Discourses on Meritocracy in the Formation of Identities in Brazil: From the Nation-Building Debate in the 19th Century to Nowadays

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Abstract:
During the nineteenth century, intellectuals interested in racial theories had their attention drawn to the newly independent societies in Latin America. Some of them were particularly curious about “mixed-race” people in Brazil, and tried to predict the potentialities and problems of a nation with such a “mixed” population. Taking this into consideration, from 1870 onwards, Brazilian authors who rejected a foreign view on the Brazilian society and its people, engaged in a debate on how to produce knowledge about the social formation of Brazilian people and its psychology. Associated to the first faculties and institutions for history and ethnography, they produced the first theories on nationality and the characteristics of the population while drawing on the positivist, determinist and evolutionist theories coming from Europe. Thus, the literature of the 1870-1930 period in Brazil, result in establishing a typology among the population in which qualities such as a superior moral character, as well as praise to work, progress and education were associated to certain groups and seem as lacking in others (mainly composed by brown and black people). In this paper, I refer to this literature and argue that ideas of progress and entrepreneurship, which entered the social imaginary of Brazilian people not only through the sociological essays but also through the social romances from these decades, ended up constituting strong sources of attachment to a desired superior cultural identity. Therefore, I examine how the continuous repetition of racialized concepts help on the constitution of a hierarchy of cultural identities. In addition, I briefly comment on the continuities between ideas coming from the positivist and evolutionist theories and the ideas of meritocracy coming from the neoliberal ideology, present in more recent debates in Brazil.

Keywords:

1. Introduction

In this paper, I investigate the emergence of racialized identities in discourses that build on psychosocial descriptions of the poor in Brazil. Discussions about poverty alleviation in this country, especially those that address issues,
such as: the productivity of labor among the lower classes, the necessity of welfare policies and the disruption of the poverty circle, tend to give great emphasis on individual characteristics associated to the poor.

As critics of modernization and development theory have pointed out, by centering the focus on the individual level and holding cultural factors accounted for the maintenance of high levels of poverty, some of the developmental and poverty reduction theories give a minor role both to structural factors and social conflicts. This is the case not only of the classical developmental models from the 60, but also the human development and human capital approaches of more recent times (Saunders, 2002 Kapoor, 2008).

As stated by critics of these models and post-development authors, those theories ground their arguments on narrow views on the poverty problem, favoring one-dimensional instead of multidimensional concepts of the rather complex phenomenon (Klasen; Waibel, 2012). The criticism is also directed to explanations that albeit focusing on the structural factors, produce a purely objectivist analysis, thus ignoring subjective and relational aspects of social conflicts (Saunders, 2002). A strong criticism against this sort of investigation is advanced by feminist scholars. They draw attention to the presence of an essentialist representation of the impoverished subject within poverty reduction and developmental theories.

For Molyneux and Razavi (2001), studies on poverty and inequality that take on only objective factors for the diagnosis of the “causes” of poverty and inequality have a propensity for making the experiences of impoverished women invisible. Saskia Sassen (2002) argues that while considering these factors to affect men and women in an equal basis, these theories overlook factors that pose particular disadvantages to poor women, such as sexism,
racism, ethnic prejudices. Moreover, many investigations centered on cultural explanations to poverty, build on gendered forms of racism\(^2\).

The above-mentioned explanations do not only construct gender-race-sexually-neutral subjects\(^3\), they propagate an essentialist view that consider the relation between poverty and culture to be the same in all parts of the world. In this view, cultural factors considered responsible to perpetuate poverty would be the same in all countries (Grosfoguel, 2002).

As has been widely discussed, most of the analytical limitations of these theories are related to epistemic bias inherent to them. In particular the classical development theories and the neoliberal approaches to poverty resort to ideas of evolution and progress (Kaapor, 2008; Grosfoguel, 2007).

This last point has been addressed particularly by postcolonial and decolonial scholars, who have criticized the linearity and hierarchical traits produced by these ideas (Santos, 2002; Mignolo, 1995; Chakrabarthy, 2008). There is some consensus among then on pointing out that knowledge on key areas in the humanities has inherited the major ideas of the Enlightenment. Enlightenment Philosophers, in particular Voltaire, Condorcet, Diderot, and Locke, expanded the idea of progress into normative views of social evolution.

According to these narratives, the advancement on science and reason would conduct societies to a superior stage, to the extent that they would lead to the improvement of individuals, and the institutions that governed common life. To put into other words, subjects guided by reason, who had tamed their

\(^2\) Drawing on historical bourgeois views on sexuality (Sassen, 2002), discourses on birth control and female education may associate women of color to an “uncontrolled” pattern of sexuality, which is seen to contribute to the perpetuation of a vulnerable situation to them and their family.

\(^3\) I do not mean here, that the discussed theories are free from racist views on poverty, quite the contrary. What I draw attention to ist o the point that do not take into much consideration racial relations and how they impact on poverty within societies.
behaviors, improved their manners and were guided by a better moral would constitute better institutions, and live in peaceful prosperous milieus. Progress would be the outcome of a historical linear process.

The Eurocentric version of modernity’s foundational myth is the idea of the state of nature as the point of departure for the civilized course of history, whose culmination is Europe or western civilization (Quijano, 2000). Quijano writes,

from this myth originated the specifically Eurocentric evolutionist perspective of linear and unidirectional movement and changes in human history, as associated with the racial and spatial classification of the world's population. This association produced the paradoxal amalgam of evolution and dualism (Quijano 2000: 551)

Decolonial authors consider that the identities produced by such an understanding of evolution and progress, were not conceived exclusively in relation to Europe’s experience. Rather, while placing the enuncie on Europeans voices the European model became a reference, rendering other experiences deviant and inferior. By placing the different experiences on a temporal line, they render the ones considered to be in the same level of the past situation of the reference, to be backward.

Mignolo (2002) attributes to Quijano and Dussel the first conceptualization of the modern/colonial world-system in terms of a socio historical structure, coincident with the expansion of capitalism and the colonization of the New World.

Quijano states that together with the necessities posed by capitalism, colonialism and coloniality, became part of a universe of intersubjective power relations. The new historical identities produced around the foundation of the
new global structure of labor control were associated with social roles and geohistorical locations.

As argued, the ideas of humanity and progress, together with the ideas of race, placed the world populations in a line of classification (Quijano 2000: Mignolo, 2007).

Hence, modernization and some developmental theories not only inherited much of a tradition of knowledge based on an evolutionary understanding of material accumulation; they reproduce a form of consciousness as well. Though they no longer use the terminology of race, as has been acknowledge, they still employ the same form of thinking albeit using the category of culture.

Taking this into account, in this paper I discuss the relationship between: the above-mentioned conceptions that relate poverty to culture and behavior in an evolutionary way; and the production/reproduction of racialized identities in Brazil.

In order to do so, and to avoid an essentialist perspective on the production of stereotypes regarding the poor, I seek to analyze the specific conflicts and continuities that re/produce such views in Brazil. That is, I do not consider that the biased discourses on development constitute identical prejudices towards the poor worldwide. They certainly bring about such images and form of thinking but they are voiced in relation to the specific conflicts. Therefore I undertake a genealogical research on the discourses of human progress and material achievements that have strongly impacted Brazilian discussions on poverty in Brazil.

This research is guided by the following questions: Which implications these continuities bring about on the formation of identities intrinsically related to an economical status? Which identities are at stake in discourses that frame poverty in terms of an inferior stage in Human evolution in Brazil?
2. Genealogy: The historical analysis and the critique of the present

The genealogical project as proposed by Foucault (1984) refuses a historical that is always looking for origins in order to provide narratives in which all events succeed each other in a linear chain. Rather it investigates historical events while looking for the discontinuities that where deemed invisible through the process of establishing hierarchies among them (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). These hierarchies were a characteristic of teleologies that aimed to link all historical facts in an explanatory system.

In the archeology of knowledge, Foucault (2010) addresses the set of practices that while aiming at producing knowledge have given birth to and reproduced explanatory systems and rendered them the status of truth. He draws attention, first to the point that what comes to our knowledge is not the unique explanation that was provided at a specific moments, but the one that trough a series techniques of legitimation and truth production became the official or predominant account.

Second he does not only seek to draw attention to the existence of knowledge condemned to invisibility, but mainly he employs himself to the task of unveiling the process that trough power relations have established the formation of discourses of truth (Foucault, 1984). While the archeological method is devoted to the analysis of the techniques of productions of knowledge the genealogy concept brings the power relations to the front of those processes (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982)

Hence, Foucault’s genealogical project seeks not only to free the object of analysis, but also to problematize it, looking for several points of origin instead of relying on the logically established one (Arribas-Ayllon, 2005). Trough this perspective, new connections between seemingly incongruous concepts and sparse occurrences, which under the previous predominant teleology would be incommunicable, are made possible (Foucault, 1984).
In this paper, I draw on the genealogical method in order to problematize the constitution of a subject that according to some developmental and neoliberal ideas is in need of rescue and better self-governance in order to progress in life. This task is twofold, first it aims to examine what does it mean to lack on skills to progress in life in the Brazilian context.

Secondly, more then asking which are the classes or groups who benefit from such a subjectification, I focus on what identities are produced by them. In other words, I question which identities are constituted in the opposition to the discourses that constitute poor men and women as subjects in need of self-governance.

Therefore, I trace back debates on race, population improvement and progress that strongly impacted knowledge production in Brazil from the 19th century so as to examine the cultural classist explanations to poverty in Brazil.

3. The Racial Theories during the Nation Building Debate and early Sociology

During the nation building debate\(^4\), which started in Brazil around the end of the 19th century, intellectuals tried to think of the nation and to provide an authentic description of Brazilian people and culture (Veríssimo, 1915).

Silvio Romero, a very influent literary critic and author, vehemently refused the romantic project (Candido, 2001). For him, people in Brazil were not the descendants of the indigenous populations elevated to a heroic position, nor the American or French citizens who had performed US independence and

\(^4\) By nation building debate I refer to: the literary critic that addressed Romantism; a literary movement, and questioned its attempts to build a nationality for Brazil; to a political public discussion on the viability of republicanism; and to an intellectual dispute on the characteristics of Brazilian population. These discussions were carried out via newspapers and magazines, and addressed by its actors in the several books they wrote.
French Revolution. This last point was blamed to be an unrealistic search for seeing in the population the politically engaged citizens from other contexts.

These critics started a discussion about the viability of constructing republican institutions in Brazil. This was followed, by a concern about the political and social conditions, which were necessary to fulfill, so that the population could take part in a democratic regime as active citizens (Schwarcz, 1993). Modernization was seen, at this point as hindered by historic and cultural process that hold the society in an organized state. Nonetheless, as pointed out by the group headed by Silvio Romero, the real evaluation of our backwardness and the correct proposition to its solution were only viable after gaining a deep knowledge of Brazil’s history.

Regarding this point, Romero (1988) stated that it was absurd that the few books devoted to Brazilian history had been written by European authors. According to him, it was not only written as an attachment to Portugal’s but those accounts were unable to comprehend the local complexities.

In particular he confronted Martius’s “How the history of Brazil should be written” and the ideas of Henry Thomas Buckle⁵, which were influential among Brazilian intellectuals. The first one, was accounted for being too ethnological and providing a description of Brazil’s history as the experience of Portuguese in America.

As stated by Martius the characteristics of the new population found in Brazil would be determined by the element, which was more predominant in its composition. That is, whose energies, dignity and numbers were greater. This way he claimed that an evaluation of its character would depend on the identification of the physical abilities, costumes, habits and morals features of the three races present on them: the African, the Indigenous and The White represented by the Portuguese.

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For the German researcher each of the human races had its own particular nature, and would have a particular path to evolution, depending on the circumstances they were living.

Buckle´s book was rejected not only for making absolute wrong statements, but also for being too determinist. The author had divided human civilization into two main types. While the European type was characterized by its prevalence over nature the fundamental aspect accounted to the non-European type was its capture by nature or the physical world. This way, Romero (1888) criticized the book for taking into account only two elements in the analyze of Brazilian people: environment and races. He considered that a deep analysis of Brazilians would required an examination of all primary, secondary, and tertiary elements that had influenced on the constitution of the new types in Brazil.

He stressed that those factors should encompass many other elements than only the environment. The primary elements regarded natural factors, being weather and geography the most important ones. The secondary consisted of ethnical elements. In this group the most detached characteristic was the *relative incapacity of the races that had build the local population*. The third set, related to moral elements especially historical factors, which were represented by law, politics, customs, and traditions (Romero, 2001).

Concerning this point, a conflict was initiated between followers of French positivism and the adepts to Recife School. Grounded on Spencer evolutionary theories, and on the German critic realism, members of Recife school proposed a method to properly investigate Brazil´s history and problems (Schwarcz, 193, Carvalho, 1991). They rejected French positivism, which was considered blind to important aspects of social life, mainly the psychology, what was considered essential to the understanding of a people´s culture.
Following the Recife School’s point of view, he argued that Brazil’s history should be written by taking into account, the experience of our intellectual life and its interaction with the political, social economic history of our nation⁶ (Romero 2001: 02).

The social culturalism method proposed by Silvio Romero became influential among generations of writers from the end of the 19th and first decades of the 20th centuries (Candido, 2001). Drawing on this method, Oliveira Viana considered fundamental to describe Brazilian population in order to find out it’s weakness and suggest policies to improve its culture (Carvalho, 1991). For him, the Brazilian population was not composed by a one single people, but the different characteristics present in the several regions of the country have raised not only different mix-bred peoples but also impacted the Portuguese on distinct manners.

Each of the groups, in his narrative, had been raised by the social organization of work, weather, geography and races present in the different parts of the country. In order to solve the national problems in terms of progress and development, he claimed for the necessity of having a deep understanding on the culture and mentalities of those types.

Viana dedicated part of his work to describe the behavior and psychology of people living in the countryside of Brazil. What is more relevant for the present paper, is his characterization of low income peasants. In order to do so, he divides the rural populations into three categories: “matutos”, “sertanejos”, and “caboclos”. In his “Populacoes Meridionais do Brazil”, they were portrayed as having an instable Familiar life, no commitment to work, and lacking moral principles. In his words, it was essential to renovate our ideas, remake our culture and reeducate our moral character (Viana 2005: 02).

⁶ In regard to these goals, the Recife School proclaimed the superiorities of the sociological approach and elected the Le Play school as the theory that had until then, produced the best method to access all the five elements that influenced on the composition of Brazilian population.
Prepared for the ECPR General Conference 2013 (Bordeaux). Panel 188
Language, Culture and Race in the Lusophone World
DRAFT Please do not quote.
While Silvio Romero considered that the Brazilian people should be improved by “whitening”. Building on the mentioned observations, Viana (2005) concluded that, besides “whitening”, the State should reeducate the population, so that it could develop republican morals.

According to him, the degraded inferior people from the inlands of Brazil showed no wishes to overcome their excluded situation. While the inferior races degraded by corruption, misery, leisure, promiscuity, and miscegenation; the elites kept the superior qualities of the Portuguese soul: ambition, the importance of thrift, the love to work, and the gift of perseverance. The most important factors in the elites character would be its decency and seriousness. In contrast to it, the rural “mob” lacked both respectability and diligence. They lived from hunting small animals and collecting fruits. (Viana 2005: 125-126).

Therefore, by fighting the foreign view that saw in Brazil a homogeneous backward mix-bred people, with incipient literacy, the local theories on Brazilian social formation from 1900 to 1930 raised several identities regarding Brazilian people. The degraded types are featured as ignorant, uneducated, ugly, immoral and emotional. Although, these characteristics are related to a race, they are not exclusively given by it.

According to the authors presented above, the innumerous other factors that act upon the groups, mainly the social organization of productive means and labor had stimulated different mentalities among people. Thus, those types were a product of these factors, and their main characteristic was their general inferior culture.

4. Ethnologies, Exoticism and Racism in Social Romances : A view on Urupês and Os Sertões (Backlands)
Following the main sociological questions from the end of the 19th century, several books searched to describe the everyday lives and customs of impoverished people of color living in the countryside of northeast of Brazil.

One of the most important accounts of the way of living of people in the rural Northeast of Brazil during the beginning of the 20th century is given in “Os Sertões” (Backlands). In his classical book, Euclides da Cunha comments on the formation of a particular race in the interior of that region. The sertanejos considered a kind of primitive and ingenuous people re shown in several situations in their fight for life in one of the driest region of Brazil. He makes a clear distinction of the differences between people who lived in the cities and the inhabitants of the countryside.

While the formers were taken by their education, sociability, whiteness and beauty, the last ones were characterized by their strength, resistance against the hard social and environmental conditions being a population unreached by education alienated of the political situation of the rest of country. In his understanding the hard environmental conditions had shaped in the sertanejos a distorted emotionality that ranged to religious effervescence to a deadly anomy (da Cunha, 2010).

In more favourable climates the need for supernatural patronage would not be as great. In this place, however, individual tendencies are exacerbated by environmental conditions and result in extremes of apathy and impulsive mysticism, fatalism, and religious fervor. The teaching of the missionaries could not overcome these tendencies. So for this reason, as in a palimpsest, the imperfect consciousness of the backlander shatters the beautiful ideals of Catholicism, and as in a broken mirror reveals all the stains of an inferior intelligence (da Cunha 2010: Part 1, location 2507).

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7 The literature that comments on this work is wide. In the brief analysis I conducted in this paper, I have restrained myself to the observation of the most stereotypical traces presented in the book.
Concerned to the civilizational stage of the entire population, he declared that our biological evolution was dependent upon the guaranty of our social evolution (da Cunha 2010).

In “Urupês”, Monteiro Lobato openly criticized the romantic description attributed to the “caboclo” of São Paulo Region. As a farmer who had inherited a property in the landscape of São Paulo, he found problem at the administration of his lands. He understood that the main reason was the lack of commitment to work on the part of the peasants. In an open letter addressed to the newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo⁸ he criticizes the peasants blaming their ignorance in dealing with the environment.

The book became immediately famous and some years later were expanded and incorporated to a book. In this book, titled “Urupês” he seeks to picture, what in his mind was an authentic cabloco, describing his manners and life style. In this tale, the cablocos were defined as effortless simpleminded people, unable to learn.

In this portray, people were so accommodated that they inhabited very simple houses and used simple instruments in order to avoid work. They did not even grow vegetables for their sustain, limiting themselves to collecting fruits and roots easily found in the region.

When he comes to a fair, all the people know what he brings: always the same things nature spread in the grass that to mean just take the gest of extend the hand and collect it, nothing more (Lobato 1967: 20)

In Lobatos` account they were also given to all sorts of superstition. Differently form the peasants form Europe, in his opinion peasants in Brazil had no sort of artistic habilities, including music, dances and handcraft works. So, they were taken for lazy parasites, which explains the title of his work: “Urupês”. Urupês is a sort of fungui that grows by taking nutrients from other

⁸ National Newspaper founded in 1857.
This letter became an essay in the newspapers main pages and later a book. This book was also during the thirties distributed to schools in the state of São Paulo. The essay was highly commented in his times, dividing opinions apart. Illustrious politicians in Brazil, such as Ruy Barbosa\(^9\) commented on the work in order to draw attention to the necessity to improve the education of low classes in Brazil.

The authors commented above and some others aimed to elaborate on the psychologies and “cultures” of these populations, by describing their religiosity, mentalities, political association, labor, ways of interacting with the environment and affective relations. These narratives bring the types earlier described to the social imaginary of Brazilian people.

Through a process of appropriation, identities which had belonged first to the colonial discourse, such as white and black, modern and primitive, were articulated by elites in order to: 1) resist the homogeneous identity Europeans had imposed on Brazilian people 2) make clear the differences they saw among types in the population, and 3) make sense of the these differences. All the characteristics understood to hold Brazil in backwardness were inputted to the impoverished people of color.

5. Neoliberal times in Brazil

An extensive analysis of the neoliberal thinking in Brazil goes beyond the scope of this paper. What I want to draw attention to is to the fact that the neoliberal corollary that built on the Austrian School - mainly on von Misses and Hayek and the Chicago School - was repeated while discussing and

\(^9\) During his last presidencial campaign Ruy Barbosa gave a discourse in which he quotes “Urupês” and the pistured cabloco in ordert o draw attention to the necessity to get the population educated.
retaking old assumptions about the cultural characteristics of the Brazilian people.

Therefore, although embracing the methodological individualism defended by adepts of the Austrian school, people who reproduced this thinking pointed out which were the characteristics that had been responsible to the economic and social problems in that society.

The literature that proclaimed its necessity mainly during 90s and beginning of the 2000s, claimed for the necessity of changing the relation between state and society in Brazil. The assumption that the economy should come first, presupposed not only the necessity of equate a financial imbalance on the state’s account, it contained also a criticism on the local culture. The state’s inefficiency was then seen, as an outcome of a culture were meritocracy and competition had no place (de Souza, 2003).

The paternalist state had been historically seen as a malady of the historical constitution of the country, most of it inherited from the Portuguese colonization. However under neoliberal times, it was not only accused of being inefficient but of raising subjects with no sense of responsibilities used to wait on the state to have all need attended for.

According to this version of the social problems, the social relations were grounded on personal and familiar relations so that people were not committed to a common good. Following this perspective, modernization on key areas should bring more productivity; among other things, giving priority to sectors and fields of knowledge that could boost the economic growth. Under the neoliberal thinking all social faults are traced back to individual behaviors.

As it has been acknowledge by postcolonial authors, during the twentieth century this pattern of thinking is present in theories that link culture and patterns of socio economical development.
While analyzing neoliberalism not as simple ideology but as a form of
governamentality, Foucault draws attention to two distinctive features of it.
First, there is a change in the discussion about the role of the state, which is
expressed more though the notion of the self-limiting state, then the
administrative state, which raises questions of techniques and ethics. In other
words, it introduces a distinctive rationale in the activity of governing (Besley
and Peters, 2007).

Second, and as an outcome of the first feature, neoliberalism brings about the
intensification of an economy of moral regulation dictated by the idea of self-
government and a focus on the responsiveness of individual behaviors. As
Besley and Peters point out on their analysis of governamentality and
neoliberalism in Foucault:

This approach understands neoliberalism through the development of a new relation between expertise and politics, specially in the
realm of welfare, where an actuarial rationality and new forms of prudentialism manifest and constitute themselves discursively in the
language of “purchaser-provider`, audit, performance, and risk-
management (Besley and Peters, 2007: 133).

Therefore, by approaching neoliberalism as a form of governamentality it is understood as a set of practices legitimated by specific rationalities, in which
government and self-government coincide and combine on issues of self-
 improvement directed to economic growth. Those discourses produce its own
subjects. On the one hand they give way to the rational, contained self-made individual; on the other, they create inapt, untamed unproductive ones.

By regarding the importance of historicization to any cultural identity I engage
with an understanding of identities that sees them as positional to discourses,
not essential, and given in structures of power (Stoller, 2010). I argue that, in
this specific context they represent a source of positioning in relation to several identities concerning, among others, mainly race, class and gender\textsuperscript{11}.

As Brah and Phoenix point out, identities are performed through narration and rhetoric. In this sense they are not objects or fixed positions, they are produced in constant process in and through power relations.

Of course, these experiences are not equal for men and women, and definitely there are gendered constructions of race and class. However, in this piece, I will limit the analysis to racialized representations of poverty, without further examining the gendered racialized representations due to reasons of space and time.

5. Conclusions: Racialized Poverty

Since the racial theories from the nineteenth century, there was a strict correspondence between race and modernization. Thought diverging about the influence of the physical elements on the constitution of human races and the possibilities of evolution, all the racial theories established a hierarchy among these that was grounded on different “levels of civilization”. This was measured by the characteristics of social organization, ability to dominate the environment as well as to tame their social behaviors. According to the positivist and evolutionist theories, as more civilized a race, more materially prosperous they were.

For these theories, material achievements were deeply conditioned to the capacity of human beings to restrain themselves, educate themselves, establishing a culture committed to responsiveness and work.

\textsuperscript{11} The criticism was/is not gender neutral. In particular, concerning the issue of reproduction of poverty known as the poverty circle, lack of birth control was seen as a recurrent fault among young poor women. In the press and literature, specially after social measures such as the Salário Família and the social program Bolsa-Família (from more recent times), poor women are accused of both being ignorant and profit-seeking when having large families, since their financial support increase as more numerous are their families.
Later the connections between the idea of progress and social evolution with modernization will be addressed in several discursive formations. As it has been acknowledge by postcolonial authors, during the twentieth century this pattern of thinking is present in modernization theories that link culture and patterns of socio economical development.

The developmental programs from the 60s and 70s and neoliberal turn of the 90s in Brazil prompted discourses on meritocracy, building on strategies not only to bring the state to a more efficient stage, but also to rescue the sectors and groups seen as most backward. In this scenery ideas on how to make the population productive that draws on liberal and neoliberal principles have been recurrently discussed.

This sort of discourse tends to place the main source of problems on matters regarding, the mentality and culture of the lower classes. Therefore, they prescribe solutions to poverty that draws heavily on techniques of self-government. By doing so, they end up repeating, albeit with other words, many of the very ideas which were present in the racial theories of the 19th century. Henceforth, both sets of theories, neoliberalism and racial theories, tend to set their focus among other things on the relationship between human improvement and economic achievements.

This way, economic developmental models or technical measures to overcome poverty, while articulated in the discourses of the local middle classes and elites, do not bring only an abstract form of non-existent ignorant, residual, inferior, local, and non-productive subject, which such epistemologies end up producing. Here, they have: a face, a color, a mentality and a culture. All of these characteristics are reunited in what is called the “Poor” in Brazil.
8. Bibliography


