

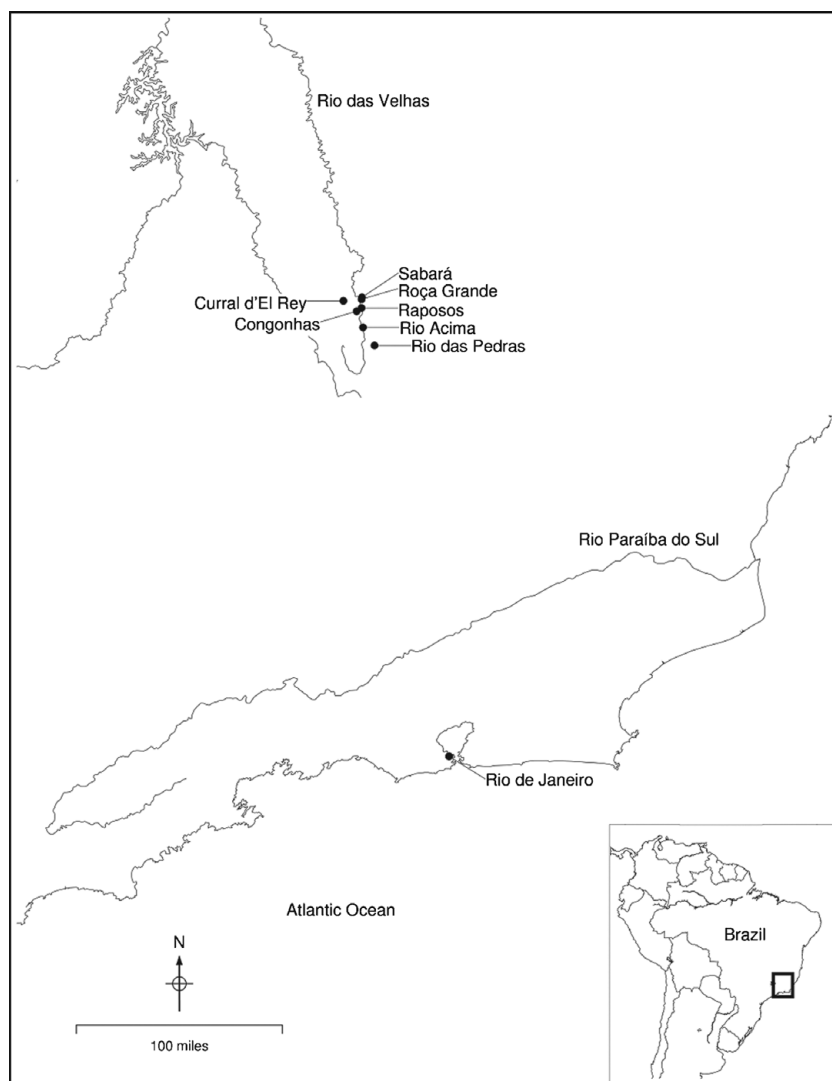
PICTURING FAMILIES BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE: *Mixed Descent and Social Mobility in Colonial Minas Gerais, Brazil*

During the eighteenth century, the Rodrigues da Cruz and the Vieira da Costa families rose to relative prominence in the *comarca* of Rio das Velhas, a judicial district of the captaincy of Minas Gerais (Figure 1). Both families had as their patriarch a wealthy Portuguese man whose fortune was built on the gold-mining industry that dominated the regional economy in the early part of the century. Both families were also the product of relationships between Portuguese gold miners and slave women. The second and third generations of the two families similarly comprised freed or free persons of mixed European and African descent whose own standing in society relied in part on their families' ability to manage the social and legal implications of the circumstances of their birth. The Rodrigues da Cruz and Vieira da Costa families were thus part of a large and rising population of *pardos* (light-skinned persons) or *mulatos* (persons of mixed descent) in eighteenth-century Minas Gerais—not of solely Portuguese origin or descent (*brancos*), solely African origin (*preto*), nor solely African descent but born in Brazil (*crioulo*). Their ambiguous social standing could lie somewhere between the elite status of most *brancos* and the slave status of most *pretos* or *crioulos*.¹

I would like to thank the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de Minas Gerais (FAPEMIG) and Ohio University for their generous support of my research at the Arquivo Casa Borba Gato in the Museu do Ouro de Sabará and the Arquivo Público Mineiro. I would also like to thank the staff of both institutions, in particular Carla Sterling, director of the archives at the Museu do Ouro. My thanks also to Sebastian Biot for designing the map of the parishes of Rio das Velhas and helping with the genealogical charts.

1. For demographic information about the population of Minas Gerais, see Francisco Vidal Luna, *Minas Gerais: escravos e senhores: análise da estrutura populacional e econômica de alguns centros mineratórios, 1718–1804* (São Paulo: IPE/USP, 1981); and Laird Bergad, *Slavery and the Demographic and Economic History of Minas Gerais, 1720–1888* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 81–122. For the population of the *comarca* of Rio das Velhas, see Mariana Dantas, *Black Townsmen: Urban Slavery and Freedom in the Eighteenth-Century Americas* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 129–134. For a discussion of the emergence of the category *pardo*, see Muriel Nazzari, “Vanishing Indians: The Social Construction of Race in Colonial São Paulo,” *The Americas* 57: 4 (April 2001): 497–524; and Hebe Mattos, “‘Pretos’ and ‘Pardos’ Between the Cross and the Sword: Racial Categories in Seventeenth-Century Brazil,” *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 80 (April 2006): 43–55. For a discussion of other terms denoting ethnic and family background and skin color, see Douglas Libby and Zephyr Frank, “Exploring Parish Registers in Colonial Minas Gerais, Brazil: Ethnicity in São José do Rio das Mortes, 1780–1810,” *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 14:3 (Summer 2005): 213–244; and Douglas Libby, “A Culture of Colors: Representational Identities and Afro-Brazilians in Minas Gerais in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 50:1 (June 2013): 25–52.

FIGURE 1
Main Parishes of the Comarca of Rio das Velhas



Source: Map created by Sebastian Biot, 2016

Yet, despite their numbers, the majority of people within this group lived lives and formed families that are not always accessible in the colonial records. Although they were counted in population maps or censuses, their individual stories are frequently unavailable to historians, possibly because they lived modest lives, because their records have been lost, or because they were

not recorded as pardo or mulato in the documentation.² The economic and social prominence of the Rodrigues da Cruz and Vieira da Costa patriarchs, and their children and grandchildren's active involvement in the economic, social, and judicial life of the comarca, has ensured their families, visibility in the archives.³ The information available about them makes it possible to reconstruct episodes in the lives of their members and the families' trajectories over time. Looking into these records reveals ways persons of mixed descent were affected by, interacted with, and navigated a social environment marked by the discriminatory practices that supported Portuguese privilege and African slavery.⁴

Scholars have long been interested in the social mobility of persons of African origin and descent in the captaincy of Minas Gerais, and in colonial Brazil more generally.⁵ Studies have emphasized the constraints that slavery and a hierarchical Portuguese imperial society imposed on persons of African descent, often resulting in their living impoverished and disenfranchised lives.⁶ These studies coexist with others that portray colonial Brazilian slavery and society as somewhat fluid and tolerant of its nonwhite members' attempts to empower themselves.⁷ More recently, scholars have employed microhistory and biography as methodologies to investigate the experience of social mobility among Africans and their descendants in colonial Brazil. Moving beyond discussions of numbers and patterns of slave manumission, or the economic

2. In her latest book, Joanne Rappaport analyzes the historical and archival process by which persons of mixed descent (European and indigenous, in this case) can disappear from the records. Joanne Rappaport, *The Disappearing Mestizo: Configuring Difference in the Colonial New Kingdom of Granada* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

3. Archival sources for the comarca of Rio das Velhas that were consulted for this study include notarial records (probate records, wills, and deeds) housed at the Museu do Ouro de Sabará, Arquivo Casa Borba Gato; parish records (baptismal and marriage certificates) housed at the Cúria Metropolitana de Belo Horizonte; and administrative records from the Municipal Council of Sabará and the Overseas Council, housed at the Arquivo Público Mineiro. Many colonial documents have been lost over the years, leaving historians with only a sample of all the records produced in the eighteenth century and limiting the chance of finding specific individuals within the existing documentation.

4. While this paper focuses specifically on two colonial families, it draws from my broader research on Rio das Velhas during the eighteenth century. I base many of my findings on data collected from 350 probate records, 82 of which belonged to individuals who were either the parents of children of mixed descent or were themselves of mixed descent.

5. For a theoretical discussion of the notion of social mobility in early modern Portuguese society, see António Manuel Hespanha, "A mobilidade social na sociedade de Antigo Regime," *Tempo* 21 (2007): 121–143. For a discussion of the historiography on comparative race relations and social mobility in the Americas and an assessment of what historians have misunderstood about social mobility in Latin America, see Ann Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness: Pardos, Mulattos, and the Quest for Social Mobility in the Spanish Indies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

6. Florestan Fernandes, *The Negro in Brazilian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969); Laura de Mello e Souza, *Desclassificados do ouro: a pobreza mineira no século XVIII* (Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1986); Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco, *Homens livres na ordem escravocrata* (São Paulo: Editora da UNESP, 1997).

7. Carl Degler, *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971); A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *The Black Man in Slavery and Freedom in Colonial Brazil* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982); Kathleen Higgins, "Licentious Liberty" in a Brazilian Gold-Mining Region (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Eduardo França Paiva, *Escravidão e universo cultural na colônia: Minas Gerais, 1716–1789* (Belo Horizonte: Editora da UFMG, 2001).

and social insertion into society of former slaves, such scholarship has painted nuanced pictures of individuals who managed to transition from slave to free, and to move up in the social hierarchy. Without ignoring the discriminatory nature of colonial society and Portuguese imperial laws and practices, these works unveil the stories of individuals who overcame these obstacles to achieve power, prominence, and privilege of some sort.⁸

The focus on socially mobile Africans and African descendants reveals the rich, complex, and often unexpected lives that members of this group experienced in colonial Brazil. Such knowledge has further challenged historians to abandon any kind of facile or linear explanation of the role Africanness or Blackness played in defining social standing within that society. Yet it is important to remember that individual experiences are inevitably enmeshed in broader historical processes that are not always discernible from the perspective that a single life story offers. In the case of social mobility, it is worth asking how one person's efforts and achievements could affect the experiences and choices of other members of their family and of subsequent generations.⁹ What does the sum of these family stories disclose about the construction of social and racial categories in colonial Brazil? This article addresses these questions by employing a generational approach to the study of social mobility in one particular environment of colonial Brazil. More specifically, it investigates the meaning and implications of the social category of *pardo* for three generations of mixed-descent families in the *comarca* of Rio das Velhas.

By the time the actions of the Rodrigues da Cruz and Vieira da Costa families began to affect the future of their descendants, Portuguese imperial society had had a long history of reconciling notions of social placement based on occupation, gender, and sexual behavior with those based on blood and lineage.¹⁰ One concept that attempted to synthesize these distinctions was

8. Roberto Guedes, *Egressos do cativo: trabalho, família, aliança e mobilidade social* (Porto Feliz, São Paulo, c. 1798–c. 1850) (Rio de Janeiro: Mauad Editora; FAPERJ, 2008); João José Reis, *Domingos Sodré, um sacerdote africano: escravidão, liberdade e candomblé na Bahia do século XIX* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2008); Júnia Ferreira Furtado, *Chica da Silva: A Brazilian Slave of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Ferreira Furtado, “Mulatismo, mobilidade e hierarquia nas Minas Gerais: os casos de Simão e Cipriano Pires Sardinha,” paper presented at the meeting of the Associação Portuguesa de História Económica e Social in Lisbon, June 10, 2010; James Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

9. Zephyr Frank's study of black social mobility in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro offers a rare view of families of African descent that prioritizes historical context and processes in our understanding of wealth accumulation and fluctuating opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. Frank, *Dutra's World: Wealth and Family in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

10. Fernanda Olival, “Rigor e interesses: os estatutos de limpeza de sangue em Portugal,” *Cadernos de Estudos Sefarditas* 4 (2004): 151–182; João Manuel V. M. de Figueiroa-Rego, “A honra alheia por um fio: os estatutos de limpeza de sangue no espaço de expressão Ibérica, séculos XVI–XVIII (PhD diss.: Universidade do Minho, 2009); Francis A. Dutra, “Ser mulato em Portugal nos primórdios da Época Moderna,” *Tempo* 15:30 (2011): 101–114; Ângela

qualidade (quality): persons of Portuguese descent who were born in wedlock, with no mechanical occupations or Jewish, Moorish, or African blood in their lineage, were of quality; those lacking such markers of distinction were not.¹¹ The many variables that could define quality encouraged families to fashion themselves or their descendants in such ways as to claim it, but their efforts sometimes clashed with those of Portuguese and colonial institutions eager to preserve the privileges of some while curbing those of others.¹² Generation after generation, this dialogue fed an ongoing process of defining categories of people in which the meaning of birth status, occupation, and African descent were constantly being negotiated. Families, perhaps more than individuals or institutions, were at the forefront of this process.¹³

FAMILY SNAPSHOTS: THE FIRST GENERATION

During the first decades of the eighteenth century, Domingos Rodrigues da Cruz and Jacinto Vieira da Costa left Portugal for the comarca of Rio das Velhas, in Minas Gerais, to build their fortunes through gold mining. Their investment in slave labor and success in obtaining concessions of mining lands resulted in the recognition of both men as *homens abastados* (men of wealth)

Barreto Xavier, "Purity of Blood and Caste: Identity Narratives among Early Modern Goan Elites," in *Race and Blood in the Iberian World*, Max S. Hering Torres, María Elena Martínez, and David Nirenberg, eds. (Zurich; Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012), 125–149.

11. A. J. R. Russell-Wood, "Ambivalent Authorities: The African and Afro-Brazilian Contribution to Local Governance in Colonial Brazil," *The Americas* 57:1 (July 2000): 13–36; Ana Luiza de Castro Pereira, "Unidos pelo sangue, separados pela lei: família e ilegitimidade no Império Português, 1700–1799" (PhD diss.: Universidade do Minho, 2009); Aldair Carlos Rodrigues, "Honra e estatutos de limpeza de sangue no Brasil colonial," *WebMosaica* 4:1 (January 2012): 75–85. The use of the term quality, or *calidad*, and its meaning has also been explored in the Spanish Americas. See Robert McCaa, "Calidad, Clase, and Marriage in Colonial Mexico: The Case of Parral, 1788–90," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 64 (August 1984): 477–501; Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations: Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 25–35, 101; and Norah Andrews, "Calidad, Genealogy, and Disputed Free-Colored Tributary Status in New Spain," *The Americas* 73:2 (April 2016): 139–170.

12. Donald Ramos, "Gossip, Scandal, and Popular Culture in Golden Age Brazil," *Journal of Social History* 33:4 (Summer 2000): 887–912; João Fragoso, "Fidalgos e parentes de pretos: notas sobre a nobreza principal da Terra do Rio de Janeiro (1600–1750)," and Roberto Guedes, "De ex-escravo a elite escravista: a trajetória de ascensão social do pardo alferes Joaquim Babosa Neves (Porto Feliz, São Paulo, Século XIX)," in *Conquistadores e negociantes: histórias de elites no Antigo Regime nos trópicos*, João L. R. Fragoso, Carla Maria C. de Almeida, and Antônio Carlos J. De Sampaio, eds. (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2007), 33–120 and 337–376, respectively; Ana Paula Pereira Costa, "'Homens de qualidade': a caracterização social das chefias militares dos corpos de ordenanças em Minas colonial," *Militares e Política* 2 (January 2008): 7–30; Hebe Mattos, "'Black Troops' and Hierarchies of Color in the Portuguese Atlantic World: The Case of Henrique Dias and His Black Regiment," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45:1 (June 2008): 6–29.

13. My discussion of the social category of pardo in this article is informed by the concept of racial formation developed by Michael Omi and Howard Winant and further explored in their *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2014). I have elected to employ the term "social category" instead of "race" because in this article I am concerned with the social mobility of African descendants and do not focus on race relations in colonial Minas Gerais.

by mid-century.¹⁴ By that point in their lives, they had also formed families and fathered several children. Cruz had nine children with his wife Luiza Rodrigues da Cruz, a freed African woman and his former slave. Their first children were born in slavery while Luiza was still Cruz's slave; the others were born after the couple contracted legal matrimony, or simply became publicly known as husband and wife, and were raised as persons of assumed legitimate birth.¹⁵ Their partnership lasted from approximately 1727, when their first son was born, to 1770, when Cruz died and the widowed Luiza assumed control over the couple's estate (Figure 2).

Unlike Cruz, Jacinto Vieira da Costa remained single throughout his life. Still, he had eight children with seven different women, five of whom had been his slaves and two the slaves of persons close to him. While Costa never formalized his relationship to any one of these women, he eventually recognized the children they bore as his.¹⁶ He freed his three youngest children at the baptismal font.¹⁷ Those who had remained in slavery were granted freedom in his will: "for the love he has for them and some suspicion that they were his." He also appointed them all his universal heirs (Figure 3).¹⁸

Despite their similar beginnings, Cruz and Costa made different economic choices and lived out distinct social and political experiences later in life. Cruz remained a miner all his life, never tapping into the other sources of wealth

14. Relação dos homens abastados das comarcas de Minas, July 24, 1756, Arquivo Público Mineiro, Coleção Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [hereafter cited as AHU], box 70, doc. 40. For a discussion of Portuguese migration and the formation of an economic and social elite in early eighteenth-century Minas Gerais, see Virgínia Maria Trindade Valadares, *Elites mineiras setecentistas: conjugação de dois mundos* (Lisbon: Edições Colibri; Instituto de Cultura Ibero-Atlântica, 2004), 263–297.

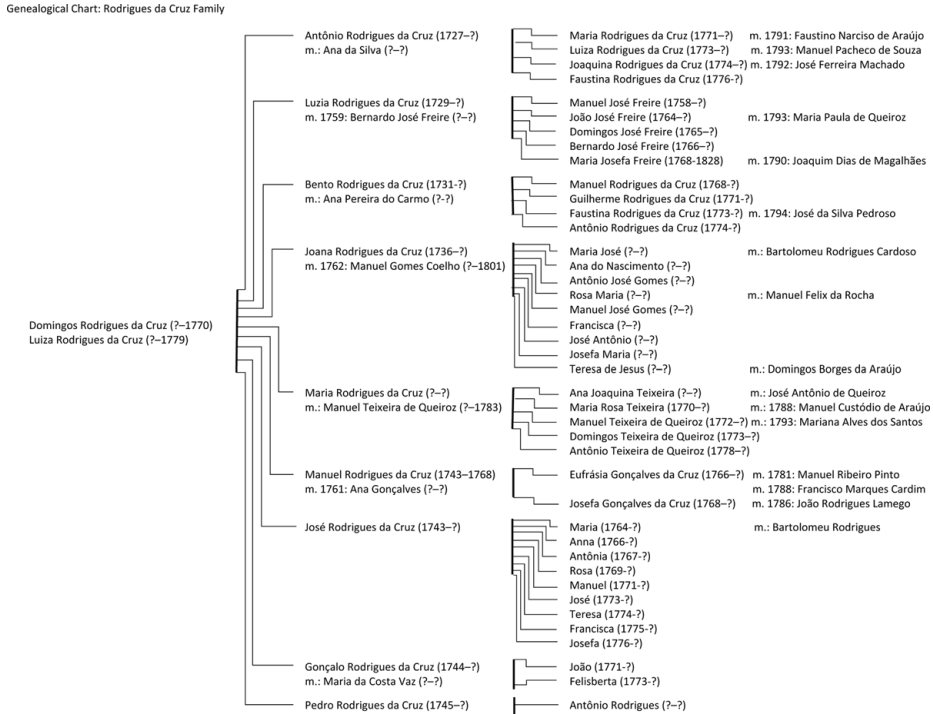
15. The couple's third child, Joana, was born in slavery. Registro de batismo de Joana, February 8, 1736, Cúria Metropolitana de Belo Horizonte [hereafter cited as CMBH], Paroquia de Sabará, Livro de Batizados 1726–1740, vol. 1. By the time Joana got married, Luiza was known as Domingos's wife. Joana Rodrigues da Costa and Manuel Gomes Coelho, July 29, 1762, CMBH, Livro de Assentos de Casamentos de Sabará 1758–1801.

16. Different scholars have explored the influence of Portuguese ideas and practices about matrimony on marriage and concubinage patterns in colonial Brazil. Some studies argue that the desire for respectability encouraged marriage; others argue that the bureaucratic procedures marriage required, paired with social and racial inequality between men and women, helped to promote concubinage. All agree, however, that concubinage and illegitimacy were common practices in colonial and post-independence Brazil, and were not necessarily correlated to race. See Elizabeth Kuznesof, "Sexual Politics, Race, and Bastard-Bearing in Nineteenth-Century Brazil: A Question of Culture or Power?" *Journal of Family History* 16:3 (July 1991): 241–260; Donald Ramos, "From Minho to Minas: The Portuguese Roots of the Mineiro Family," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 73:4 (November 1993): 639–666; Muriel Nazzari, "Concubinage in Colonial Brazil: The Inequalities of Race, Class, and Gender," *Journal of Family History* 21:2 (April 1996): 107–124; Luciano Raposo Figueiredo, *Barrocas famílias: vida familiar em Minas Gerais no século XVIII* (São Paulo: Hucitec, 1997), 131–163; and Eliana Rea Goldschmidt, *Casamentos mistos: liberdade e escravidão em São Paulo colonial* (São Paulo: Annablume Editora, 2004).

17. His children's baptismal records were copied into his probate record as evidence of their relationship to him. Inventário de Jacinto Vieira da Costa, June 10, 1760, Museu do Ouro de Sabará/Arquivo Casa Borba Gato [hereafter cited as MOS/ACBG], Cartório do Segundo Ofício [hereafter cited as CSO], box 21, doc. 189.

18. Testamento de Jacinto Vieira da Costa, May 9, 1760, MOS/ACBG, Cartório do Primeiro Ofício, códice 14(24), 77–83.

FIGURE 2
Genealogical Chart of the Rodrigues da Cruz Family



Source: Chart created by the author

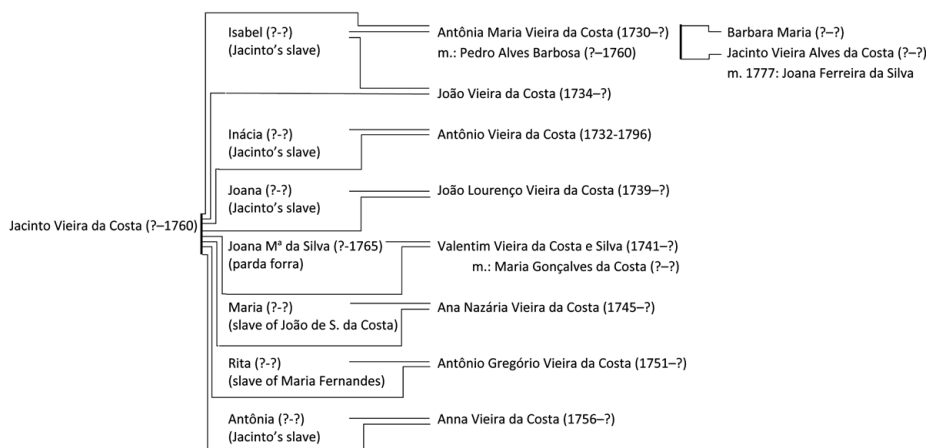
that emerged mid-eighteenth century in Minas Gerais. Costa, however, began investing in sugarcane crops and in a sugar mill as early as 1746.¹⁹ By the time he died in 1760, he owned mines, several rural properties, over 400 slaves, a sugar mill, and a couple of flour mills. While Cruz's estate was valued at approximately 4:500\$000 réis at the time of his death, Costa's estate was estimated at 200:000\$000 réis.²⁰ Along with wealth, Costa also enjoyed more social and political prestige than did Cruz. In 1749 he was elected *juiz ordinário*

19. In 1746 he petitioned the crown for permission to build a sugar mill on his land, declaring that it would not distract him from mining efforts but would be used to profitably employ slaves no longer fit for mining. Requerimento de Jacinto Vieira da Costa, February 11, 1746, AHU, box 46, doc. 11. For a synthesis of patterns of economic change in Minas Gerais during the second half of the eighteenth century, see Bergad, *Slavery and the Demographic and Economic History*, 1-25.

20. Although I have not been able to find Domingos Rodrigues da Cruz's probate record, it is possible to estimate the value of his assets based on that of his wife. Inventário de Luiza Rodrigues da Cruz, February 1, 1779, MOS/ACBG, CSO, box 49, doc. 372; Inventário de Jacinto Vieira da Costa, June 10, 1760, MOS/ACBG, CSO, box 21, doc.189. The *real*, or *réis* in the plural form, was the currency of eighteenth-century Minas Gerais. One thousand réis was registered as 1\$000, and one million réis (often referred to as a *conto de réis*) was registered as 1:000\$000. During the second half of the eighteenth century 1\$200 *réis* (the value of the unitary measure of gold, the *oitava*),

FIGURE 3
Genealogical Chart of the Vieira da Costa Family

Genealogical Chart: Vieira da Costa Family



Source: Chart created by the author

(judge) of the municipal council of the town of Sabará, the seat of the comarca. He was later appointed *ouvidor* (district judge) of the comarca of Rio das Velhas. He also held the highest rank in the infantry regiment of the local militia, that of *mestre de campo* (colonel).²¹ His probate record stated, moreover, that he was “always treated with distinction and nobility, with a horse in the stable and always moving around mounted on a horse, serving in public office . . . and always enjoying the privileges of nobility.”²² Shortly before his death he was accepted in the Order of Christ.²³ Given the Portuguese practice of reserving positions of authority or prestige to men of quality, Cruz and Costa’s very distinct socioeconomic positions and public lives were likely related to the impact their decision to marry, or not marry, an African woman and former slave had on their quality.²⁴

was equivalent to 3.5 grams of gold. Waldemar A. Barbosa, *Dicionário da terra e da gente de Minas* (Belo Horizonte: Publicações do Arquivo Público Mineiro, 1985), 135.

21. A useful overview of the organization of military forces in Brazil is Christiane Figueiredo Pagano Mello, *Forças militares no Brasil colonial: corpos auxiliares e de ordenanças na segunda metade do século XVIII* (Rio de Janeiro: E-Papers, 2009).

22. Inventário de Jacinto Vieira da Costa, June 10, 1760, MOS/ACBG, CSO, box 21, doc. 189.

23. Mercê feita a Jacinto Vieira da Costa do hábito de Cristo, April 28, 1760, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo [hereafter ANTT], Registro Geral de Mercês, D. José I, Livro 14, fol. 454.

24. Metropolitan and colonial officials were inclined to limit access to positions of power and prestige in eighteenth-century Minas Gerais to men of quality, that is, to white persons who were not connected by blood or marriage to African descendants. In 1725, the Overseas Council advised King João V to prohibit the election of men who had the defect of being mulato up to the fourth degree, or who were not married to a white woman, to the offices

The type of liaison Cruz and Costa established with the mothers of their children also affected these women's life trajectory. Luiza Rodrigues da Cruz lived much of her life in freedom, her African origin and slave past rarely referenced in colonial records. In the marriage certificates of three of her children, for instance, Luiza appears simply as the wife of Domingos Rodrigues da Cruz. The couple's relationship enabled Luiza to assume control of their household, becoming owner of half of their estate after her husband's death. It also allowed her to refashion herself as the legitimate wife of a white man and a respectable matriarch. Her determination to uphold social norms led, in fact, to one of her grandchildren being disinherited. Antônio, Luiza's grandson by her son Pedro, was born out of wedlock. Arguing that "as it is well-known that Pedro was not married, and that according to the mind of the deceased only the grandchildren born of legitimate matrimony are to be considered," the judge of the Orphans' Court of Sabará ruled that Antônio was to be excluded from the inheritance.²⁵ The mother of children born out of wedlock while she was still in slavery, Luiza nevertheless embraced certain views on appropriate social and sexual behavior that enabled her to claim an elevated status or quality for herself. She also held her descendants to those standards.²⁶

The women in Jacinto Vieira da Costa's life, on the other hand, did not experience the benefits of marriage. While some obtained their freedom and went on to become property owners, they were never entitled to share in his fortune and social prestige. It is not even clear whether Costa helped his enslaved sexual partners achieve their freedom. Joana Mina, possibly the mother of Costa's third male child, was freed in exchange for a new slave.²⁷

of municipal councilor or judge. AHU, Parecer do Conselho Ultramarino, September 25, 1725, box 7, doc. 26. For a discussion of this document and its implications, see Nazzari, "Vanishing Indians," 497–524.

25. The Orphans' Court was the legal institution in charge of overseeing the succession of property in cases involving underage heirs. The quote, and much of the information available on Luiza Rodrigues da Cruz and her family comes from her probate record. Inventário de Luiza Rodrigues da Cruz, February 1, 1779, MOS/ACBG, CSO, box 49, doc. 372. The following marriage certificates are also available for her children: Luzia Rodrigues da Cruz and Bernardo José Freire, March 31, 1759, CMBH, Livro de Assentos de Casamentos de Sabará, 1758–1801; Ana Gonçalves and Manuel Rodrigues da Cruz, August 4, 1761, *ibid.*; Joana Rodrigues da Costa and Manuel Gomes Coelho, July 29, 1762, *ibid.* For a discussion of the definition of natural vs. legitimate child, and the laws regulating their right to inheritance, see Linda Lewin, *Surprise Heirs I: Illegitimacy, Patrimonial Rights, and Legal Nationalism in Luso-Brazilian Inheritance, 1750–1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 42–70.

26. As Ann Twinam has discussed for the Spanish Americas, notions of desirable and moral behavior, which supported claims to honor and distinction among white elites, were embraced and employed by non-elites to negotiate a middling position in colonial society. Ann Twinam, "The Negotiation of Honor," in *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America*, Lyman Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, eds. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 68–102. For a discussion of the circulation of similar notions and practices in colonial Brazil, see Muriel Nazzari, "An Urgent Need to Conceal," in *The Faces of Honor*, 103–126; and Ramos, "Gossip, Scandal, and Popular Culture," 887–912.

27. Jacinto Vieira da Costa to Joana Mina, November 29, 1756, MOS/ACBG, CSO, Livro de Notas N118, fol 56. The descriptor "Mina" was a general reference to the place and people of origin (the *nação*) of a slave, and referred to a region in Western Africa that corresponds to present-day Benin, Nigeria, Togo, and Ghana. See James Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441–1770* (Chapel Hill:

The freedom of these women, like that of most slave women manumitted in eighteenth-century Minas Gerais, was more likely the result of their own economic efforts than of someone else's beneficence.²⁸ Once freed, some were also successful in becoming property holders. Izabel, the mother of two of Costa's children, and Inácia, the mother of Costa's oldest son, owned slaves whom they freed in the late eighteenth century.²⁹ Unfortunately, not much else is known about them. The manner in which they freed their slaves suggests, though, that they became attached to, or could not afford to part with, what few benefits or privileges they had secured through slave ownership. Despite their past experiences, they demanded of their own slaves compensation for their freedom: Izabel received Thomé Mina's value in gold; Inácia required Cecília Mina to serve her until Inácia's death.³⁰

PARDO OR NOT PARDO: THE SECOND GENERATION

The Rodrigues da Cruz and Vieira da Costa children, like their mothers, were also affected by the circumstances of their parents' union. Moreover, members of this second generation, despite their common mixed descent, experienced different economic and social lives as a result of actions their parents took on their behalf. Among Domingos and Luiza Rodrigues da Cruz's nine children, for instance, six could claim to be of legitimate birth and free status. The couple's three oldest children, however, were born in slavery and out of wedlock. Indeed, their oldest daughter Luzia was described in her marriage record as *parda* and *forra* (freed slave). Still, despite their brush with slavery, all three of the couple's daughters, Luzia included, married Portuguese men of legitimate birth. Through their marriages each became owner of half the estate they helped their respective husbands build and were entitled, like their mother,

University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 13–30; and Mariza de Carvalho Soares, *People of Faith: Slavery and African Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 67–100.

28. In the region of Sabará, sixty percent of the slaves whose manumission was recorded by the notary office were women, and 54 percent of those women had purchased their freedom. Overall, two out of every three African slave women who obtained their freedom did so through purchase. This information is based on the consultation of 513 letters of freedom recorded by the notary public of Sabará between 1750 and 1808. MOS/ACBG, CSO, Livros de Notas L2, L56, L59, L75, L82, L89, N118, and L63-67. See also Dantas, *Black Townsmen*, 98–112. For similar observations elsewhere in Minas Gerais and colonial Brazil, see Stuart B. Schwartz, "The Manumission of Slaves in Colonial Brazil: Bahia, 1684–1745," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 54:4 (November 1974): 603–635; Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio, 1808–1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 335–362; and Douglas C. Libby and Clotilde Paiva, "Manumission Practices in a Late Eighteenth-Century Brazilian Slave Parish: São José d'El Rey in 1795," *Slavery and Abolition* 21:1 (April 2000): 96–127.

29. Izabel Vieira da Costa to Thomé Mina, July 21, 1779, MOS/ACBG, CSO, Livro de Notas 13(63), fol. 99; Antônio Vieira da Costa to Cecília Mina, May 31, 1796, MOS/ACBG, CSO, Livro de Notas 34(sn), fol. 139.

30. Ownership of slaves was of great economic and social importance to former slaves, who might have been reluctant to surrender their own bondmen and women without compensation. See Frank, *Dutra's World*, 96–121; and Furtado, *Chica da Silva*, 146–161.

to become heads of household if widowed.³¹ Maria Rodrigues da Cruz even obtained royal permission to become her children's guardian after the death of her husband, Manuel Teixeira de Queiroz. Such a privilege was granted only to mothers who were able to prove their honor, chastity, and ability to manage property.³² The Rodrigues da Cruz daughters' unions to men of Portuguese origin and legitimate birth helped them claim the status of honor that had gained Maria the guardianship of her own children.³³

Maria's appointment as her children's guardian was also related to her membership in a land-owning family. Domingos and Luiza Rodrigues da Cruz's success in mining had provided their children with financial security and the opportunity to follow in their footsteps.³⁴ Records of land concessions and the probate records of two of the couple's sons-in-law and of their son José indicate that most members of this generation became mining entrepreneurs in their own right. José Rodrigues da Cruz's probate record even refers to two of his brothers as *abonados* (men of means).³⁵ Property records related to the Rodrigues da Cruz family suggest, moreover, that the siblings worked together to preserve the family's economic and social standing. Their efforts ensured the family's continued presence in the town of Sabará and their importance to the local mining economy.³⁶

31. Information about the daughters' marriages is available in Luiza's probate record and the marriage certificates of Luzia and Joana. For laws regulating women's right to property, see *Código Philippino, ou ordenações e leis do Reino de Portugal*, Livro 4, títs. 56 and 96 (Rio de Janeiro: Cândido Mendes de Almeida, 1870; reprint, Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1985), 832–835 and 949–954. See also Alida Metcalf, *Family and Frontier in Colonial Brazil: Santana do Paraíba, 1580–1822* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 95–100; and Lewin, *Surprise Heirs I*, 19–39.

32. Requerimento de Maria Rodrigues da Cruz, September 24, 1784, Coleção AHU, box 122, doc. 27. For a discussion of women of African descent as heads of household and their children's guardians, see Mariana Dantas, "Succession of Property, Sales of *Meação*, and the Economic Empowerment of Widows of African Descent in Colonial Minas Gerais, Brazil," *Journal of Family History* 39:3 (July 2014): 222–238.

33. Patterns of marriage arrangements in early and mid eighteenth-century Minas Gerais likely resembled what Muriel Nazzari has described for seventeenth-century São Paulo: wealthy families with children of mixed descent sought white Portuguese husbands for their daughters to whiten the family line and complement their economic standing with social prestige. See Nazzari, *The Disappearance of the Dowry: Women, Families, and Social Change in São Paulo, Brazil (1600–1900)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 15–39.

34. Even after both parents had died, their descendants continued to benefit from their mining business. Months after Luiza's death, for instance, Antônio, her oldest son, declared that the deceased's mining plots yielded 164\$700 réis of gold, an amount equivalent to the price of a young male African slave. Equal shares of that amount were allocated to the different heirs. Inventário de Luiza Rodrigues da Cruz.

35. Inventário de José Rodrigues da Cruz, November 11, 1783, MOS/ACBG, CSO, box 55, doc. 412. Records of mining lands concession held by the Rodrigues da Cruz children can be found in Cartas de Aforamentos, 1776–1809, APM, Câmara Municipal de Sabará, código 203.

36. While historians such as Laird Bergad have highlighted the process of out-migration that marked late eighteenth-century Minas Gerais as a result of the decline of gold mining in the region, studies like that of Douglas Libby point to an alternative pattern of family permanence in Minas Gerais. Bergad, *Slavery and the Demographic and Economic History*, 89–100; Douglas Libby, "Family, Stability, and Respectability: Seven Generations of Africans and Afro-descendants in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Minas Gerais," *The Americas* 73:3 (July 2016): 371–390.

The circumstances of the Vieira da Costa children's birth did not afford them the same smooth transition to property-holder status enjoyed by Domingos and Luiza's descendants. Children of legitimate birth were the forced heirs of their parents and automatically entitled to equal shares of their property. Natural children—those born out of wedlock to parents eligible to marry each other—were also entitled to equal shares of the inheritance if legally recognized as heirs.³⁷ Costa recognized his children and named them heirs in his will, but because he did not appear as the father in their baptismal records their claims to his estate could be legally challenged. Aware of the vulnerability of the children's position, Costa orchestrated the sale of his property to his oldest son Antônio.³⁸ The other seven children were ultimately recognized as heirs and were entitled to payments Antônio owed for the purchase of his father's property. Still, unlike Antônio, they had to pursue their own paths to economic well-being, relying either on their brother's patronage or their own professional pursuits. Several became Antônio's debtors and one sister remained a member of his household. Moreover, when Antônio died in 1796 without known descendants, his siblings were unable to prove their rights as heirs: the court ruled that there was no legal evidence that they were blood relatives. The extraordinary wealth accumulated by Costa and sustained by Antônio over the course of several decades thus ended up in the hands of their creditors.³⁹

Their father's efforts and family resources nevertheless afforded some of the Vieira da Costa children the means to achieve social distinction. Bearing a dowry of 1:600\$000 réis provided by her father, Costa's oldest daughter Antônia Maria married Portuguese native Pedro Alves Barbosa.⁴⁰ Not much is known about Barbosa, except that he had come from the archdiocese of Porto and was of legitimate birth. Like other Portuguese men before him, he had likely migrated to Minas Gerais to build his wealth. His wife's dowry gave him a good start, and by the time of his death, the couple owned a large rural estate worth 11:290\$400 réis.⁴¹ Costa's concern for the well-being of his female descendants extended to the third generation. In his will he bequeathed

37. Lewin, *Surprise Heirs*, 20–29, 42–57.

38. Inventário de Jacinto Vieira da Costa, June 10, 1760, MOS/ACBG, CSO, box 21, doc. 189; Testamento de Jacinto Vieira da Costa, May 9, 1760, MOS/ACBG, Cartório do Primeiro Ofício, códice 14(24), 77–83. Sales of property between parents and children, or to another family member, were not uncommon in colonial Minas Gerais. These transactions had added importance to families with children of African descent whose entitlement to the inheritance might have been challenged by the circumstances of their birth. See Mariana Dantas, "Inheritance Practices Among Individuals of African Origin and Descent in Eighteenth-Century Minas Gerais, Brazil," in *The Faces of Freedom: The Manumission and Emancipation of Slaves in Old World and New World Slavery*, Marc Kleijwegt, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 153–181.

39. Inventário de Antônio Vieira da Costa, February 27, 1796, MOS/ACBG, CSO, box 72, doc. 561.

40. Testamento de Jacinto Vieira da Costa, May 9, 1760, MOS/ACBG, Cartório do Primeiro Ofício, códice 14(24), 77–83.

41. Testamento de Pedro Alves Barbosa, November 28, 1760, MOS/ACBG, CPO, códice 15(25), fols. 123–127.

800\$000 réis to his granddaughter Barbara Maria, Antônia Maria's daughter, as part of her dowry. Costa, it seems, tried to ensure a line of respectably married female descendants to enhance the family's reputation.

Costa's ambitions for his children were also evident in his decision to provide Valentim Vieira da Costa, the only one of his children born of a parda woman, with a prestigious education at the University of Coimbra, in Portugal, a common practice among the elite of colonial Minas Gerais.⁴² Valentim began his studies in law in 1758 and, once back in the comarca of Rio das Velhas, acted as a solicitor, bearing the distinguished title of *doutor* (doctor). Jacinto Vieira da Costa's elite standing also helped to propel Antônio Vieira da Costa into a position of relative importance. Like his father, Antônio was appointed to the highest officer rank within the local militia: mestre de campo of the auxiliary regiment of the pardo infantry of Sabará. While his rank confirmed his mixed descent and carried no monetary compensation, it nevertheless afforded him some of the privileges and prestige reserved for the military class.⁴³

Antônia Maria, Valentim, and Antônio were born slaves, of slave women of African origin or descent. Yet because they were also the children of a wealthy and prominent Portuguese man they experienced significant social mobility during their lives. The children of Domingos and Luiza Rodrigues da Cruz also enjoyed an improved social status as a result of their mother's legitimate union to a white Portuguese man. As a child of a former slave, or born into slavery themselves, they were nevertheless able to claim a legitimate birth and an inheritance, which helped them present themselves as honorable and propertied. Still, none of Domingos and Luiza's sons studied at Coimbra and at least one of them, Gonçalo, was a carpenter by trade.⁴⁴ Portuguese laws often barred persons of Jewish, Muslim, or African ancestry, who were viewed as lacking quality, from certain institutions or privileges such as graduating from the University of Coimbra (though they were sometimes able to attend) or holding influential positions in government.⁴⁵ Additionally, laws and provisions

42. Valadares, *Elites mineiras setecentistas*, 297–336.

43. Carta patente de mestre do campo dos auxiliares, June 22, 1785, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Registro Geral de Mercês de D. Maria I, Livro 18, fol. 320v. For an overview of the participation of African descendants in colonial militias, see Fernando Prestes de Souza, Leandro Francisco de Paula, and Luiz Geraldo Silva, "A Guerra Luso-Castelhana e o recrutamento de pardos e pretos: uma análise comparativa (Minas Gerais, São Paulo e Pernambuco, 1775–1777)," in *Temas setecentistas: governos e populações no império português*, Antônio César de Almeida Santos and Andréa Doré, eds. (Curitiba: UFPR-SCHLA, 2008), 67–83; and Francis Albert Cotta, *Negros e mestiços nas milícias da América Portuguesa* (Belo Horizonte: Crisálida, 2010).

44. Judith Martins, *Dicionário de artistas e artífices dos séculos XVIII e XIX em Minas Gerais* (Rio de Janeiro: Publicações do Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, 1974).

45. Valadares, *Elites mineiras setecentistas*, 297–336; Dutra, "Ser mulato em Portugal," 101–114; João de Figueirôa-Rêgo and Fernanda Olival, "Cor da pele, distinções e cargos: Portugal e espaços Atlânticos Portugueses (séculos XVI a XVIII)," *Tempo* 15:30 (2011): 115–145. The Pombaline reforms of 1773 ended the requirement of

regulating the Orphans' Court ordered judges to provide those under their jurisdiction with an education suitable to their quality.⁴⁶ Judges of the Orphans' Court of Sabará, for instance, were advised that "those who are not of quality or nobility must become soldiers or learn a trade by the order of the court."⁴⁷ Given the legal and social culture of imperial Portuguese society, Domingos and Luiza's decision to marry, legitimizing their children but also underscoring their mixed ancestry, may have undermined their quality and opportunities for further social mobility, more so than Jacinto Vieira da Costa's decision to remain single.

As the offspring of white Portuguese men and African-descendant women, the Rodrigues da Cruz and Vieira da Costa children could all have been considered *pardo* or *mulato*. Portuguese imperial notions about purity of blood and quality would have kept them from positions of authority or prestige. Yet records are very inconsistent in the way they refer to members of this second generation, or suggest how colonial society may have treated them. For instance, Domingos and Luiza's oldest daughter Luzia, though described in her marriage record as *parda forra* and a natural child, appears in two of her children's marriage records simply as the wife of Bernardo José Freire.⁴⁸ On these occasions, Luzia's relationship to her Portuguese husband was prioritized by the priest recording the events; her African descent and *forro* status were mentioned only in the document where her illegitimate birth was also recorded.

Domingos and Luiza's other children were also described as *pardo* in an irregular fashion. Joana, the only child whose baptismal record is available, was born in slavery before her parents were married. Yet when she married Manuel Gomes Coelho, a white Portuguese man of legitimate birth, she was described as the legitimate daughter of Cruz and his wife Luiza Rodrigues. Eleven years later, however, she was described as *parda forra* in the record of a sale she contracted with Manuel Nogueira de Carvalho, a *pardo forro*.⁴⁹ Gonçalo

purity of blood that some Portuguese institutions had demanded, but they did not immediately displace the culture of discrimination the requirement had created. See Rodrigues, "Honra e estatutos," 75–85.

46. *Código Phillipino*, Livro 1, tit. 88 § 13–21, 211–213. For a discussion of the implications of these laws and attempts to circumvent them, see Solange Maria da Silva, "Estratégias e práticas educativas dos negros na comarca do Rio das Velhas, século XVIII," (Master's thesis: Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 2011); and Dantas, "Succession of Property," 222–238.

47. "*Os que não forem de qualidade e nobreza devem assoldadarse ou porem-se ao offício por ordem do juízo.*" Quote from Livro de provimento dos órfãos, MOS/ACBG, 15v–16. This book, produced by the Orphans' Court of Sabará in the early eighteenth century, was a compilation of *provisos* intended to guide future procedures of the court.

48. Luzia Rodrigues da Cruz and Bernardo José Freire, March 31, 1759, CMBH, Livro de Assentos de Casamentos de Sabará, 1758–1801; Maria Josefa Freire and Joaquim Dias de Magalhães, February 10, 1790, *ibid.*; Maria Paula de Queiroz and João José Freire, August 15, 1793, *ibid.*

49. Registro de Batismo de Joana, February 8, 1736; Joana Rodrigues da Costa and Manuel Gomes Coelho, July 29, 1762; Joana Rodrigues da Cruz and Manuel Nogueira de Carvalho, October 9, 1772, ACBG/MOS, CPON, Livro de Notas 18(63) 1772/3.

Rodrigues da Cruz, Joana's younger brother, was also described as pardo forro in the baptismal record of Francisco, his legitimate son with Maria da Costa Vaz, herself a parda forra. In a tax record for the mining lands he held in the town of Sabará, however, only his military rank of *alferes* (ensign) was recorded.⁵⁰ In both cases, reference to Joana and Gonçalo's pardo status was made only when they were associated to another individual of African descent and forro status. When their connection to a white Portuguese man or their rank sufficed to identify their social context, the category of pardo forro was omitted.

Indeed, second-generation Rodrigues da Cruz and Vieira da Costa men who served in the militia were often identified by their rank rather than their pardo category. Manuel, Domingos and Luiza's second son, was listed in his daughters' marriage records with no particular description, but when he acted as witness in the aforementioned sale that his sister Joana contracted with Carvalho he was referred to as *alferes*.⁵¹ Similarly, Pedro Rodrigues da Cruz was identified as *furriel* (sargeant) in the probate record of José Rodrigues de Aguiar, a mentally incapacitated pardo man. Nominated to serve as Aguiar's guardian, Pedro was excused from that obligation after reminding the court of his position with the infantry regiment under the orders of the mestre de campo Antônio Vieira da Costa.⁵² Antônio Vieira da Costa, in turn, was consistently identified in colonial documents by his military rank, first as captain and later as mestre de campo. Only once was he described as pardo, in the inventory of looms in Minas Gerais prepared in response to the queen's 1785 act forbidding colonial production of textiles other than plain cotton. Census-takers who collected information for Rio das Velhas were unusually careful to identify heads of household by the categories of branco, preto, or pardo.⁵³

Antônio's siblings Antônia Maria and Valentim, on the other hand, have nowhere in the documentation been described as pardo. Antônia Maria served as godmother to two of her younger sisters, both children of slave mothers, but no reference to her own mixed descent or forro status was made in the baptismal records.⁵⁴ She was also named in her husband's will with no reference to her color or freed status.⁵⁵ Finally, no description follows her name in her

50. Registro de batismo de Francisco, February 27, 1780, CMBH, Livro de Assentos de Batismos de Sabará; Cartas de Aforamento, February 17, 1798, APM, CMS 55.

51. Eufrásia Gonçalves da Cruz and Manuel Ribeiro Pinto, June 20, 1781, CMBH, Livro de Assentos de Casamentos de Sabará, 1758–1801; Josefa Gonçalves da Cruz and João Rodrigues Lamego, February 14, 1786, *ibid.*; Eufrásia Gonçalves da Cruz and Francisco Marques Cardim, August 27, 1788, *ibid.*; Joana Rodrigues da Cruz and Manuel Nogueira de Carvalho, October 9, 1772, *ibid.*

52. Inventário de José Rodrigues de Aguiar, January 16, 1787, MOS/ACBG, CSO, box 62, doc. 463.

53. "Lista de Teares," *Revista do Arquivo Público Mineiro* 40 (1995): 65.

54. Copies of the birth certificates of some of Jacinto's children are included in his probate record. Inventário de Jacinto Vieira da Costa.

55. Testamento de Pedro Alves Barbosa, November 28, 1760.

son's marriage dispensation request.⁵⁶ Similarly, Valentim appears in numerous documents without reference to his African descent or *forro* status. Because of his occupation as a solicitor, he served as procurator to many in Sabará. He also transacted a few sales that were recorded by the town's notary public, and he served as the executor of his father-in-law's will. The child of a *parda forra* and born in slavery himself, Valentim was never associated to either category; instead, his name was consistently prefaced by the title *bacharel* (graduate), or *doutor*.

Still, Antônio, Antônia Maria, Valentim, and their other siblings were well-known in Rio das Velhas as persons of African descent. In 1780 the Orphans' Court named Matheus Gonçalves Casqueiro, a Portuguese man and a slave trader, their new guardian. Casqueiro avoided the appointment by arguing that "as those orphans are *pardos* and children of this country, and some of age and others emancipated, it is from among these or others who are equal and residents of this country (*"ou de outros iguais com existência nas terras"*) that the guardian should be elected."⁵⁷ It was his opinion that the court should not burden someone who was the orphans' social superior with their guardianship. By 1780, Costa's children had lived as his heirs for two decades, often recognized in colonial documents for their association to him rather than to their slave or freed mothers. Nevertheless, there was public knowledge that they were of African descent and not "equal" to Portuguese colonists. The absence of references to their *pardo* category in most contemporary records, and association instead to other markers of social status, had not erased their mixed descent or ensured a consistent perception of their quality.

(THE LIMITS OF) SOCIAL MOBILITY

What are historians to make of the inconsistent use in colonial records of terms denoting African descent or freed status? A study of the descriptions of mothers in a sample of 547 baptismal records collected for the town of Sabará can help address that question.⁵⁸ Among these women, 418 were unmarried and 129 were married. Unmarried mothers were described according to their African descent and legal status with considerable consistency: only eight women

56. Jacinto Vieira Alves da Costa and Joana Ferreira da Silva, June 22, 1777, Arquivo Eclesiástico da Arquidiocese de Mariana [hereafter AEAM], Livro de Dispensas Matrimoniais-Sabará. Couples commonly requested a marriage dispensation when there was reason to believe there was an impediment to their union according to the laws of the Church.

57. Appendix to Inventário de Jacinto Vieira da Costa, April 8, 1780, ACPBG/MOS, CSO, box 21, doc. 189.

58. The sample collected for this study included documents from the early 1730s, the early 1750s, and the early 1780s, Cúria Metropolitana de Belo Horizonte, Livros de Assento de Batismo de Sabará.

(less than two percent) appeared with no particular description.⁵⁹ Conversely, descriptive terms were omitted for the majority of married mothers who were not slaves, even though some were, according to other documents, Africans or African-descendants and freed slaves.⁶⁰ It is important to note that ecclesiastical law did not require priests in the archdiocese of Bahia to record African descent or *forro* status in parish records.⁶¹ Thus the use of such descriptive language in these and other colonial documents reflected, as some researchers have already noted, the idiosyncrasies of individual priests or local trends in record-taking.⁶² The priests presiding over these baptisms were more inclined to record the African descent and *forro* status of unmarried mothers than of married mothers.

The descriptive language observed in this set of records resembles the pattern already noted in the parish records referring to members of the Rodrigues da Cruz family. African descendants, including former slaves, who were associated by legitimate birth or marriage to a Portuguese or white man were often identified by that connection rather than other personal traits. Those who were unmarried, whose spouse was of known African descent, or whose illegitimate birth weakened their connection to a Portuguese or white man, were more regularly described by their descent and, when applicable, *forro* status. Parish priests and other record-takers apparently weighed different personal traits—birth, lineage, marital status, past slavery—against each other when registering an individual's quality. They often prioritized traits that they felt best situated an individual within his or her social context.

The omission of the *pardo* designation in descriptions of people in colonial documents should not be taken, therefore, as evidence of change of social status or upward social mobility. It could in some cases indicate an individual passing for someone with a social background other than his or her own.⁶³ Portuguese imperial society restricted Africans and their descendants' physical mobility, economic opportunities, access to positions of authority, and acceptance into religious or military organizations; members of this group thus had an incentive to hide or reinvent their personal and family histories.⁶⁴ Yet the records referring

59. Of the 418 unmarried mothers, 325 were declared slaves, 22 appear as *preta forra*, 25 as *parda forra*, 33 as *crioula forra*, and 5 as merely *forra*.

60. Of the 129 married mothers, 53 were recorded with no particular description, 47 were declared slaves, 5 *preta forras*, 12 *parda forras*, one as *cabra forra* (freed mixed-race person), and 21 as *crioula forra*.

61. D. Sebastião Monteiro da Vide, *Constituições primeiras do Arcebispado da Bahia*, edições do Senado Federal (São Paulo: Typographia 2 de Dezembro, 1853), 28–29.

62. Soares, *People of Faith*, 7; Libby, "Exploring Parish Registers," 213–244.

63. For a discussion of the complexity, reasons for, and practices of passing, see R. Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660–1720* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 49–67; and Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness*, 60–64.

64. Furtado, for instance, has discussed the lengths to which the son of a freed slave woman went to hide his mother's African descent in order to enter the magistracy in Portugal. Furtado, *Chica da Silva*, 53–68. António Manuel

to the Rodrigues da Cruz and Vieira da Costa families are inconsistent, variously ignoring or stating their pardo or forro status. Roberto Guedes has suggested that a decline in one's economic standing or new associations to persons of African descent or forro status could cause someone not previously described as an African descendant or forro to be referred to in that manner.⁶⁵ Although variations in the description of the Rodrigues da Cruz and Vieira da Costa descendants seem to suggest similar forces at work, reference to their pardo and forro status is too erratic to reflect a neat chronology of social rise and fall.

Information about the third generation of these two families invites further caution when considering any correlation between the omission of the term pardo and social mobility. Two of Luzia's children (Domingos and Luiza's oldest daughter), though the offspring of a mother once described as a parda forra, are described in their marriage records only as being of legitimate birth.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Luzia's son Manuel José Freire, who was confirmed as captain of the local militia in 1798, served with the first company of the infantry regiment of the militia of pardo men of the town of Sabará.⁶⁷ The son of a Portuguese man and a member of a family whose African descent was regularly omitted from public records, Manuel was unable to evade his African ancestry when he decided to pursue a career in the military service, a realm of colonial (and imperial) institutional life that systematically differentiated between branco, preto, and pardo.⁶⁸

The experiences of Maria Rodrigues da Cruz and Manuel Teixeira de Queiroz's children further illustrate the influence African descent had on the lives of members of this generation. After Manuel's death in 1783, Maria became guardian to her children. The couple had a large estate built on gold mining and thus the means to provide a comfortable life and good future prospects to their descendants. To ensure that as guardian Maria did just that, the Orphans'

Hespanha argues that in Portuguese society during the Antigo Regime, when the social hierarchy was organized around the notion of estates, social mobility occurred only when kings granted individuals a mercy or favor that could place them within a superior class of people. Hespanha, "A mobilidade social," 121–143. Yet, as Ann Twinam and María Elena Martínez have shown, in the colonial setting the crown alone could not promote a change in individual status, public opinion and memory shaped in part by the archives, also affected mobility. Ann Twinam, *Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Ann Twinam, "Purchasing Whiteness: Conversations on the Essence of Pardo-ness and Mulatto-ness at the End of Empire," in *Imperial Subjects: Race and Identity in Colonial Latin America*, Andrew B. Fisher and Matthew O'Hara, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 141–166.

65. Guedes, *Egressos do cativo*, 239–313.

66. Joaquim Dias de Magalhães and Maria Josefa Freire, February 10, 1790, CMBH, Livro de Assentos de Casamentos de Sabará, 1758–1801; João José Freire and Maria Paula de Queiroz, August 15, 1793, *ibid.*

67. Requerimento de confirmação de patente, November 10, 1798, AHU, box 146, doc. 54.

68. Hendrik Kraay, *Race, State, and Armed Forces in Independence-Era Brazil: Bahia, 1790s–1840s* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 82–83, 88–97.

Court demanded that she report regularly on the status of her children and of their inheritance. Her reports revealed that the couple's two daughters were living chastely with their mother, learning to weave, sew, and embroider; their three sons were learning a trade.⁶⁹ Maria's sons, like their uncle Gonçalo a generation earlier, were thus subjected to the Orphans' Court mandate that children under their jurisdiction receive an education suited to their quality.⁷⁰ Although they had been brought up in a wealthy household and stood in line to inherit the family's mining business, the young men had been apprenticed to a mechanical trade. Their wealth and prospects had not, in the eyes of the court, erased their lack of quality.

Maria's daughters, having been raised with modesty as already described, were expected to contract marriage to men of comparable quality. Because marriage was one path to emancipation from parental control, allowing orphans not yet of age to assume charge of their inheritance, the Orphans' Court scrutinized the marriage arrangements of their underage wards. The intent was to prevent someone from establishing an unsuitable match simply to secure emancipation. The law even prescribed that an orphan should be monetarily compensated if forced or allowed to enter an unfavorable union.⁷¹ Families, moreover, aware of the social costs of unequal marriages, attempted to promote or prevent a member's marriage depending on whether it would benefit or harm that person's social standing, and by extension, that of the family.⁷² Marriage records of third-generation members of the Rodrigues da Cruz family can indicate, therefore, local perceptions of their quality, attempts to improve that perception, and the extent of their social mobility. Among Maria Rodrigues da Cruz's children, Antônia Joaquina married José Antônio de Queiroz, an alferes and tailor by trade, of unknown descent and birth status; Maria Rosa married Manuel Custódio de Araújo, a Portuguese man and a widower; and Manuel married Mariana Alves dos Santos, a *parda* woman of legitimate birth.⁷³ All three were underage when they wed. Their choice of spouse, therefore, would have been approved by their mother and the Orphans' Court. Antônia

69. Information about the family of Maria Rodrigues da Cruz and Manuel Teixeira de Queiroz is available in Queiroz's probate record. Inventário de Manuel Teixeira de Queiroz, January 15, 1783, MOS/ACBG, CSO, box 55, doc. 04.

70. *Código Phillipino*, Livro 1, tit. 88 § 13-21, 211-213; MOS/ACBG, Livro de Provisamento dos Órfãos, 15v-16.

71. *Código Phillipino*, Livro 1, tit. 88 § 19-21, 213.

72. I have examined the marriage strategies of free African descendants in colonial Minas Gerais in Mariana Dantas, "Humble Slaves and Loyal Vassals: Free Africans and Their Descendants in Eighteenth-Century Minas Gerais, Brazil," in *Imperial Subjects*, Andrew B. Fisher and Matthew O'Hara, eds., 115-140.

73. Information about these marriages is available in Manuel Teixeira de Queiroz's probate record and in Maria Rosa and Manuel's marriage certificates. Manuel Custódio de Araújo and Maria Rosa Teixeira, June 2, 1788, CMBH, Livro de Assentos de Casamentos de Sabará, 1758-1801; Manuel Teixeira de Queiroz and Mariana Alvez dos Santos, July 11, 1793, *ibid.* I was able to determine that Mariana was of African descent through the probate record of her grandfather. Inventário de Francisco Alves dos Santo, January 29, 1750, MOS/ACBG, CSO, box 13, doc. 132.

Joaquina's union to a tradesman and Manuel's marriage to an Afro-descended woman were apparently deemed appropriate matches.

As far as I can determine, Maria Rosa was the only Rodrigues da Cruz grandchild whose spouse was, with all certainty, Portuguese and branco. One of Antônio's daughters (Domingos and Luiza's oldest child) married the legitimate son of a Portuguese man and a woman who claimed descent from one of the main families of the comarca of Paracatu, in northwestern Minas Gerais). It is not clear, however, whether he would have been considered white. Antônio's other two daughters married the natural sons of undeclared fathers and women of unknown descent.⁷⁴ The daughters of Manuel, Domingos and Luiza's second son, married men of noted African descent. Eufrásia and Josefa wed at young ages, 15 and 18 respectively, possibly because their maternal grandfather and guardian sought their speedy emancipation through an early marriage. Neither Manuel nor the Orphans' Court, it seems, objected to their union to pardo men.⁷⁵

Information about the spouses of third-generation Vieira da Costas is available only in the case of Jacinto Vieira Alves da Costa, the son of Antônia Maria and Pedro Alves Barbosa. Jacinto requested from the archdiocese of Mariana dispensation to marry Joana Ferreira da Silva, the natural child of Felipe Ferreira da Silva, deceased, and Josefa Maria do Rego, a crioula forra. No impediment was found, nor objections raised, to the couple's proposed marriage.⁷⁶ The information I have found about the third generations of the Rodrigues da Cruz and Vieira da Costa families indicates that their African descent influenced their participation in certain institutions, occupations, and social circles. To be sure, these descendants of slave women had experienced considerable social mobility. None had been born slaves, nor had they experienced the constraints slavery imposed on their grandmothers' mobility, living conditions, labor, and family life. The legitimate children of legally married parents, with one exception, none had to face the financial uncertainty or vulnerability that being a natural

74. Faustino Narcizo de Araújo and Maria Rodrigues da Cruz, March 6, 1791, CMBH, Livro de Assentos de Casamentos de Sabará, 1758-1801; José Ferreira Machado and Joaquina Rodrigues da Cruz, November 29, 1792, *ibid.*; Manuel Pacheco de Souza and Luzia Rodrigues da Cruz, September 29, 1793, *ibid.*

75. Eufrásia, moreover, remarried after the death of her first husband; her second husband was also a pardo man. Manuel Ribeiro Pinto and Eufrásia Gonçalves da Cruz, June 20, 1781, CMBH, Livro de Assentos de Casamentos de Sabará, 1758-1801; João Rodrigues Lamego and Josefa Gonçalves da Cruz, February 14, 1786, *ibid.*; Eufrásia Gonçalves da Cruz, August 27, 1788, *ibid.* Because the young women's grandfather and guardian was required by the Orphans' Court to present reports on the status of their inheritance and upbringing, and did so until they married, it is possible to determine there were no legal objections to their marriages. Inventário de Luiza Rodrigues da Cruz, February 1, 1779, MOS/ACBG, CSO, box 49, doc. 372.

76. Jacinto Vieira Alves da Costa and Joana Ferreira da Silva, June 22, 1777, Arquivo Eclesiástico da Arquidiocese de Mariana, Livro de Dispensas Matrimoniais-Sabará. While dispensation records dealt with Church-defined impediments to a marriage, they sometimes revealed parents' objections to the proposed marriage. See Dantas, "Humble Slaves," 123-129.

child had caused some of their parents. Finally, their connection to white, Portuguese men and their distance from their grandmothers' slave status meant that they were mainly identified in colonial records by traits other than African descent. Still, their family histories were not forgotten. Living in a society that often focused on blood and lineage to place its members within the local hierarchy, their ability to move vertically between social groups or quality of people was, to varying degrees, limited by their African descent.⁷⁷

CONCLUSION

The history of family formation in colonial Minas Gerais, and colonial Brazil more broadly, is to a great extent the history of sexual encounters between white Portuguese men and black African women. Many of these encounters were forced, others consensual; a few resulted in long-term unions, fewer still in formalized legal marriages. These interactions ultimately produced new generations of individuals of mixed descent who occupied an ambiguous place in a society structured around slavery and the unequal power relationship between colonizing and colonized peoples.

Parents and grandparents who recognized these descendants as their legitimate heirs and successors worked with or around Portuguese laws, inheritance and marriage practices, and societal norms and expectations to secure for their children and grandchildren the advantages of a good social and economic standing.⁷⁸ Domingos and Luiza Rodrigues da Cruz and Jacinto Vieira Costa were no different. They sought favorable marriages for their daughters, ensured their mixed-descent children inherited their property, and provided their sons with the economic and social resources to attain military or professional distinction. These advantages enabled the second generation of their families to live lives that seemed unaffected by their mothers' origins, and to claim markers of distinction and privileges typical of colonial elites: wealth, honor, personal titles. As a result, they added to the diverse makeup of colonial Brazilian society, both at the top and bottom of the social hierarchy.

77. R. Douglas Cope has called our attention to the fact that variations in the way people are described in colonial records are more likely to reveal horizontal social mobility than vertical social mobility. Cope, *Limits of Racial Domination*, 68–85. For a discussion of the racial dynamic of social mobility in colonial Brazil, see Sílvia Lara, *Fragmentos setecentistas: escravidão, cultura e poder na América Portuguesa* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2007), 272–285; and Guedes, *Egressos do cativo*, 315–317.

78. I have discussed these parental strategies in other works. See Dantas, "Inheritance Practices," 168–180; Dantas, "Succession of Property," 1–17; and Mariana L. R. Dantas, "Market Women of African Descent and the Making of a Colonial Town in Eighteenth-Century Minas Gerais, Brazil," *Colonial Latin American Historical Review*, Second Series, 2:1 (Winter 2014): 1–24. Other works that have addressed similar practices are Metcalf, *Family and Frontier*, 95–105; Faria, *A colônia em movimento: fortuna e família no cotidiano colonial* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 1998), 223–286; Furtado, *Chica da Silva*, 259–283.

Meanwhile, colonial authorities and elites faced their own anxieties about this rising population of mixed descent, some of who tried to claim elite or privileged status. Accordingly, they advised the crown to limit the rights and privileges of this group, also working with or around laws and norms when it proved necessary. There were efforts to prevent mulatos from inheriting the estate of their white fathers, even though inheritance laws protected their rights as legitimate or natural heirs.⁷⁹ And there were calls to apply more systematically requirements of purity of blood and quality to prevent pardos from assuming positions of authority or privilege within the imperial government and institutions.⁸⁰

Amid this struggle over the meaning and implications of African descent, the descriptive terms *mulato* and *pardo* could simultaneously refer to persons of mixed white and black descent and to a category of people who, though socially superior to slaves or Africans, were not fully entitled to rights and privileges enjoyed by Portuguese and white colonists. The Vieira da Costa and Rodrigues da Cruz families, though unique in some ways (their notable wealth, permanence in Rio das Velhas, their prominence in the archives), represent the connections between families of African descendants and the process of construction of the category of *pardo*. The families' frequent association to personal or family traits that could denote quality, or something like it, meant that their individual successes remained disassociated from their *pardo* classification. Their improved social and economic status, therefore, did not substantially challenge or undermine discriminatory notions and practices in colonial Portuguese society, which would continue to affect the status of subsequent generations of their own families.

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79. Representação dos oficiais da Câmara da Vila do Príncipe, August 9, 1746, AHU (47)26.

80. Parecer do Conselho Ultramarino, September 25, 1725, AHU, box 7, doc. 26. For a discussion of lingering requirements of purity of blood, see Rodrigues, "Honra e estatutos," 75–85.