of the power of religious conservatives in Brazil. This bloc contends that the rights of the unborn must trump all others (Simões and Matos 2008).

One has to wonder if in taking on the abortion issue, Lula somehow overestimated his personal appeal to Brazilians or thought that Brazil's keen desire to attain international legitimacy would give him the power to step into the fracas unscathed. Whatever the case, he was clearly wrong. Maybe it was just bad luck: the proposal was put forward just as a major corruption scandal threatened the president's reelection in 2006, and just as the bishops were using every weapon in their arsenal—from parish pulpit to mass media—in a campaign to rally public opinion against him. Religious leaders there and throughout the country stoked nationalist passions, characterizing the pro-choice movement as pro-abortion zealots funded by the United States. During this period, Church leaders referred to the president as "Herod" (the king of Judea who ordered the killing of baby boys) and Rio parishes distributed plastic dolls to represent aborted fetuses, with full support of the bishop. Despite his multiple headaches, Lula managed to get reelected in 2006, but by the time of a 2007 meeting with Pope Benedict, Lula had recalibrated and was pledging that he would never seek the legalization of abortion (Mollman 2012).

Yet another turning point occurred in 2009, when the Church excommunicated a nine-year-old rape victim, her mother, and her doctors for her abortion.

¹⁰ It should be noted that not all practicing Catholics form a monolithic block on this issue. The NGO Catholics for the Right to Choose has played an important role in raising awareness about the need to deal with the problem of unsafe, illegal abortions and its race- and class-based implications (Simões and Matos 2008).

Under Brazilian law, the termination of the pregnancy was legal on two counts: she was raped, and her life was at risk—the eighty-pound girl was pregnant with twins. For a moment it appeared that Lula had rallied: he condemned the bishops for excommunicating everyone involved—except the stepfather who had impregnated the girl (Kulczycki 2011; "Brazil: 9-Year-Old" 2009). However, in the end, Lula disappointed advocates for reproductive rights. With elections just months away, he bowed to conservative pressure and took an about-face, and, in order to boost his protégée's chances at the polls, his party dropped decriminalization from its human rights plan (Mollman 2012). However, this had become the topic that wouldn't go away. Abortion, which had never been a front-burner issue in past elections, became a flashpoint in the 2010 vote. Dilma nearly lost her first campaign for president over accusations that she flip-flopped on abortion and Internet rumors about her support for changes that would allow terminations as late as the ninth month of pregnancy. In the end, analysts say that she pulled off the victory only by insisting that she personally opposes abortion and vowed not to legalize it (Downie 2010; "Abortion Becomes an Issue" 2010).¹¹ Thus, abortion offers a prime example of the political power of social actors and how society can lead the state—in this case, to maintain the status quo.¹²

When it comes to the rights of sex workers in Brazil, contentious politics is about state receptivity. As with the other social issues discussed here, society has led the state, which adopted reforms. In fact, this is an example of synergy; the state changed its repertoire and has moved from marginalizing prostitutes to partnering with them to better implement its HIV-AIDS policy. Here again Brazil is unique. It has the world's largest Catholic population at the same time that it celebrates its reputation as an "erotic democracy"—one of the world's most sexually liberal societies. Brazil is a major draw for sex tourism—in 2012 it was close to overtaking Thailand as the world's number one sex-tourist destination. The country's sexual vitality is central to its national identity, symbolized by Carnival and prized since at least the 1930s as a social, cultural, and

¹¹ All three of the leading candidates for president in 2014 tried to avoid the issue, but came out in favor of keeping the law as is (Carneiro 2014).

¹² Interestingly, the majority of the Brazilian public (65 percent, according to a 2007 *Data-folha* poll) favors maintaining the current abortion laws without reform (cited in Garcia 2010). However, it is estimated that 31 percent of pregnancies end in abortion and one out of five Brazilian women under age forty have had an abortion (Guilhem and Azevedo 2007; Garcia 2010).

economic resource (Amar 2009). However, as the following discussion will demonstrate, perhaps it is no more an erotic democracy than it is a racial one.

In Brazil, the commercial exploitation of prostitutes is illegal, but not prostitution per se, as long as the sex worker is eighteen or older (Pimenta et al. 2010). Until recently the result of this contradictory policy has been that sex workers lived in a legal limbo without any formal protections. Today, even though prostitution is legal, it is still a very dangerous profession. In fact, the first organized movement of sex workers formed in 1979 to protest police brutality, after police murdered three prostitutes (female and travesti, or transgender) in São Paulo. In those days, sex workers, including transgender and male prostitutes, who are particularly targeted for violence, were pariahs in Brazil. When they marched to call attention to the widespread police abuse, it was the first time that Brazilians heard prostitutes speaking up for themselves. Not only were they successful in their demand to have the precinct captain removed, this event marked a watershed for Brazil, as this previously excluded group joined civil society (Hinchberger 2005). By the late 1980s, using protest as pressure, Brazilian sex workers from all over the country formed the Brazilian Network of Prostitutes. They joined “whores’ movements” in other countries to fight for labor rights, including social benefits such as government pensions, to reduce the vulnerabilities associated with sex work and to combat violence against prostitutes, and to eliminate the stigma attached to it (Crago 2008; “Human Trafficking, HIV/AIDS, and the Sex Sector” 2010).

But it was the government’s concern over the spread of HIV/AIDS that brought the state into partnership with sex workers. In Brazil as elsewhere, early on in the epidemic the state stood by as certain groups (sex workers and homosexuals) were blamed for the disease. Meanwhile, as HIV/AIDS spread rapidly in Brazil, it became more of a priority for the state and eventually both groups were able to persuade the government to see the problem differently. The critical juncture came in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when a combination of pressures (domestic and international) forced a shift in attitudes and the public health officials changed their approach, signaling state receptivity to society’s demands. Recognizing that gay men and sex workers were in a unique position as citizens to combat AIDS, the state recalibrated its policy and chose to work synergistically with these groups (Jeffrey 1997). By 2000, these groups had formed NGOs and were working in government and receiving federal funds to promote HIV prevention efforts. In effect, the state paid female and male prostitutes to work as peer educators, running workshops to teach other sex workers about condom use and AIDS prevention. The programs have worked

well because they deal with the issue of access; more people are getting access to information and technology because peers are accepted in ways that officials are not (Hinchberger 2005).

Despite the effectiveness of such programs, in 2005 the Bush administration made continued US foreign aid to fight HIV/AIDS contingent on the Brazilian government’s formal condemnation of prostitution and rejection of prostitutes’ rights.¹³ The Lula government chose instead to reject the \$40 million in US funding rather than accept the anti-prostitution pledge and violate what it considered a matter of sovereignty. In other words, Brazil refused the United States’ attempt to tell it what to do. For Brazil, it was also a matter of ethics and citizenship. This is another example of Brazil’s exceptionalism: for standing up to the United States, Brazil stood out as an example to the world. It is one of the few countries that views sex workers as partners in public policy. Most countries treat them as part of the problem instead of the solution. The partnership between sex workers and the state on AIDS continued to evolve over several presidencies, as prostitutes served as advisers for policy and meanwhile continued their calls for prostitutes’ rights (Pimenta et al. 2010).

Taking a different approach and calling themselves “*putas políticas*” (political whores), more prostitutes are pressing for their rights as citizens through the political process. Not only do they lobby politicians; Gabriela Silva Leite, a retired prostitute and sex workers’ rights activist, ran for a congressional seat in 2010 with the slogan, “*uma puta deputada*” (which can be read to mean “congressional whore” or “a bitchin’ awesome congresswoman”) (Blanchette 2010). Clearly, some individuals have chosen to consider sex work as a profession and part of their identity. They’ve appropriated slurs once used against them and drawn power from them.

Other *putas políticas* presented a bill before Congress obliging clients to pay prostitutes directly and to legalize brothels and the commercial employment of prostitutes. Such moves would have afforded protections to sex workers that they currently do not enjoy, as the illegality associated with brothels means that prostitutes often wind up working in miserable conditions that they can’t complain about since they can’t have a formal working relationship with their employers. From the sex workers’ perspective, yes, there has been progress. But until sex work is fully decriminalized there will be corruption, as police extort

¹³ Under the Obama administration, the United States has continued to require all organizations that receive HIV/AIDS funding to take the anti-prostitution oath.

them or look the other way when employers mistreat them (Vallance 2012; Jeffrey 1997).

Just as is the case with its racial democracy, Brazil's self-image as an erotic democracy does not hold up against reality. Brazil is a paradox. On the one hand, Carnival is a celebration of shifting gender identities and the country is a mecca for gay travelers; in 2010 it was estimated that a quarter of all Rio's tourists were gay (Keating 2012). And Brazil has staked out its place as a world leader in the promotion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights at international forums. But Brazil is also infamous as one of the worst places in the world to be LGBT. Once more, the story is about how bigotry fosters activism, which fosters backlash, and how one group of non-state actors has joined with the state in opposition to another non-state actor whose power once rivaled the state.

Of course, that actor is the Catholic Church, and although it has never been as powerful in Brazil as it is in other Latin American countries, many—if not most—of Brazil's traditional conceptions of sex, the family, and morality are based in Church doctrines. Traditional Brazilian beliefs about homosexuality reflect Catholic teachings that it is unnatural, sick, sinful, and an abomination to God.¹⁴ And evangelicals have indicated that they are ready to join conservative Catholics in throwing down the gauntlet against gays and lesbians ("Brazil Evangelical Christians" 2012).

As a result, homophobia and transphobia live on in Brazil, as the country has become infamous, even record-setting for violent attacks persecuting people for their real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Homosexuality (except for in the armed forces) has been legal in Brazil since 1823. Here again there is a disconnect between the real and the legal Brazil: Brazil's rate of victimization of gays and lesbians is higher than in Europe or the United States. Brazil, the capital of Carnival, is said to have the world's highest rate of transphobic violence (Rosenberg 2011; "Brazil at a Crossroads" 2011). It is estimated that between 1980 and 2009 over 3,100 people were murdered in hate crimes across the country, specifically targeted for their sexual orientation or gender identity ("Brazil at a Crossroads" 2011). And the number of homophobic and transphobic hate crimes appears to be climbing. According

¹⁴ Most Brazilians are well acquainted with this view but are more liberal than their religious leaders and considerably less homophobic. Still, many analysts warn us not to make too much of this; they would only describe the average Brazilian's view as tolerant—which is far less than accepting (Encarnación 2011).



Members of São Paulo's gay community protest the Catholic Church's views on homosexuality with posters that read "No more hypocrisy! Condoms and Health," and "Jesus loves gays," 2007. Source: Reuters/Luludi-Agencia Luz.

to the Gay Group of Bahia, transphobic and homophobic attacks resulted in 326 murders in 2014—nearly one every day in Brazil. This democracy, which aspires to be a leader of the world's marginalized people, may also be the world's deadliest place to be transgender (Bevins 2015; "Brazil at a Crossroads" 2011).

On the other hand, this is the same country that hosts the largest gay pride parade on the planet, with three million participants in 2013 ("São Paulo Gay March" 2014). Its gay rights movement also grew out of the abertura of the 1970s and 1980s, as LGBT activists put aside their specific concerns and joined in solidarity with other civil society groups using a confrontational, oppositional approach to push for the end of the dictatorship. For years LGBT persons lived in a climate of repression and in fear of the state, which claimed to represent Christian values and the traditional family. In the 1970s in Brazil, the authoritarian government threatened advocates for gay rights with charges of offending public morality, and police conducted raids to "clean up" the cities. In a variety of ways, citizens resisted this persecution; in what is known as the May Day March of 1980, in the largest political act by Brazilian LGBT groups up until that time, nearly a thousand people marched in São Paulo to protest police harassment (Green 1994). During the early years of the democracy, by the early

1990s, some groups (such as the Brazilian Association of Gays, Lesbians and Transvestites) had begun partnering with the state and working in government. As mentioned earlier, gradually the state became reliant on LGBT activists' technical expertise on HIV prevention. In return, these groups received funding from the state and the two built on the relationship, gradually expanding into other issue areas (de la Dehesa 2010).

In Brazil, as in much of the rest of the region, this movement is surging and considered one of the best-organized worldwide. LGBT groups have even (often provocatively) shown that they're willing to take on their adversaries. For example, one group caught the country's attention for distributing HIV prevention posters depicting scantily clad male models dressed as Catholic saints with the caption, "Not even a saint can save you. Use a condom" (Bevins 2011). In what has been described as "cross-pollination," gay groups fighting discrimination in Brazil have influenced and been influenced by their counterparts in Europe (especially Portugal) and the United States. For example, gay rights activists have used the Internet to create a "gay cyberspace" that provides a variety of services but is most notable as an alternative to mass media outlets, as a place where the LGBT populations represent their views and share information (Encarnación 2011).

In many ways, despite the fact that the 1988 constitution does not explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation—it does prohibit it on the basis of race and gender—LGBT activists have been more successful than feminists or Afro-Brazilian activists in achieving legislative and policy changes. When it comes to gay rights, there is said to be a true partnership between state and society, although that has not always been the case. Whereas Cardoso was the president serving as the catalyst for change when it came to race, President Lula is widely considered the patron of LGBT rights in Brazil, famously claiming that discrimination on the basis of sexuality is "perhaps the most perverse disease impregnated in the human head" (E. Friedman 2009, 429). Thanks to the Lula government's support, Brazil is one of the few places in the world where free gender reassignment surgery is considered a basic right for all citizens (Rosenberg 2011). Moreover, the federal government sponsors São Paulo's annual Gay Pride march (E. Friedman 2009). Perhaps the most celebrated triumph for supporters of gay rights to date is the recognition of equal marriage rights in 2013 (civil unions have been recognized since 2004). Most of the gains on this front have come through Brazil's judiciary, which argued that Brazil's constitution guarantees same-sex couples the same rights as their opposite-sex counterparts (Romero, 2013a; "Same-Sex Marriage: Global

Comparisons" 2013). As a result of this state-society partnership, Human Rights Watch has recognized Brazil's exemplary progress in the promotion of LGBT rights (Rosenberg 2011; Vianna, Carrara, and Lacerda 2008).

However, conservatives are challenging the court's decision, seeking to overturn what they see as the efforts of activist judges, whom they claim are violating Christians' religious freedoms by forcing them to recognize same-sex marriages. They are turning to Congress for support, which is increasingly dominated by evangelical Christians and has been less willing than the other two branches to view gay rights as human rights (E. Friedman 2009; Bevins 2015). Conservative groups and their allies in Congress seek to annul existing marriages and to reestablish marriage as the union of a man and a woman (Leal 2014). They are also making their voices heard on other issues regarding sexual orientation. In an effort to stop hate crimes, during the Lula administration PT and other progressive lawmakers have proposed a landmark anti-homophobia law that seeks to guarantee the rights of the LGBT population and turn homophobia into a crime—much as racism is treated as a crime in Brazil (Ortiz 2011). Religious conservatives, however, have lobbied hard against the bill. Because it criminalized public utterances against gays, they characterized it as a "gay gag" and argued that it promoted homosexuality and interfered with freedoms of religion and speech. After multiple revisions the bill was blocked and as of 2015 appears to be going nowhere, in part because executive support for it has diminished. Dilma, Lula's successor, was once outspoken in favoring the bill. However, to be reelected in 2014 and needing conservative votes and support in Congress, she (and her main rival) avoided the issue in the campaign. Weakened by a major corruption scandal in her second term, Dilma has not been nearly as willing as her mentor to take a lead on the issue. In this case it's not simply a matter of receptivity or resistance; for a variety of reasons, even in her first term the president chose to avoid the controversy, vetoing the "Kit Gay," an educational packet designed to promote tolerance among schoolchildren (Jebson 2012).

Some are concerned this is a sign of the times in Brazil, that Brazil is becoming a less liberal nation as evangelicals, supported by international evangelical groups such as one led by American televangelist Pat Robertson, are ascendant. For example, a controversial preacher known for his homophobic and racist remarks was appointed president of the Commission for Human Rights and Minorities (Watts 2013b). Clearly, neither state nor society are monolithic on this issue.

Although Brazil was once considered a unique racial democracy, few continue to make such arguments today. It is a country with a female president

serving her second term, but women are still widely treated as sexual objects. It is recognized throughout the world as a leading voice for the human rights of LGBT populations, but those concerned about equality know that there is still work to be done in Brazil. The country is changing in ways that many people never expected in their lifetimes—as is awareness of the issues raised in this chapter. But many fear that it is war now; the very success of these movements is creating a backlash. “Anxiety” over change is commonly argued to be behind the rising number of hate crimes against people who are still characterized as a threat to tradition (Bevins 2011; Jebson 2012). Until the “real Brazil” comes into line with the “legal Brazil,” the country will not live up to its reputation.

CHINA

Too often, observers of China discount the role of society. As one Western business adviser laments, “The huge misconception in the West is that China moves forward and changes because all-powerful officials at the top issue orders that everyone follows” (McGregor 2005, 194). Chinese society is more stratified—economically, socially, and politically—than ever. Despite visible and brutal crackdowns, “China lays claim to one of the oldest and most influential traditions of popular protest of any nation on earth” (Perry 2011, 136). As we will see in the following discussion, there is a combination of both receptivity and resistance by state actors to many social initiatives.

Since 2005, Chinese leaders have promoted the image of China’s “harmonious society”—an aspirational statement that belies China’s record of contention and challenge. Given the size of the country, and the well-known limits of the center’s reach beyond Beijing, leaders face a legacy of promoting local flexibility while insisting on the rigid interpretation of central mandates. Elizabeth J. Perry (2011) introduces the concept of “pragmatic populism” to capture the CCP’s ability to dispel ideological orthodoxy in favor of a managed social response, a heritage she traces to the Confucian principle of benevolent governance. She argues that the state’s response to popular demands may actually strengthen the state and state legitimacy. Yet much is in contention. Some maintain that the types of protest and contention in China have significantly changed since the late 1980s, with a rise of blue-collar protests that involve far fewer students and intellectuals than prior waves. From the standpoint of state-society relations, one of the biggest differences in these protests is that they are directed toward the local state, rather than Beijing. In fact

complainants often appeal to higher authorities for help, invoking the need for the enforcement of national laws (Walder 2011).

Layers of Identity: Religion and Ethnicity

In recent years, Chinese leaders have gone out of their way to extol the regime’s official tolerance of the diversity within the Chinese population, highlighting China’s fifty-six recognized ethnic groups (the majority Han constitute approximately 92 percent) and the constitutional promise of freedom of religion. At the same time, unrest in spiritual and ethnic identities found within Tibetan and Uighur communities challenges the official narrative of China as a cohesive multiethnic country. And, even though many Chinese view prejudice as a “foreign problem,” racism and other forms of discrimination remain doggedly persistent (Canaves and Oster 2009). Prejudice against “foreign devils” is centuries’ old, and discriminatory, racist slurs against Japanese and Koreans are uttered in public without reticence. Chinese have long harbored negative attitudes toward people with darker skin, a predilection that was often used to mask the class identity that was supposed to be non-existent; upper-class Chinese shield their skin from the sun and purchase beauty products to avoid the appearance of peasant farmers, who are tanned because of their labor. Color-based racism, deeply embedded in the imperial period, was again highlighted during the run-up to one of China’s wildly popular reality shows, *Oriental Angel*, modeled after the *American Idol* series. Lou Jing—the daughter of a Chinese mother and African-American father, and a native of Shanghai who is fluent in Mandarin and has even mastered the extremely difficult art of Peking Opera—faced a barrage of online criticism after she failed to make the finals of the show. She had been nominated for the show by one of her instructors at the Shanghai Drama Academy, where she was studying broadcasting (Doran 2009). Despite widespread recognition of her musical talent, she was vilified for her skin color and mixed ancestry, labeled a “black chimpanzee” and a “zebra” whose mixed parentage was an ugly “mistake” (Callahan 2013, 100). The fierce response to her appearance also captured another truth about Chinese society: a lack of acceptance of interethnic unions.

Due largely to government censorship and the influence of official discourse, many Chinese fail to see negative attitudes toward China’s ethnic minorities as being rooted in cultural homogeneity or underlying racism. Rather, they castigate “instigators” within ethnic minority communities as agitators against Chinese culture. Incidents of ethnic strife in China, including

Han-Uighur and Han-Tibetan violence in recent years, are viewed as isolated incidents often due to foreign influences. Such clashes are not understood based in ethnic differences or prejudice. Rather, the Chinese understanding of racism is apparently very narrow; as one university student stated, "There is no racism in China because there are no black people."¹⁵

Within China, it can be quite difficult to separate nationality, race, ethnicity, and spirituality.¹⁶ The term "*minzu*," literally meaning "tribe people," includes an understanding of the interactions between race, ethnicity, lineage, and nationality (Makley 2010, 151). Adding the religious connection to many ethnic minority experiences has produced significant areas of contention. Facing increased persecution for religious expression outside of prescribed channels, "more people see religion as a form of resistance rather than personal piety" (Demick 2011). Contention arises, at least in part, to challenge the official characterization of group identities. Within the PRC, five faiths are formally recognized: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Except for the indigenous Daoist traditions, official scrutiny is rooted in the foreign nature of these traditions, and they garner attention for their role in territorial integrity and international relations as well. Religion and ethnicity coalesce to create a multilayered identity that coincides with geographical divisions—most Chinese ethnic and religious minorities live in the country's southwest and border regions, and two strategically significant provinces that are home to minorities (Tibetan Buddhists and Uighurs in Xinjiang) possess significant natural resources as well. Chinese universities—strained to enroll even a fractional percentage of eager applicants—employ affirmative action policies for minority applicants, boosting minority students' enrollment in higher education at an

¹⁵ Statement from a Chengdu University student, quoted in the *Shanghai Star*, April 17, 2003 (as cited in Coleman 2009, 5).

¹⁶ Bovingdon contends that the CCP use of the term "*minzu*" to refer to both the Chinese nation and its subgroups ended up (unintentionally) promoting space in which Uighur identity and nationalism could flourish—the same word is used for subnational and national groups. There is a rather lively debate within government circles over the official English translation of *minzu*, with some encouraging a move away from "nationalities" and toward "ethnicity" in order to avoid framing contentious Uighur and Tibetan issues as "national" rather than "ethnic" disputes. See Bovingdon 2010, 15–17.

¹⁷ The religious resurgence in China has historical grounding and communal religious culture is extremely important. China has a rich history of lineage temples, local gods, Confucianism, and other significant belief systems that have provided identity, morality, and a sense of community, especially in rural areas. The Qing state (1644–1912) was itself the dominant religious institution of its time.

average yearly rate of 12 percent between 1978 (when most universities reopened after the Cultural Revolution) and 2008 (Yang 2010).

In the eyes of Chinese leaders, faith and ethnicity are instrumental; they help the regime achieve various objectives, including modernity, stability, and at least the appearance of respect for diversity. Some have used the image of "faiths on display" to highlight the economic component of spiritual tourism, especially with the growth of leisure and the luxury market for upper-middle-class consumers (Oakes and Sutton 2010). Local and national ethnic theme parks are avenues, in elite eyes, to promote both heritage and profit, publicizing regime tolerance.¹⁸ Religious and ethnic tourism appeals not only to curious foreigners but to the growing Chinese upper-middle-class as well (Friedman 2006).

Since the foundation of the PRC, Party leaders have been suspicious of the influence of religion in citizens' lives. Despite the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religious belief and activities (Article 36),¹⁹ state leaders sanction and monitor approved (aboveground, or registered) churches, and CCP and government officials are officially forbidden from engaging in formal religious activities, although for some years now a "don't ask, don't tell" approach has been applied ("Render unto Caesar" 2012). In spite of these limitations, religious identity in China has flourished, especially in Muslim and Christian communities. The faithful worship in officially sanctioned mosques and churches, as well as so-called underground (or unregistered) house churches that attempt to operate beneath the radar of state monitors. The two dominant types of adherents, sometimes referred to as "registered" and "unregistered," are not mutually exclusive categories, making it difficult to gain an accurate count of members at any given time. Even with the possibility of double-counting, it is clear that we are talking big numbers: "there are already more Chinese at church on a Sunday than in the whole of Europe," and many believe there are far more Muslims than Christians (Gardam 2011). These trends seem likely to increase, even though "China could already be considered one of the world's major Christian and Muslim nations" (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 388, emphasis in original).

¹⁸ For an interesting analysis of the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park that is part of the "Olympic Green" in Beijing, as well as other ethnic parks that have arisen since the early 1990s, see Makley 2010, 127–156.

¹⁹ This article of the 1982 constitution also notes that "no one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order," and "Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination," a clear reference to the imperial history of some foreign religious institutions in China.

While Beijing is receptive to religious adherents, it also insists on the aptly titled “3 Separations”: separation of religion from politics, education, and health care. Religious organizations submit to official governmental audits during which they must submit financial records, activities, and employee details.

Similar to many other issues in contemporary Chinese society, religious identity is not a “new” but rather “re-emerging” identity. Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism each have deep historical roots within China; Islam and Christianity, two major forces today, were later arrivals from abroad. Attention among leaders to the “religious question” (*zongjiao wenti*) has turned into a complicated game of mutual accommodation, with the CCP grudgingly recognizing that religious institutions may have the staying power to help the regime achieve some of its social priorities (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 2). This interplay, which includes elements of both state receptivity and resistance, has produced a duality of religious expression, with traditions employing both official (approved) organization and “underground” or “unregistered” communities, distinctions that are rarely exclusive. At times, leaders have even promoted religious expression as a way to promote social harmony and stability, especially in the era of breakneck growth and consumerism, although this has significantly retracted since 2011.

State resistance to religious expression, and confrontational responses by social actors, are especially evident throughout Tibetan-inhabited areas. The majority of the 5.4 million Tibetans in China live within the Tibetan Autonomous Region, with large numbers also living in Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu Provinces. They face acute challenges grounded in fundamental questions of religious and political authority, which have been heightened by tensions between Han Chinese and Tibetans. There have also been similar challenges with Uighur identity. A potent sense of cultural dilution has been exacerbated by Han migration to Tibet and the construction of massive infrastructure projects, most notably the Qinghai-Tibet railway, linking Tibet to other parts of China.²⁰ State resistance to religious expression has targeted authority structures, culminating in Beijing’s exertion of influence over the recognition of reincarnated lamas, or the chief teachers and spiritual leaders within Tibetan Buddhism. In 1995, two young boys were named as legitimate reincarnations of the Panchen

²⁰ Also known as the Qinghai-Xizang railway (Xizang is the Chinese translation of “Tibet”), this track, completed in 2006, was the first to connect Tibet by rail to any other province in the PRC. The line includes the world’s highest track (5,072 meters above sea level at the Tanggula Pass), and over 500 kilometers of track rests on permafrost.

Lama, with the boy selected by the Tibetan search team whisked away into confinement, followed, months later, by Beijing’s rival announcement and a secret installment ceremony.²¹ The globally staged protests in the spring of 2008, timed to coincide with the Olympic torch relays for the Beijing Games, were followed by significant state resistance, most concretely in terms of living restrictions and hard bargains offered to monks. New social security measures, enacted after 2008, include stipends to monks as an old age benefit, benefits that are contingent upon meeting a state-regulated standard of patriotism that includes relinquishing the religious services monks used to perform for a fee. Non-monastic Tibetans have also been impacted; nomadic groups have been forcibly moved to resettlement towns and banned from grazing, with over one million relocated since 2007 (Parshley 2012). Individuals who resist the move to these reservations have been stripped of their personal documents and threatened (“Tibetan Nomads” 2014). As one of the most extreme types of protest as opposition, since 2007, we have observed a surge of immolations, which have included nuns and monks as young as seventeen years old. One observer fears that this could be a sign of the beginning of a “larger, accumulating outrage”²² within the Tibetan Buddhist community.

Muslims in China also face harsh resistance from central state leaders, especially following major uprisings in Xinjiang, one of the Muslim-majority provinces in China’s northwest. The region has experienced four significant uprisings since mid-2008.²³ Despite attempts to protect some religious traditions, including the Muslim exemption for traditional burial (the only exemption to cremation in the PRC), state resistance looms large. Laws in Xinjiang (known

²¹ The tenth Panchen Lama died suddenly in early 1989, shortly after giving a speech critical of Chinese policies in Tibet. The Tibetan search team (which had traditionally included the Dalai Lama, and was rumored to have consulted with him) announced Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, from Nagchu in northwestern Tibet, as the eleventh reincarnation. However, the Beijing Religious Affairs Bureau drew the name of Gyaincain Norbu from the golden urn, installing him against opposition from both the domestic and overseas Tibetan communities.

²² Steven Marshall, senior adviser for the Congressional Executive Committee on China, has more than two decades experience researching human rights violations in Tibet. Quoted in Parshley 2012.

²³ Bovingdon asserts that Uighur resistance is fundamentally based in Uighur nationalism, rather than in any Islamist threat as articulated by Beijing. He also reports that until July 2009, there were no major organized protests in Xinjiang since 1997, although he highlights a substantial amount of “everyday resistance” on the part of ordinary citizens. See Bovingdon (2010), especially chapter 3 (“Everyday Resistance”) and chapter 4 (“Collective Action and Violence”).

as Eastern Turkestan to many activists) prevent minors from participating in religious activities, and government employees and CCP members are routinely reminded that they are not to practice religion. Ramadan is especially monitored: students are escorted to meals to ensure they are not fasting during daylight, restaurants are threatened with fines if they close during the period of fasting, and universities lock down during the three-day Eid al-Fitr feast to make sure students do not celebrate with their families or other community members (Demick 2011). Beijing's resistant stance toward Muslims bleeds into terse interactions among ordinary people as well, leading to heightened ethnic tensions between majority Hans and ethnic minority groups. Within Xinjiang, the Han tend to be viewed as opportunistic outsiders. Hans derisively refer to Uighurs as *chantou* ("head wrapper"), with Uighurs calling Hans *bu akam* ("big brother") and *kapir* ("infidel") (Bovingdon 2010). However, foreign guests of China would hardly experience such restrictions or bias. During the 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou, approximately 30 percent of the food served at the games was certified halal, and of the forty-five participating nations, more than half were predominantly Muslim (Hayoun 2012).

Christianity is one form of Chinese religious identity not connected to ethnicity. In the eyes of many, though, especially among central officials, Christianity is directly associated with China's weaknesses during its "Century of Shame," discussed in Chapter 2. As outside powers, including Britain, France, Russia, and Japan, worked to expand their trading rights and territorial access in the Middle Kingdom, religious conversion became a favored tool of many foreigners who lived and worked in China during this period. Unlike earlier periods of religious interaction (Matteo Ricci and the Jesuits in the 1500s were famed for their respect for Chinese civilization and adaptations of Confucian thinking into their work) (Peale 2005, 5–6), nineteenth-century missionary movements were less tolerant of local traditions and more actively evangelical. Anti-religious sentiment became a rallying cry later for communist revolutionaries and other nationalists who mobilized their followers to take back China and expel all foreign influence. Today, as an increasingly popular form of religious expression, including in many rural areas that have maintained a religious identity and community for decades, misgivings by Beijing are largely based in the foreign nature of Christianity, as well as the connection between some popular uprisings and Christian groups, most notably Rome's role facilitating the Solidarity uprisings in Poland. Part of the challenge posted by faiths beyond Beijing's borders is the appointment of authority figures: Beijing requires that local congregations severely limit their interaction with international

leadership, which has presented the most visible challenge to Chinese Catholics. Beijing asserts its right to appoint bishops, producing an odd combination of communist leaders literally wearing religious hats, and Rome asserts its primacy over such personnel appointments. This investiture dispute of recent decades belies the fact that the vast majority of bishops have actually been recognized by both Rome and Beijing, although notable exceptions remain. Large numbers of organized congregations, especially the unofficial "house churches" in rural areas, continue to gather in defiance of central mandates to submit their names for registration and official leadership. Protestant communities have reported significant gains in numbers in recent years, viewed by many as a sign of the moral bankruptcy of official ideology. State resistance in the case of these communities appears grounded in the concern not of religious values or identity, but of the unofficial nature of their gatherings, outside of the auspices of the state's formal channels.

Chinese sensitivities to external influence, particularly when it relates to ethnic minorities and religious identities, were on display during the 2009 meetings of the World Conference on Racism, where Chinese delegates attempted, on several occasions, to remove the term "freedom of thought and conscience" from official conference documents, since they do not, in the eyes of the Beijing delegation, directly relate to the freedom of religion. Beijing projects the oft-challenged image of harmony, and exercises loud resistance to international challenges to its record on religious freedom.

Sexual Politics and LGBT Rights

In a society well-known for its "favored sons," a predilection for boys that significantly predates contemporary population planning policies, perhaps it is not surprising that gender issues fare prominently in Chinese state-society relations.²⁴ Influenced in part by the demographic marriage squeeze, and in part by the pervasiveness of traditional cultural values embedded in the nuclear family, the pressures to conform to social and state norms are severe. If one isn't married by the age of twenty-five, the gossip mill kicks in—even though this is far from uncommon, as there are an estimated forty million Chinese men who

²⁴ China is not unique in its imbalance and marriage squeeze; Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea face difficulties as well, although not nearly on the same scale as China. China's sex ratio at birth is 118.08 boys per 100 girls, according to the 2010 census ("China: Country Summary" 2012, 5).

will likely be unable to find a Chinese wife. China is believed to have as many unmarried young men, viewed as “bare branches,” as the entire population of young men in America (“Gendercide” 2010). With the growth of the Chinese middle class, women look for prospective husbands to provide at least an apartment, if not other measures of material comfort; as the popular saying demands, “no money, no honey.” Despite decades of formal government policies aimed at promoting gender equality, many women continue to see men as providers. To agree to marry a man who doesn’t own property is known as a “naked wedding.” Unmarried women are also stigmatized as “leftover women,” by both social and official governmental sources: a state-sponsored media campaign openly stigmatizes women who are too choosy selecting a partner, encouraging (especially urban) women to avoid delaying marriage—ideally tying the knot before age twenty-seven—lest they be forever lonely (Fincher 2014).

Nevertheless, to believe the official narrative, China is the hallmark of gender equality: the Communist Party has focused on women’s issues since its beginning, and the first piece of legislation passed in the People’s Republic was the Marriage Law of 1950, outlawing arranged unions and providing legal equality between men and women. The law was modeled after many of the practices of the communist base areas during the Chinese revolution in the 1930s and 1940s. Chinese leaders have long touted the oft-quoted line from Mao that “women hold up half the sky.” However, the World Economic Forum ranks China sixty-ninth in making improvements to gender equality, behind Mexico and Senegal. China especially lags behind other countries in the forum’s “health and survival” measurement, coming in at 133, the third-lowest ranking in the study. This study also highlights the persistent drag on women’s wages compared to their male counterparts, even though the 2013 “Global Gender Gap Report” ranked China 32 out of 136 countries for labor force participation (“The Global Gender Gap Report 2013” 2013). Beijing’s Renmin University estimates that Chinese women earn two-thirds that of men’s salaries (Eimer 2011).

Feminism has an uneven history in contemporary China, in large part because early state and party leaders attempted to fold feminist concerns into the communist structure, relegating gender concerns second to class consciousness. But feminism has a long history in Chinese culture, including suffragettes during the 1911 Republican Revolution, shortly followed by women’s rights activists who helped inspire the May Fourth Movement of 1919, which is widely viewed as the birth of mass politics in China. Since 1949, the inclusion of women’s concerns in foundational documents, including both the PRC and CCP constitutions, has provided an abundance of formal rhetoric for the rights and interests

of women. However, the promulgation of laws rarely means the acceptance of practices, as we saw with the “new era” introduced with the Marriage Law of 1950. Even though divorce was made legal in this legislation, separation—especially when initiated by the wife—was not socially acceptable because it violated lineage requirements. Women seeking a divorce from their husbands were criticized as bourgeois and individualistic, even “Western.” While many in the West are familiar with the conservative images of the family as the foundation of stable society, this view is even stronger in Confucian societies. The institution of the family preserves traditional culture, yet this institution is facing great stress and change. In traditional China, the family included at least two—often three—generations living under one roof, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the wife (and for the elite, multiple wives). Household registration requirements and the widespread urban migration that we discussed in chapter 3 also add pressure to the mix. Increasingly, young children are being raised outside of the immediate family, often by grandparents far away, with visits from the parents mainly during the Lunar New Year celebrations once a year.

In response to many of these changes, Chinese feminists—often in opposition to the official mass organization, the conservative All China Women’s Federation—are increasingly speaking out, even in the face of great risks. Feminist individuals may not be as linked together as we see in Brazil, the United States, or other countries, but individual activists committed to the rights of women remain dedicated to the cause, including filmmaker Ai Xiaoming and lawyer Guo Jianming, recipients of the 2010 Simone de Beauvoir Prize for Women’s Freedom, among others. Only Guo was able to travel to Paris to receive the award; Ai, a professor of Chinese language and literature who has produced documentaries on gender violence, HIV-AIDS, and the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake, has not been permitted to leave the PRC. Shortly after receiving the Beauvoir prize, Beijing University banned Guo’s Centre for Women’s Law and Legal Services, an NGO established to promote judicial reform as well as improve living conditions for Chinese women (Kristeva 2011).

Historically, Chinese feminists helped inspire one of the earliest mass movements in China, the May Fourth Movement of 1919, fought to end polygamy and arranged marriages, and lobbied to ensure that wives would keep their maiden names. Today’s Chinese feminists protest against the lack of educational and career opportunities for Chinese women, criticize the seemingly ubiquitous dating game shows on television, and speak out against corruption. Increasingly, they are organizing against sexual abuse as well as trying to raise awareness of culturally taboo topics. The iconic play *The Vagina Monologues* has been performed by

small groups since 2003 and continues to stir controversy and sometimes vitriolic responses, especially on social media (Jaffe 2013). Performances have not always been permitted to go forward, however, as local officials can pull the plug shortly before curtain, and some have forced organizers to change the provocative title of the show. As we have seen with other forms of activism in China, feminists tend to be active more as individuals, rather than as groups. The groups that do form watch leaders carefully for cues on permissible behavior. For example, shortly after Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg was invited to speak in Beijing, “Lean In” circles (focused on analyzing her well-known book), organized in many major cities. Participants view this as a safe form of organizing—advocates imply that, since Sandberg had been invited by the PRC government to speak throughout the country, they are “not in violation of anything” by getting together to discuss implications of her book (Tatlow 2013). Ironically, the company that Sandberg directs remains off-limits to most Chinese Internet users.

Similar to religious identity, personal relationships are grounded in formal bureaucratic structures that defy acceptable expression. This is especially the case with marriage and childbirth: one change introduced by the 1950 Marriage Law is that unions must be registered with the local government, with permission from work units for those couples employed by the public sector. The social recognition and wedding ceremony can come much later, sometimes after pregnancy, which, due to the planned birth policy, requires permission as well. Even in the most personal of choices, government scrutiny and community monitoring are present. The reinterpretation of the country’s marriage law by China’s supreme court in mid-2011 is viewed as a huge step back for women, as residential property is no longer jointly owned and divided equally in the case of divorce. Since 2003, divorce no longer requires the permission of one’s work unit, but, given the new interpretation of the country’s marriage law, state mandates loom large in private decisions. Most estimates are that, on average, five thousand couples divorce each day in the PRC, and in the first half of 2011, the Ministry of Civil Affairs reported a 17.2 percent increase in divorces over the same time period in 2010 (Eimer 2011), with an upward trajectory as the clear multiyear trend (FlorCruz 2010). The change, viewed by many as a way to make divorce a much less attractive option for Chinese couples, now rewards property to the party that originally paid for it, rather than splitting it evenly. The changes turn husbands into landlords, exacerbating the already existing wealth gap between the sexes. Even prior to the 2011 changes, it was common that the husband received custody of any children. Many believe that the country’s rampant mistress culture will only get worse as these laws take effect (Eimer 2011).

Another aspect of family identity and personal relationships is abortion. Contraception and family planning are openly discussed and formally promoted as medical and social tools to promote economic well-being for the greater good of the Chinese population. Even since changes in the population planning policy, the norm remains that most births are registered with a neighborhood committee, a quasi-governmental structure in most urban and some rural areas. Even though birth control is widely available, and often subsidized by either the local government or other employers, abortion is widespread, especially sex-selective abortion. Three factors influence this prevalence: an ancient preference for sons, a contemporary desire for smaller families, and advanced ultrasound and other technologies that identify the sex of the fetus early in its development (“Gendercide” 2010). Even though abortion and compulsory sterilization have never been openly endorsed by Beijing, it is widely known that they have been an element of the planned birth policy since at least 1980, when the Chinese population topped one billion (Pan 2005).

Most attribute China’s rate of abortions to its planned birth policy, widely referred to as the “One Child” policy. Even with recent changes in national policy, the Chinese “baby bureaucracy” (Levin 2014) remains powerful: married couples are required to follow local guidelines for both the timing and number of births in their family; they must obtain the stamped approval of multiple officials, with the vast majority of Chinese couples limited to a single child.²⁵ Changes in this controversial policy—believed to have prevented as many as four hundred million births since its introduction in the late 1970s—were long debated, and implemented only in the first quarter of 2014. While there has been longstanding public pressure to decrease the heavy hand of local officials, especially those who famously averted all population limitations for their own kin, most believe that practical considerations, including the demographic imbalances and growing elderly population without children to care for them,²⁶

²⁵ In 1978, Chinese leaders established as a national goal the desire to limit population growth by delaying marriages, requiring permission to have children, and limiting most urban couples to one child. From the onset, exceptions existed to this general goal of the one-child family, including for national minorities and for families in the countryside. Over the years, localities have established other exceptions, including permitting couples to bear two children without penalty if one of the parents is a sole child themselves—as long as the second child is born at least four years after the birth of the first child. Most families were permitted two children after changes adopted in late 2015.

²⁶ In 2012, Chinese state media reported that there were 40 million more men than women in the PRC, forecasting that by 2020, there could be 30 million eligible bachelors unable to find a Chinese wife (Levin 2014). Other research suggests the number could range as high as 40 million (“Gendercide” 2010).

motivated the final push by the National People's Congress Standing Committee to adopt such changes (Levin 2014).

Still, Chinese scholars note that increasingly, young women, including teenagers, make up the majority of abortion cases in cities such as Shanghai and Beijing, as changing cultural mores that include a rampant mistress culture, nearly non-existent sex education, and the availability of safe, relatively inexpensive abortions—complete with hospital marketing campaigns offering “the Model Abortion for a New Generation!”—collide (Yardley 2007). Despite changes in social attitudes, single motherhood in China remains extremely rare, and unmarried pregnant women rarely carry a pregnancy to conclusion in order to place the child up for adoption. As one medical clinic manager in a facility that treats students, mostly twenty-four-years-old or younger, stated, “The moral outrage over having a child before marriage in our society is much stronger than the shame associated with abortion” (Olesen 2011). The Guttmacher Institute reports that, after years of decline, the abortion incidence rate in China appears to have increased since 2003, which it attributes to an increase in premarital sex as well as substantial gaps in access to contraception, due to rapid urbanization and job mobility (“In Brief: Fact Sheet” 2012). The validity of abortion statistics is often doubted, and national statistics do not categorize marital status, but Chinese family planning officials insist that the abortion rate among married women is dropping because more than 80 percent of them use long-term contraception such as IUDs, or sterilization (Yardley 2007). In contrast, “Young people think if they are not married or are not having a regular relationship, then they can just have an abortion” (Yardley 2007). Contraception use among unmarried couples is extremely low—due to both ignorance of the technology and the social stigma associated with sex outside of marriage.

In any country it is difficult to assess true opinions on matters as private and personal as abortion; these difficulties are exacerbated in China, where family planning is considered a “pillar of the nation's economic development strategy” and adherence to population targets serves as one of the most important qualifications for local officials' promotions (Pan 2005). After his decade of fieldwork studying attitudes and medical ethics, Jingbao Nie attempts to debunk the perception of a cavalier attitude toward abortion among the general Chinese public. He found that there are controversies within Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism about conception, as well as groups that point to the impact of abortions on women's reproductive health and well-being. The few anti-abortion campaigners in China are often Buddhists or Christians, but their arguments are subdued because of the status of official policy toward population

control (Olesen 2011). The “beginning of life” argument that tends to dominate Christian opposition to abortion is nonexistent in China. Given China's recent history of high infant mortality rates, the beginning of life was marked when they were named on the one-hundredth day of life, when it seemed more likely that they would survive (Olesen 2011). Feminist arguments centering on choice or women's control over their own body don't resonate either. As one Chinese psychologist put it, “When we argue that a woman owns the uterus, and it's her right to decide whether to deliver the baby or not, people won't buy it. If you are a woman, your personal choice is monitored and supervised by a lot of others, and they expect you to do what everyone else does” (French 2008).

Another aspect of China's changing attitudes toward sexuality can be found within the market for sexual services. Prostitution has a long history in China, dating back to the imperial period in which a man would have several concubines in addition to his wife and the industry flourished as official, taxable business. During the time of the Opium Wars, at the height of China's humiliation at the hands of outside governments, Shanghai was nicknamed the “Whore of the Orient” for its role in promoting vice, especially among elite Chinese and the significant expat community. Communist campaigns were largely successful at virtually wiping out prostitution, at least from public view, by the late 1950s. With China's opening to the outside world after 1978, prostitution found a place again throughout the country, and there was even a cadre close to Deng Xiaoping, named Cao Manzhi, who argued for the legalization of prostitution as a part of the natural progression of capitalism. His pleas were ignored, and, since the 1990s, “China's sex industry has gone from bust to boom” despite its illegal status (Zheng 2009, 3).²⁷ Human Rights Watch estimates that sex workers number between four and ten million (“Country Summary: China” 2012). As one noted scholar of Chinese sexuality points out, “China has visibly conflicted attitudes towards sex, officially condemning licentiousness while turning a blind eye to a hugely prevalent sex trade, where it is routine for businessmen to take clients to karaoke bars to ‘relax’ with girls.”²⁸ Karaoke bars are considered the upscale variant of the sexual entertainment industry, just ahead of saunas. The ubiquitous KTV (karaoke television) bars boast raucous sing-alongs in main

²⁷ Prior to 1911, prostitution had never been condemned by statute in China—in fact, it was regulated and taxed as a formal business. Official attitudes started to shift in the late Song Dynasty (960–1279), with the advent of calls for public morality that dominated the neo-Confucian discourse of the period. See Cao and Stack 2010.

²⁸ Katrien Jacobs, as quoted in Foster 2011.

dining areas as well as private rooms. KTV venues are famously staffed by the so-called *sanpei xiaojie* (women who accompany men in three ways): serving alcohol, dancing/singing, and servicing the sexual desires of clients (Zheng 2009).

Sex work is becoming increasingly visible, serving a vital economic function and generating local revenue.²⁹ Liuming Yan, a well-known blogger and activist who wanted the plight of sex workers and migrant laborers to become better known, worked as a “prostitute for a day” and offered her services free of charge to migrant workers, posting updates on Twitter-like sites (Tan 2012). There have been some limited attempts at organizing. In 2010, sex workers in Wuhan networked fourteen small non-profits to form a network providing medical exams, condoms, and even funeral services for women whose families no longer claim them. In Choi’s field research, she found that most sex workers in southwestern China were migrant workers from rural areas, regularly sending remittances home to their family. She reports that nearly 80 percent were introduced to sex work by relatives, neighbors, or friends. Among the women she interviewed, economic factors lured them and kept them involved in sex work, and more than 95 percent of them maintained close family contacts with their family networks. She also found that police campaigns against prostitution seem to do little to curb the practice or to promote safe sex, but rather feed police coffers (Choi 2011).

Research has highlighted a significant shift in official attitudes toward sex workers in China, from that of “victims of social systems to victimizers who spread diseases,” which has justified harsher police crackdowns and penalties (Choi 2011, 97). The official tactics have changed from targeting pimps to punishing sex workers, according to Choi, in large part because of the AIDS crisis, including an amendment to the Criminal Law that includes detention for anyone knowingly buying or selling sex while infected with syphilis, gonorrhea, other sexually transmitted diseases (Choi 2011). Prostitution crackdowns are framed as part of a larger state campaign to “bolster core socialist values and promote cultural and ethical progress” (“Prostitution Crackdown” 2014). Officials within the ministry coordinating radio, film, and television even recently announced that actors with a history of drug use or involvement in prostitution will be banned from film or TV roles, all connected to the ongoing “moral crackdown” against vice (Child 2014). However, state-run CCTV

²⁹ Zheng reports that karaoke bars pay 33 percent of their net income and an additional 20 percent operating tax to the Dalian city government, exceeding the 5 percent tax rate on other local businesses, all but guaranteeing their secure future (Zheng 2009).

(China Central Television) recently experienced a significant backlash after it ran an investigative report detailing prostitution in Dongguan, a southern city in Guangdong Province known for its sex trade. Citizens rallied to the defense of sex workers, chastising the callousness of the broadcast as undermining the livelihoods of ordinary people, and expressing anger that authorities were diverting attention away from more serious problems, especially official corruption (Makinen 2014). Human Rights Watch researcher Nicholas Bequelin highlighted the outrage triggered by the nationwide report, which he believes sparked the first serious and widespread discussion about the possibility of legalizing sex work in China (Boehler 2014).

Corruption in prostitution crackdowns became most evident in the well-publicized arrests of “virgin prostitutes” during the early 2000s. Seven young women were arrested and accused of prostitution, forced to “confess,” only later to have their virginity medically confirmed. Their cases were picked up by national media, including CCTV, *Xinhua*, *People’s Daily Online*, and *Beijing Youth Daily* among others, launching a nationwide debate on police malfeasance and the unlawful fining of alleged minor offenders (Jeffreys 2010). In one sign of progress—it’s all relative—the central Ministry of Public Security has ordered police to stop parading prostitution suspects in public, attempting to bring an end to the time-honored “shame parades” of shackled prostitutes after public outrage on Chinese Internet sites expressed sympathy for the women involved, with posts such as “Why aren’t corrupt officials dragged through the streets?” (Jacobs 2010).

Not surprisingly, data on public opinion toward prostitution in China is difficult to come by, and the highly publicized “virgin prostitutes” and response to the nationwide exposé reveal only a partial view. With Chinese netizens avidly embracing the Internet, and public outrage toward police corruption teeming, it is important to note, in the case of the shame parades, that the central state blinked. Even scholars who have used cross-national opinion polls, such as the World Values Surveys, point to complex layers of public attitudes toward prostitution. Despite sporadic outcries when prostitutes are victimized, it seems that public opinion remains against the legalization of prostitution.

Given the traditional emphasis on the nuclear family and gender roles, it is probably unsurprising that lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered Chinese face an uphill battle within the Chinese public. Despite official pronouncements to the contrary, homosexual identity has been expressed throughout China’s rich past. In the sixteenth century, Italian Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci even noted, with disapproval, Chinese society’s inclusion of

homosexuality, and scholars have long noted the homosocial world of Imperial China, including Beijing Opera, the imperial court (including gay emperors), and the many linkages between culture and commerce during China's Middle Kingdom period (Brook 1998; Hinsch 1990).³⁰ Lesbian characters fared prominently in Cao Xueqin's *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, one of the four great Chinese novels written in the middle of the eighteenth century, and China has a history of third-gender discussions or formal acceptance of variations of gender, including eunuchs (Levine 2013). In 1997, Beijing formally decriminalized homosexual identity, and in 2001 removed homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses under which gays were prosecuted under vague "hooliganism" statutes—punishable by up to seven years in prison. Still, same-sex relationships lack legal rights, including marriage and adoption, and gay men often take girlfriends because they are afraid to tell their families about their true identity (Chan 2004), since they risk extreme ostracism for "ending" the family line. This pressure is only made worse by the lack of siblings in most parts of China, due to population control policies. Also, many mental health providers seem to remain unaware that homosexuality has been declassified as a mental illness, curtailing the likelihood of adequate professional support for individuals seeking it ("Violence on the Basis" 2010).

Transgendered individuals in China contend with police harassment and employment discrimination, in addition to being cut off from their families in most cases. Gender reassignment surgery is prohibitive not only in terms of cost, but also red tape. The Ministry of Health released guidelines in 2009 that require individuals seeking gender reassignment to formally register with police in order to change their hukou registration, to consent to extensive therapy, not be married, and document that they have shared their wishes with their immediate family (Levine 2013). However, according to one mainland activist, Chinese society may be more accepting of transgender individuals—who engage in "regular" heterosexual relationships after reassignment—than those who are gay. China has known transgender celebrities, but none who are openly gay (Speelman 2013). The mainland's most famous transsexual, dancer Jin Xing, regularly draws huge crowds for both her dancing performances and her role as a guest judge on a popular TV talent show, but she continues to face

³⁰ In his groundbreaking book on homosexuality in Imperial China, Hinsch claims that the open acceptance of homosexual relations dates to the Bronze Age, crossing class divides from emperors to laborers, and included the open recognition of same-sex marriages for both men and women (Hinsch 1990).



Two lesbians pose for photographs in Beijing on Valentine's Day, a holiday some have used to campaign for acceptance of homosexuality, 2009. Source: Reuters/Jason Lee

scorn within the official media and on social networking sites. It seems the ministry guidelines codify the countervailing pressures of traditional society, which coincide closely with social morality campaigns perpetuated by the CCP. As one Chinese scholar put it, "Within mainstream society, you simply cannot come out. It would be the end of your career. Can you image a Communist Party member being openly gay? There is no way" (cited in Speelman 2013).

Especially in urban areas, LGBT groups attempt to host pride events within the public sphere, including same-sex marriage campaigns, lesbian salons, and pride festivals—although, depending on the mood of the leadership, such events risk disapproval or a late sleight of hand in which all activities are called off. Much of the political space afforded to LGBT associations by local governments has been in response to government attempts to mobilize citizens to fight the HIV-AIDS epidemic, using civil society groups to reach out to high-risk groups that government officials are unable or unwilling to engage—even though many leaders of gay and lesbian groups do not identify AIDS as a primary interest for their groups (Hildebrandt 2013). The emphasis on health issues within the LGBT community and its interaction with the government limits the discourse to biological terms, rather than civil rights issues (Speelman 2013). Lesbians

have expressed much more difficulty organizing and finding acceptance than gay men, and most associations have been unable to formally register as an NGO, meaning they must rely on overseas sources of funding (Fincher 2014).

Public opinion toward same-sex relations—at least as expressed via digital repertoires on the Internet—may be shifting: Chinese netizens have shown international savvy, calling for a boycott against a famous film couple, Lü Liping and Sun Haiying, after they retweeted the anti-gay statements of a Chinese-American Baptist pastor in Rochester, New York. Lü and Sun reposted Pastor Feng Wei's lamentations against the increasing legal acceptance of gay marriage laws in the United States and called on all of their fans to do the same. Instead, they faced the ire of many of their fans, including the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays—China and Shanghai Pride, who lambasted the couple's intolerance and ignorance of China's history ("Gay Groups Urge" 2011). Government agencies and international NGOs provide funding for popular telephone hotlines. And one of China's premier universities, Fudan University in Shanghai, has offered a course on homosexuality since 2005, taught by noted sociologist Li Yinhe (Simon and Brooks 2009). Li, famous for her annual (since 1993) submissions to the Chinese legislature, the National People's Congress, proposing a same-sex marriage law, reports that 16 percent of Chinese male university students have had a homosexual experience (Chan 2004). Despite having a legislative sponsor, supporters were unable to muster the thirty people necessary to place Li's proposed legislation on the agenda. A cross-dressing garbage collector who was featured on a TV news report in Qingdao ignited a national debate about sexual identity after the news anchor mocked Liu Peilin, who also goes by Da Xige (which translates as "Mr. Great Happiness"). After video of the news report was posted on *Weibo*, with derogatory statements, Liu was turned into an online celebrity, with widespread calls for care and tolerance (Lu 2012).

Homosexuality and transgenderism remain largely hidden identities within China. In public opinion polls, many express a nonchalant attitude toward homosexuality, but most also end up admitting that they have never actually met a gay or lesbian person. One study reported that nearly sixteen million women in China are married to gay men, due to the overwhelming pressure to conform and especially to avoid dishonoring or letting down one's parents (Shan 2012); another contends that 80 percent of gay men married women due to social pressure (Simon and Brooks 2009). The pressures to conform to "traditional" heterosexual relations are exacerbated by local policies that, in many urban areas, prevent unmarried individuals from being able to purchase real estate—leading some

gay men to marry lesbian women in weddings of convenience or "functional marriages" to maintain face (Fincher 2014, 183). Clearly, homosexual identity in China is less taboo than it has been in the past, with gay bars, websites, and organizations emerging, sometimes even in public view. Yet in a culture where the public expression of intimacy remains rare for all couples, sexual and gender minorities, and the activists who support their cause remain cautious.

ANALYSIS

As figure 4.1 and the section to follow indicate, when it comes to social diversity in Brazil and China, the picture is more complex. It is in China that we identify a rarity: a highly contested core issue and civil societies that adopt confrontational approaches that directly challenge the state. Matters of religious and ethnic diversity in China are unique among all the other issues that we consider in this chapter, not only because Tibetan and Uigher calls for self-determination are viewed as existential threats to the PRC, but also because this is the only example of contentious politics in this chapter in which violent repression is the outcome. There's nothing like this in regard to diversity in Brazil. Racial inequality is a major problem, but state and society have largely come out of denial in regard to its once-upon-a-time "racial democracy" to recognize it as such.

A more in-depth examination of social identity in both of these large, diverse countries presents us with both some startling similarities as well as differences. On one hand, both countries are multiethnic, even if the embrace of this richness is much more welcomed in one (Brazil) than the other (China). Both states espouse official narratives describing their societies as cohesive and multiethnic, and both face challenges trying to live up to that standard. The Brazilian state during the dictatorship (1964–1985) was a lot like the Chinese government of today, censoring those who would claim otherwise. Brazil's generals were never as harsh or as heavy handed as the CCP, but the effect was perhaps just as damaging. Both states can be accused of promoting cultural dilution: the mass migration of Han to Tibet and Xinjiang is as much ethnocide as is Brazil's social whitening and the mulatto escape hatch. It is said that the myth of racial democracy is dead (or dying) in Brazil, but even since the return to democracy, Brazilians who suggested that racism might exist faced social pressure and were accused of being "un-Brazilian." The various ethnicities in China are highly aware of their distinct identities—which go beyond the neatly defined boundaries crafted by the CCP in the 1950s—and are often also based on their association with particular regions, languages, and sometimes

spiritual traditions. So far, the discourse on race in China has been uncivil at best. At one end of the spectrum, it denies that Chinese society could even face a problem with racism; at the other end, it spews ugly slurs. In Brazil, it is only recently that a slight majority of Brazilians claim to be African-descended, and most of them identify as *pardo* or mixed race. There is a discussion about race in Brazil, but it is less clear that attitudes are truly changing because of it.

FIGURE 4.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL DIVERSITY

Brazil		China
Color/Religion and Ethnicity		
Less Contested: Most recognize that the "racial democracy" was a myth—and recognition of the fact is good for Brazil's image.	Issue	Highly Contested: Attempts to speak out that vary from officially presented narratives on religion and ethnicity are perceived as direct challenges to the central state.
Conventional: Protest as pressure to raise awareness and demand remedies. Society led the state.	Societal Approach	Confrontational: Repertoires range from illicit gatherings and association to self-immolation.
Receptive: Allies in the executive branch, starting with President Cardoso.	State	Resistance: State requires approved registration, despite widespread defiance.
Reform: "Positive Discrimination," but uneven implementation.	Outcome	Repression: Official rules limiting expression and organization.
Abortion		
Moderately Contested: It is highly contested within society but untouchable for the state because of the power of Catholics and evangelicals—and because it is a core issue for these powerful groups.	Issue	Less Contested: Abortion itself is a non-issue for most (population planning and abuse of it is more contested).
Conventional: Attempts to decriminalize by using the political process. Holy war of countervailing pressure.	Societal Approach	Conventional: Those who do speak out tread careful line due to central policy of population planning.
Resistant: Politicians know better than to touch the issue ... Lula tried and got burned.	State	Receptive: Closeness of majority social view with state policy makes issue less inflammatory.

continues

FIGURE 4.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL DIVERSITY (continued)

Brazil		China
Repression: See above. Abortion rights groups are stonewalled.	Outcome	Indeterminate: Policy reform based as much in state preferences as social pressure.
Sex Work		
Less Contested: Most recognize that the constitution guarantees rights—even for marginalized groups.	Issue	Moderately Contested: Illegality of status invites pressure to conform, despite boom.
Conventional: Uses the political process, protest as pressure, working with state.	Societal Approach	Conventional: Mostly legal means; limited attempts at organizing. Backlash when state seems to target ordinary people, yet countervailing pressures from traditional culture.
Receptive: Recognizes sexual vitality as part of Brazil's identity. Synergistic partnership to fight HIV-AIDS.	State	Resistant: Central to state campaigns to promote socialist morality.
Reform: Legalized sex work, but not completely decriminalized and still dangerous.	Outcome	Indeterminate: Collusion with police invites corruption. Sex work remains illegal, despite increased debate.
LGBT Rights		
Less Contested: As far as the state is concerned, at least. Highly contested within society.	Issue	Moderately Contested: Largely hidden identity; contested within society, although shifting.
Conventional: Protest as pressure and working synergistically with state against HIV-AIDS, etc. Goes head to head with religious groups.	Societal Approach	Conventional: Countervailing pressures from traditional society; synergistic work with state against HIV-AIDS.
Receptive: Divided government: President Lula led the way, but conservatives in Congress lobby hard against gains.	State	Resistant: Concerns about power of organized groups and challenges to social stability trump other concerns, with exception of HIV-AIDS.
Reform: Exemplary progress in recognizing rights, but homophobia and transphobia persist. The "real Brazil" hasn't caught up with the "legal Brazil."	Outcome	Indeterminate: No longer illegal identity, although awareness and acceptance remain low and repression remains an option.

Lining up Brazil, the largest Catholic country in the world, next to officially atheist China makes for an interesting juxtaposition. In terms of religious identity, both countries are experiencing a shift of sorts, but we have two different stories. They are similar in that most Chinese and Brazilians do not actively mix religion and politics. Although in Brazil, religious teachings are deeply engrained and coexist with secular leanings with contradictory and unpredictable effects. Most Brazilians consider themselves to be religious, although fewer attend services. Brazilians pride themselves on their receptivity to other religions; Protestantism, especially evangelicalism, has experienced rapid growth in Brazil in the last few decades, and Afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé have long coexisted (and sometimes blended) with Catholicism and other religions. Most Chinese are not religious, but many Chinese citizens conjoin religious experiences and traditions, sometimes adopting religious association as a remedy to the daily grind. For these individuals, perhaps religion is more a form of resistance than an expression of personal piety. Chinese are associating with both registered and unregistered congregations in record numbers—it's just that the chord can be yanked away by the regime (or by local officials) at any time—and the CCP continues to prohibit cadres and their families from joining unsanctioned spiritual organizations. On the other hand, even though their policies in regard to sexuality have sometimes challenged conservative Christians, Brazilian presidents have been the ones having to walk a fine line. Lula and Dilma have accommodated this wing of civil society on more than one occasion.

Elites in both Brazil and China recognize that when religion and politics mix, the result can be potent. In China, the state seeks to monitor and control religious organizations; in Brazil religious organizations seek to monitor and control the state. In Brazil, power relations between state and society are inverted—and this is precisely what the CCP is trying to avoid. In China people can be persecuted for religious identity beyond approved channels. This would be unthinkable in Brazil—it's the Church and evangelicals who crack down on the government, by threatening to swing elections. Lula's about-face on abortion is an example of their power. As figure 4.1 shows, abortion is a highly contested issue in Brazil—but not between state and society. There is a holy war going on, but the battle lines are drawn between different groups within society. As a result, abortion is a “dangerous” issue unlike any other that we discuss, in either country. Those who support the status quo in Brazil have so much clout that abortion—along with the most highly contested of all issues in Brazil, land reform—is too highly charged for the state to touch,

the third rail of politics. And so the state doesn't touch it; rather, it “represses” pro-choice activists by stonewalling them.

Our two cases are fascinating to compare on abortion. As we discussed, Brazil has some of the most restrictive laws in the world whereas in China, abortion is available on demand and there is little stigma associated with it. In Brazil, where it is illegal with very few exceptions, women and girls who resort to clandestine abortions are highly stigmatized, and many times those suffering from botched abortions tend to be mistreated by medical professionals. But abortion is common in both countries. China is notorious for having one of the highest rates of abortion (if not the highest rate), while even in Brazil it is estimated that more than one million abortions are performed each year (Wyler 2013).

As is usually the case, both national and international factors combine to explain the differences. Once again, we see the Catholic Church, both domestically and internationally, as a major player in Brazil's cultural politics, with a candidate's rumored stance on abortion nearly costing her the election. In China, we see much less debate about the morality of abortion, even if brave campaigners take great risk to publicize officials' abuse of family planning policies. Married couples forced by the state to terminate pregnancies get more play in the international media, but increasingly singles are turning to multiple abortions to avoid the stigma of unwed pregnancy. In contrast to Brazil, where the state allows debate on abortion—but the Church forbids it—inside China there is little public interest in debating the procedure (the topic of abortion in China is much more controversial outside the country) (Nie 2005). Part of the reason it's a non-issue inside China is due to widespread cultural acceptance, in part due to years of family-planning campaigns and slogans. But state coercion also plays a significant part in explaining the relative lack of discussion of the issue, as individuals in China know full well.

Although the status quo is very different in the two countries, both states face significant resistance to changing the status quo when it comes to reproductive rights—and for the most part Brazilian and Chinese publics want it that way. In Brazil, the easing of abortion restrictions is blocked by social norms and the influence of the Vatican. In China, challenges to family planning (of which abortion seems an integral part) run into the forces of social norms and the acceptance of state mandates, even if there is widespread resistance to abuses of it. In Brazil, feminist networks work to decriminalize abortion by drawing attention to the high maternal mortality rates associated with it, but the public is largely complacent. Public opinion polls show that most Brazilians are satisfied with the abortion laws the way they are. In China, individual activists fight

not against abortion, *per se*, but abusive leaders who engage in selective policy implementation (this form of corruption is something that people care about, since violations of the policy can run as high as US\$40,000–50,000 per unauthorized birth) (Denyer 2013). In both countries, crusaders for reproductive freedom face considerable odds: Brazilians are up against the Vatican; Chinese face the full force of the state.

On the other hand, as our framework shows, in neither country is sex work or LGBT rights highly contested. In Brazil, the state agreed to be led and the outcome has been clearly reformist, even synergistic. In China, where these are largely hidden identities, society has adopted conventional approaches to promote the rights of sex workers and LGBT rights. However, although it has indicated some willingness to cooperate with these groups on HIV-AIDS, the Chinese state's response to these groups has largely been resistant, and the outcome is indeterminate. When it comes to sex, except for the fact that the sex business in both China and Brazil is booming—and that most sex workers in both countries start out as young migrants to the cities, driven by poverty—it appears that the two countries couldn't be any more different. Although not all Brazilians (including the state) are exactly comfortable with the title, Brazil struts its stuff as the erotic capital of the world. It is a leading—if not *the* leading—destination for sex tourism, and prostitution is a booming, legal business.

Meanwhile, prostitution is illegal in China, and sex workers are more highly stigmatized than ever, although some are taking brave steps to independently organize when possible. In China, whereas they were once viewed as victims exploited by pimps, now prostitutes—rather than the procurers or clients—are the targets of crackdowns. Interestingly, on this issue it is China that behaves like a country with a strong religious lobby; sex workers are blamed by the government for the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and they are increasingly at the mercy of police, who extort or arrest them. In predominantly Catholic Brazil, it was once a very similar story. Prostitutes were, and still are, to some degree, stigmatized, but their relationship with the state has changed dramatically. In the 1990s, as prostitutes pressed for their rights, the Brazilian state recognized that these workers could help it meet one of its priorities: reducing the incidence of HIV-AIDS. Since then it has—in a very Brazilian way—adopted a policy of mutual accommodation. Today it is the exploitation of sex workers (through pimping and brothels) that is illegal, not sex work (and sex workers have played a pivotal role in preventing the spread of the disease).

In contrast, Chinese sex workers have not yet organized to push back or to

change their relationship with the state in the way that Brazilian sex workers have. In China they have been limited to social networks, especially hometown connections formed among migrants from the same village. Small NGOs have formed, but they operate with an ever-watchful eye on the police, who hold the keys to sanction or punish members. Such behavior is hardly what most would expect in atheist China—and Christian Brazil.

When it comes to LGBT rights, Brazil is known for its openness whereas China is known for its legal restrictions. Brazil hosts the largest gay pride parade in the world; conversely, LGBT activists in China operate with the nearly constant possibility that their permits can always be revoked. The one similarity both countries share is that both governments, true to their pragmatic forms, have sought the cooperation of LGBT NGOs on HIV-AIDS.

Still, beneath the surface we see that the picture within Brazil is much more challenging. Gays and lesbians have the right to marry and adopt in Brazil, but a backlash of sorts can be identified as homophobic traditions hang on tenaciously: someone is killed every thirty-six hours in Brazil for being homosexual or transgender (Pearlman 2012). Yes, the state has been identified by Amnesty International for its exemplary progress in recognizing the rights of sexual and gender minorities. Yes, Brazil's LGBT NGOs are some of the best organized in the world, and in many ways they've had more policy successes than the feminist or Afro-Brazilian movements. But Brazilian civil society is activist on both sides of the issue. The most formidable adversary that LGBT rights advocates—and, many would argue, women's rights advocates—face is the Catholic Church and evangelicalism (E. Friedman 2009). This is a good example of how civil society can be heterogeneous and work at cross purposes. Here it is the state that is caught in between.

It could be argued that China is now going through many of the changes Brazil experienced since the 1970s, but without the backlash. Sure, homosexuality is stigmatized (it was considered a mental disorder until recently), and people have been arrested for their sexual orientation. They're still sometimes harassed by police and relatively few homosexuals live openly, but one huge contrast between Brazil and China when it comes to the treatment of their LGBT populations is the difference in the power of religion. Most Chinese are secular and accepting, and Confucian traditions encourage marriage and childbearing but do not prohibit homosexuality or characterize it as a sin. Religion simply isn't part of the sexual discourse in China. As opposed to Brazil, there's no power akin to the bishops instructing Chinese that homosexuality is an abomination. Similarly, the state's stance has been described as cautious

and low-key; it doesn't take much of a position on sexual orientation one way or the other. Perhaps it is just not publicized, but human rights advocates contend that homophobic violence is actually rare in China, and the violence that we are aware of comes mostly from within the family itself ("Violence on the Basis" 2010).

For all of their differences, to some degree in both countries change is ultimately dependent on executive leadership. The downfall of this is that such change is fragile—and less effective in challenging long-standing cultural norms. In Brazil, analysts disagree over whether the reforms of the last decade are more symbolic than substantive, and even those who characterize them as substantive worry that they aren't underpinned by the institutional supports needed to sustain them. For example, in terms of race, given the not insignificant resistance to affirmative action in Brazil, some of it led by well-connected citizens most likely to make their voices heard, such policies are built on a fragile foundation and may not be sustained, let alone carried forward. Remember, much of Brazil's shift on LGBT and sex workers' rights has come in large part because the state came to view both groups as partners in the fight against HIV-AIDS—one that is important not only for the lives that it has saved but also for the international acclaim—and soft power—it accrued for Brazil. According to Htun (2004), under Cardoso's leadership the state changed course on race not because of material incentives or to win votes (after two terms, he was restricted from seeking reelection), but because he wanted to show that it was the right thing to do—and that, as a new democracy, Brazil was doing the right thing. Lula and Dilma have continued these reforms, but experts agree that if future governments don't give the same relevance, or seek to sustain these policies or institutionalize them, they will fall apart (Htun 2004). When the executive retires or if executive interest flags, any progress is at risk—and the "legal Brazil" indeed comes closer to reflecting the "real Brazil."

In the last twenty years, China has experienced a rapid increase in public discourse and engagement. Some of this alteration has been facilitated by a receptive state (it allows participation in congregations that have been officially vetted), and some of it has been carved out by risk-taking members of society (for example, sex workers). What the discussion of China in this chapter reveals are the limits of state control, or state resistance to society. Although the state is doing everything it can to control it, due to the proliferation of the Internet and social networking, Chinese citizens have a better chance of being able to weigh the words and policies of their leaders against evidence and

challenges beyond their borders. For example, Chen Guangcheng's dramatic escape from house arrest and asylum was paraded around the world through Internet 2.0 sites, demonstrating the force that such communication channels may have in China's future.³¹ Changes in social policy in China have been both symbolic (remember, Mao said "women hold up half the sky") and genuine (the decriminalization of homosexuality), but they have been gradual and incomplete.

What is clear is that although regime type may have something to do with policy, the picture is rarely as simple as that. For obvious reasons, policy change in an authoritarian state is less fragile than in a popular democracy—alternations in Chinese administrations rarely bring significant shifts in policy direction. We find it intriguing, though, that even strong authoritarian governments, which should be freer than democracies are to make unpopular or controversial changes, often choose to avoid antagonizing citizens. Conversely, on certain issues democratic states take the lead on policies that aren't popular with most citizens.

We return to our finding that issue may trump regime. In this chapter, we have seen how dictatorships and democracies have struggled to accommodate contention over ethnicity, religion, and sex, and there has been give-and-take between leaders and the led, with different levels of risk depending on the issue. For example, interpretations of ethnic unity that are alternative to the official policy are highly salient and contested in China, and Beijing regards them as a direct challenge, an existential threat. Clearly, issues of social identity are not nearly as highly contested in Brazil, as they do not directly threaten vested interests. In the end, despite the different ways in which they regard issues of identity, the two do share one attribute: in both China and Brazil there is still quite a discrepancy between the legal and the real, between the laws on the books and the facts on the ground when it comes to the differences that define us . . . and we see the ramifications of this in people's lives on a daily basis.

³¹ Chen Guangcheng is a well-known activist who has focused on official abuse of power, especially with regards to China's population planning policies. Blind since a young age, Chen taught himself the law and developed a reputation for petitioning authorities and representing clients against local officials. In 2012, he escaped house arrest and dramatically fled nearly three hundred miles to the US Embassy in Beijing, leaving first for medical treatment, and then later (along with his family) for the United States.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Both Brazil and China project images that belie reality. Consider a few examples presented in this chapter. Why does such a gap between day-to-day reality and the official narrative exist? Do you think this is a common characteristic of governments, or is this something specific to Brazil and China? Why?
2. Sexual identity and behavior are viewed as among the most personal, private, and important characteristics of individuals. Brazil is more than promiscuity and Carnival; it is also a state grounded in traditional Catholic identity emphasizing sexual abstinence and is strongly anti-abortion—but it has some of the highest abortion rates in the world. China is more than sexual repression and abortion; it is also a state in which sexual identity is being more openly explored than at any other time in its modern history. What do you believe explains the divergences of approaches within and between these two countries?
3. Within this chapter, there were many references to the slowness of change within Brazil and China. Why do you believe this is the case? Is this rate of change being fostered mostly by the state or is it a gradual approach adopted by social actors? In which areas of social identity would you believe the fastest pace of change can be observed? What about the times in which society is actually the leading voice in maintaining the status quo?
4. In this discussion of social identities in both states, we have observed mixed records of state receptivity to demands from groups. If regime type doesn't capture the bulk of the explanation, what in your view does? What motivates change—and, conversely, continuity—on these contested issues?
5. Both Brazil and China are known to have diverse societies. In what ways have both governments responded to diversity? When do governments view diversity as a strength, and when do they frame it as a weakness? How would you explain the differences?

5

ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

If you don't leave, you're going to end up with ants in your mouth.

—A common death threat in the Amazon (Larry Rohter, "Brazil's Lofty Promises After Nun's Killing Prove Hollow")

China's economic miracle will end soon because the environment can no longer keep pace.

—Pan Yue, vice-minister, Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection (Christina Larson, "The Green Leap Forward")

INTRODUCTION

As we have argued before, the distance between Brazil and China is not as great as it may seem. With regard to pollution, deforestation, and the challenges of providing sustainable sources of energy, there is a push and pull between state and society in Brazil and China as they struggle to find the right balance between two needs: promoting economic growth and protecting the environment. Here's where we make the strongest argument that our cases are theory-infirming. In fact it is in these issues that contentious politics operate in ways that are most challenging to conventional understandings of regime type. In this chapter, we highlight both governments' ongoing responses to the continued challenges of environmental sustainability. Several factors, such as resource pressures and state capacity, can explain why the state is receptive on some issues and resistant on others. Countervailing pressures play a role as well. Once again, we