


## HOW CAN ETHNICITY PROMOTE RECOGNITION OF AN ETHNIC IDENTITY?

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/arev6n4-114>

Submitted on: 09/11/2024

Publication date: 09/12/2024

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to know and reflect on what has been produced in the last decade and a half of this century, focused on the theme of ethnicity, in the period from 2001 to 2016. The methodology adopted was a consultation of the Portal of Journals of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) / MEC. The choice of the theme was a personal decision, as it is a production for the end of the course, with Professor Dr. Estevão Rafael Fernandes, who granted us autonomy to choose the theme. When accessing the aforementioned portal, I opted to search by subject. Inserting the word ethnicity, the portal retrieved and made available 166 articles related to the topic, written in English and Spanish, of which 101 were peer-reviewed. I opted only for articles written in Portuguese. As a selection criterion, I chose the most accessed articles on this theme. After refinement, the result was reduced to 10 articles. And it is these articles that underpin this work.

**Keywords:** Ethnicity. Fights. Ethnic Groups and Recognition.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ethnicity, as a process of struggle, aims to achieve the recognition of the identity of ethnic groups and involves: culture, politics, religion and economy, including the struggle for land ownership, therefore, it awakens a double feeling: the acceptance of some and the rejection of others. Thus, the struggles instituted, South, Southeast and Northeast of Brazil, reflect the political game, which the Brazilian elite knew how to implant and develop, in the national consciousness. The authors: Emerson César Campos (2013), Jean Duvignaud (1968), Caroline Kraus Luvizotto (2009), Marcos Flávio Portela Veras & Vanderli Guimarães de Brito (2012), Diego Villar (2004), Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (2009), Valdir Pires, Everton Santos and Margarete Fagundes Nunes (2011). The methodology adopted was an analysis of articles produced by the aforementioned authors in the period of a decade and a half, that is, from 2001 to 2016, with the theme of ethnicity. The text is structured in five parts: Introduction; Theoretical approach methodology; Survey result; fine considerations and; Bibliographic reference.

The historical social relations that developed between colonizers and colonized in the Brazilian case are relations of domination and developed in the field of ideas. Thus, we can, if we prefer, we can make the terms "dominant and dominated", which in the thought of (Antonio Gramsci, 2012), is called: "ruled and ruled, or even leaders and led" (Gramsci, 2012, p.11). This relationship has its foundations in the colonization process, which was developed in Latin America and Brazil.

Anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro (1983), when analyzing the colonization process in Latin America and Brazil, classified it as a heavy "yoke" when that model of exploitation and social exclusion incapacitated them to such an extent that the author, upon noting the state of "penury" of such individuals, demonstrated disbelief in the capacity of reaction or overcoming of such groups, when he states: "Living under such a yoke, these millions of Latin Americans do not reach the minimum degrees of consciousness to exercise the role of citizens or to rebel against the system" (Ribeiro, 1983, p. 114). The author resists accepting the human capacity to create its own condition to overcome social adversities. And it is in this context that a political instrument – ethnicity – may be born whose objective is to mitigate the suffering of such ethnic groups. The theme of Ethnicity is not something new, nor a *neologism*, as it may seem. Nor is it a word that has arisen without due social commitment. It has been in existence for more than four decades and has occupied academic spaces in the field of Social Sciences since the 1970s (Luvizotto, 2009), in

recent decades, it seems to be attracting more and more interest from Sociologists, Anthropologists and Political Scientists, who have moved from the macro to the micro spaces, or "microsociology" (Jean Duvignaud, 1968). He says: "And it is from these small groups that the dissemination of creative matrices can develop" (Duvignaud, 1986, p.343). It is these small groups, or according to the author, the "almost microscopic scales that most of the thoughts of creation that we know of were born" (ibidem). And so, the interests of these ethnic groups have emerged, which have constituted intense struggles in search of the recognition of their identity, as such and as such.

A question that is necessary: what is Ethnicity? The Anthropological concept states that: "the ethnic group is the "subject" of ethnicity: although there may be groups that share the same culture, cultural differences do not lead to the formation or recognition of distinct ethnic groups. The fact of sharing a culture is a *consequence*, not the cause, the condition or, even less, the explanation of ethnicity<sup>2</sup>." In the online dictionary of the Portuguese language<sup>3</sup>, the Definition of "Ethnicity, is the set of characteristics common to a group of people, which differentiate them from another group". And, "Usually these characteristics include language, culture and also the notion of a common origin – a nationality".

According to the authors Marcos Flávio Portela Veras & Vanderli Guimarães de Brito (2012), ethnicity can be thought of as "a political instrument". Again, "ethnicity is not a stable condition but a negotiated relationship between one group and others, between these groups and the State" (De Brito & Veras, 2012, p.8, apud Maybury-Lewis).

Regarding the theme of ethnicity, Brito & Veras (2012) recall that the understanding of Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (2009), which states that it is a political and cultural process, according to the author: "to think of ethnicity in a situation and as a form of political organization, which has led to considering culture as something constantly re-elaborated and ethnic affirmation as an important form of political protest" (ibidem, p.12, apud Cunha, 2009). Caroline Kraus Luvizotto (2009), in her analysis, states that there are difficulties in defining ethnicity, she says: "The concepts of ethnic group, ethnic identity, and ethnicity have a complex theoretical trajectory in the Social Sciences" (Luvizotto, 2009, p.30). Reflecting on the same theme, Diego Villar (2004) states: "ethnicity is a process

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VILLAR, Diego, [http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0104-93132004000100006](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0104-93132004000100006), Mana vol.10 no.1 Rio de Janeiro Apr. 2004. Accessed on 04/11/2017.

<sup>3</sup>Source: <http://dicionarioportugues.org/pt/etnicidade>, accessed on 04/11/2017.

anchored in concrete historical conditions" (Villar, 2004, p.10). While for Luvizotto (2009), ethnicity has a "complex trajectory", for Villar (2004), ethnicity is a "concrete historical condition", from this perspective, ethnicity is not a consensus among these authors.

Thus, the theories listed here point to a conflicting relationship, in which ethnic groups seek recognition of their affirmation, which was installed via the dominant Brazilian society. This relationship can be perceived in several regions of the country, when small groups presented their claims, invoking their cultural ties and their origin, religion and even their condition as individuals, as part of a historical process, such as being an inhabitant of a certain community or being the "founder" of a neighborhood, such as the "Porto de trás" in the city of Itacaré - BA (Couto, 2011), as well as in the South of the country the festive "collective celebrations" of the "Centenary of the Colonization of Criciúma, SC" (Campos, 2013).

Emerson César Campos (2013), when researching the commemorations of the Centenary of the Colonization of Criciúma - SC, states: "There are many festivals, nationally known, from the South of Brazil, which celebrate primary motivations, such as ethnicity and places of memory" (Campos, 2013, p.152). In this sense, the purpose of the festivals is to recognize an ordinary or historical fact, in a context: symbolic, political, economic and social. In the south of the country, specifically, in Criciúma, the party "was created with the intention of honoring the ethnicities, colonizers of Criciúma, such as: the Italian, the Polish, the German, the black and the Portuguese", in that order, according to the author. In the 80s, a new event would create a "calendar", he says: "One more date on the calendar, but which contained a series of preparations and speeches, dialogues, agreements, emotions" (Ibidem). Thus, ethnicity, as such, can represent a place of belonging and recognition of oneself.

During the inauguration of the monument of the immigrant, the inhabitants recognize themselves when they express: "the monument represents each of the five ethnicities and, even more, in the order of person: Italians, Germans, Poles, Portuguese, blacks" (ibidem, p.158). Here, the order of arrival of the immigrants was reversed. According to the author, to include other ethnicities, previously ignored. For the author, another feeling, which had been strongly internalized, was influenced by religion. He says: "In 1918, the first feast of Santa Bárbara was held in Criciúma, Santa Catarina, in 1932, the festivities of St. Joseph began". "Ethnicity, today, should not happen in isolation, it is connected to a global conception" (ibidem, p.166). The theoretical findings end the introductory part of this work.

And from this moment on I will deal with the methodology adopted, as well as the objective to be achieved.

## **THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

When I thought about this work, I aimed to know and reflect on what was produced in the last decade and a half, of this century, focused on the theme of ethnicity, by the authors: Emerson César Campos (2013), Jean Duvignaud (1968), Caroline Kraus Luvizotto (2009), Marcos Flávio Portela Veras & Vanderli Guimarães de Brito (2012), Diego Villar (2004), Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (2009), Valdir Pires, Everton Santos and Margarete Fagundes Nunes (2011). Thus, I made a query, by subject, in the Journal Portal of the Coordination for the Improvement of Senior Personnel of Capes, when inserting the word "ethnicity", I obtained as a result 166 articles, written in languages: English, Spanish and Portuguese, of which 101 were peer-reviewed.

I decided to refine the quantitative and selected the Portuguese language, I refined the time frame from 2001 to 2016, I also chose to look for the most accessed articles, with the theme ethnicity, the result was reduced to 10 articles, which specifically discuss ethnicity, in the South, Southeast and Northeast regions. The texts of Antonio Gramsci (2012), Darcy Ribeiro (1983), Marcos Flávio Portela Veras & Vanderli. Guimarães de Brito (2012), Diego Villar (2004) and Caroline Kraus Luvizotto (2009), plus the 10 articles researched, will be composed of this article.

The work is structured in four parts: in the first, it is the introduction to the theme; in the second, the theoretical-methodological approach; in the third, I present the result of the research and in the fourth, I make the final considerations. Ethnicity, currently, as has been said above, is "a political instrument". The following texts reveal the moments of struggle in which minority groups were involved and are still involved in the search for recognition of their identities, as proposed by the authors listed below:

- Emerson Campos (2013), in his text, Commemorations in an (in)certain eldorado: ethnicity and festivals in southern Brazil (1980 -2002);
- Valdir Pires, Everton Santos and Margarete Fagundes Nunes (2011); Politics, religion and ethnicity: relations and displacements of borders;
- Lucia Helena Guerra (2011), Memory and ethnicity in the Quilombo Ilê Axé Oyá Meguê;

- Patrícia de Araújo Brandão Couto (2011), Porto de trás: ethnicidade, turismo e patrimonialização;
- Maria Regina Celestino de Almeida and Vânia Maria Losada Moreira (2012), Indians, Residents and Municipal Councils: ethnicity and agrarian conflicts in Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries);
- Gláucia de Oliveira Assis (2011), De Gonzaga para Londres: ethnicidade e prejudice na história de Jean Charles de Menezes;
- José Alberto Simões (2013), Between paths and indenitary discourses: ethnicity, class and gender in hip-hop culture;
- Ari Pedro Oro (2011) and Sergio Brissac (2012) in a similar work present *CAPONE, Estefânia* (2011), Os Yorubá do Novo Mundo: religião e etnicidade e nacionalismo negro no Estados Unidos.

According to the authors listed above, it is perceived that ethnicity transits in several areas, involving the various conflicts: agrarian, religion and politics, places and memories. Finally, the anthropologist Regina Weber (2010), in an interview with the historian Professor Mozart Linhares da Silva, in the "black ethnic leaderships", states: "Immigrant groups also gave rise to ethnic leaders, some of a more business or political nature and others in associative entities" (Weber, 2010, p. -276-277). A country colonized by different ethnicities, as is the case in Brazil, in theory should have no difficulty in understanding the processes that involve ethnic relations.

As is evident according to the authors, what happens is the position of the expected. And what is the explanation of such opposition? The Anthropologist states: "A capitalist country with an elite that does not see itself as responsible for the misery of the population tends to perpetuate inequalities and social injustices" (ibidem, p.276). From this perspective, Almeida and Moreira (2012) emphasize: "Nevertheless, significant differences marked the local distances of socioeconomic and political development of their areas" (Almeida and Moreira, 2012, p. 2).

Shortening such distances is revealed in the process developed by European immigrants in the city of Criciúma, SC, who claimed their recognition, through "social movements, unions, neighborhood organizations, the press and the local business community, the city of Criciúma was no longer publicized as the Brazilian Capital of Coal" (Campos, 2012, p.150). In the same sense of belonging, the movement of struggles of the residents of the "Porto de Trás", in Bahia, reveals a collective and cultivated



consciousness. According to (Couto, 2012), "an identity cultivated and fostered by the construction of ethnic references supported by the relations of belonging, exclusion, segregation and interaction" (Couto, 2102, p.26).

By seeking to shorten the social distances in which ethnic groups find themselves, the concept of identity was created. This identity aims to establish the limits. Luvizotto (2009) states: "Ethnic identity is used as a way to establish the limits of the group and to reinforce its solidarity". Again: "The cultural traits that demarcate the boundaries of the group can change, and culture can be the object of transformations, without this implying the emptying of ethnic solidarity" (Luvizotto, 2009, p. 31). The theories listed here suggest that it is necessary to recognize one's state of belonging, and from establishing the limits. But what types of limits does the author refer to? It is possible to infer that this is a socially tolerable limit of exclusion, such as ensuring their right to remain in a certain place, even if this is forced to face the resistance and persecution of dominant groups.

## THE RESULT OF THE RESEARCH

Ethnicity, according to the authors, can transit in various contexts: political, economic and religious. The researchers Campos (2013), Couto (2011), Almeida and Moreira (2012), Guerra (2011), Pedde, Nunes and Santos (2011), Regina Weber (2010), Simões (2013), Capone (2012), Oro (2011) and Assis (2011), infer that these groups, despite being located and in different contexts, all in general, contributed to maintaining or expanding their claims and delaying the interference actions of the dominant group:

- I. "In the three centuries of colonization, different indigenous groups were transformed and mixed, building new forms of identification that had a strong reference in the villages in which they lived" (Almeida and Moreira, 2012, p.6-7);
- II. "The Indians contributed to delaying the process of extinction of their villages, frustrating the expectations of different social sectors" (ibidem, p.21);
- III. "It is instigating to note that the Tupiniquin Indians of Espírito Santo are located in the same place, where, at the end of the sixteenth century, the village of Santo Inácio dos Reis Magos was founded" (ibidem);
- IV. "The commemorations alluding to the centenary of European colonization in the South of Brazil and the ethnicization process engendered in the region";
- V. "Época do eldorado catarinense", when "coal companies" emerge (Campos, 2013, p. 150-151);

- VI. "It is clear the intention to institute and solidify an idea of a city that, even expressing the aforementioned movement, would keep the roots" "Italian, German, Polish, Portuguese and black" (ibidem, p.158);
- VII. "Ethnicity today has a dimension that is articulated not only with that of a more characterized community, or local or even that politically imagined" (ibidem, p.166);
- VIII. "The recent process of cultural patrimonialization of the Porto de Trás neighborhood, an ethnic community of Afro-descendants";
- IX. "Inhabited essentially by fishermen and riverside dwellers, many of them of indigenous origin or children and grandchildren of slaves, both from the quilombos and regional mocambos" (Couto, 2011, p.20 – 23);
- X. "Ethnicity, here understood as a political awareness of difference, provided them with an ethnicity built on the foundations of the cultural heritage accumulated by the symbolic capital of this collectivity" (ibidem, p.29);
- XI. "The processes of extinction of indigenous villages and collective lands in Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo, from the mid-eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries". "The objective of the law was assimilation, achieving it required different procedures" (Almeida and Moreira, 2012, p. 1);
- XII. "The great change, in my view, was the encouragement of miscegenation and the presence of non-Indians within the villages, with the necessary measures to promote assimilation" (ibidem, p.2-8);
- XIII. "A humanitarian discourse of integrating the Indians on equal terms, transforming them into citizens";
- XIV. "They idealized the Indians of the past, while they saw their contemporaries as degraded";
- XV. "They encouraged the assimilationist proposal and continued to guarantee the right of the Indians to collective lands as long as they did not reach the so-called state of civilization" (ibidem, p.11-12);
- XVI. "The dynamics employed by the members of the Terreiro Santa Bárbara, located in the city of Olinda, PE" (Guerra, 2011, p.284);
- XVII. "Association of Friends of the João Emerenciana State Public Archive - AAP";



- XVIII. "Within this process of inclusion of blacks and reparations by the Federal Government, the Xambá community was recognized in 2006 as a quilombo, the title was recognized by the Palmares Foundation" (ibidem, p.288);
- XIX. Nunes, Pedde and Santos (2011), "Interpretation of a life story, in the interrelation of politics, religion and ethnicity" (Nunes, Pedde and Santos, 2011, p.277);
- XX. "By reflecting on their life stories and narrating them, they create meanings for their actions and their imaginaries" (Assis, 2011, p.177);
- XXI. "Contemporary migration has posed significant questions for citizenship in the globalized world, undocumented immigrants movement is increasingly monitored and treated as a matter of national security" (ibidem, p. 184);
- XXII. "Ethnicity, class and gender in hip-hop culture. The most common, and usually accepted, story about hip-hop culture associates social exclusion from large North American urban centers with young males and females" (Simões, 2013, p. 109);
- XXIII. "Hip-hop culture has historically been an alternative cultural manifestation of the black and Latino American communities that live in situations of social exclusion and economic marginalization" (ibidem. p.124);
- XXIV. "Religion, Ethnicity, and Black Nationalism in the United States," "The Creation of an Independent Territory for Blacks Within the United States" Capone (2011);
- XXV. "The cultural movement of exaltation of blackness and affirmation of racial pride in Afro-American literature, poetry, theater, music and dance" (Brissac, 2012, p.596);
- XXVI. "On the unfolding of this role in affirmative action policies in the country", "race as a social construction is an instrument of intervention that enables clarity between the fields of conflicts" (Weber, 2010.p.274);
- XXVII. "Migrant groups also gave rise to ethnic leaders, some of a very present nature in Rio Grande do Sul, which had precedents in the Platino countries" (ibidem, p.277);
- XXVIII. "A violent process of conquests with wars, diseases, famines, enslavement and the destructuring of their societies, the settlements were seen by many Indians as new possibilities for survival in the colony" (Almeida and Moreira, 2012, p.2);

- XXIX. "The trade between Indians and Portuguese, mixed marriages and the use of the Portuguese language among the Indians, all with the aim of transforming them into vassals without distinction in relation to the others";
- XXX. "In order to extinguish the villages according to the legislation, it was necessary to consider the state of mixture and civilization of the Indians" (ibidem, p.11 - 15);
- XXXI. "The flow of people to and through the city, coming from different regions of the state and the country, was constant and intensified between 1950 and 1980, the time of *the Eldorado of Santa Catarina*" (Campos, 2013, p. 150);
- XXXII. "This racial, social and economic segregation, made explicit in the very configuration of the urban space in its areas of confinement and interaction, allowed the constitution of the ethnicity of the blacks of Porto de Trás" (Couto, 2011);
- XXXIII. "The evidence of the observed facts leads us to the conclusion that the residents of Porto de Trás have been fulfilling the trajectory of constituting their own ethnicity" (ibidem, p.28).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It can be seen in this analysis that ethnicity has produced fundamental arguments in favor of ethnic groups, socially excluded and marginalized, who wished to forward their claims with the objectives of rescuing the historical past and affirming their ethnic identity, as well as facing the resistance of the dominant Brazilian group. It is evident in the importance of the struggle that the ethnic groups of Criciúma, SC, Itacararé BA, as well as in Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo, it was possible to perceive the degree of awareness of these groups, for socioeconomic development and local conservation, with regard to the confrontation in the search for recognition, as immigrants, fought and created the centennial party and monument of the immigrant in Brazil, in Criciúma, SC.

The conflicts involving the Indians and the residents of the states of Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo, have their origin in agrarian issues and as a consequence the possession of land, which guaranteed the Indians the recognition of their ethnic identity. On the other hand, the Afro-descendants of Porto de Trás, in the city of Itacararé, Bahia, fought in search of their affirmation, having the place as their local ethnic identity. Ethnicity when

anchored in the ethnic group is strengthened, when centered on the individual it is weakened.

It is worth emphasizing that ethnicity does not find shelter on foreign soil, and can sometimes be interpreted as an imminent danger. The case of the Brazilian, from Minas Gerais, Jean Charles de Menezes, who died "on July 22, 2005, in London, capital of England", reflects the fragility of the individual, unknown and when he does not have an identity relationship with the place of residence. Add to this the fact that he is "immigrant, Latino and undocumented", his ethnicity cannot be invoked and his identity, on the contrary, is seen as a threat. It can be inferred that ethnicity as a political process has faced strong resistance from the Brazilian dominant group.

For the researchers, ethnicity, even in the face of a rigid process of resistance on the part of the dominant economic group, maintains its conviction to the point of not fading, when faced with the most varied and unfavorable political arguments. On April 19, 2017, the National Congress approved the new Migration Law (PLS 288/2013). In the speech, the opposing parliamentarians argue that in the colonial period, when the adverbs and adjectives of "little, mixed and civilized" were created as a justification for the extinction of indigenous villages. Currently, the dominant discourse points to the closure of borders, with indigenous territories being seen as a "gateway for drug traffickers, terrorists and guerrillas" in the words of Senator Ronaldo Caiado (Jornal do Senado, 2017, p.3).

The Senator's speech is not surprising, since that gentleman is the legitimate representative and defender of the ruralist caucus, whose interest is to expand the productive area for agribusiness, which are being occupied by indigenous communities. Indigenous lands are the main focus of that caucus. When it comes to the peasant issue and especially the indigenous people, if the Indians are in the condition of allies, the discourse is protectionist, going so far as to express terms such as "our Indians". However, if such individuals are in the condition of resistance and opponent, to what is called economic development, in which it involves the interest of large groups, the issue is of National Security. This political game is not recent, nor is it managed by apprentices, but by a strategist group, which was born in the Monarchy, went through the Colonial period and settled in the Republic.

Despite the strategies adopted by the dominant Brazilian economic group, whose purpose was and always will be: to suppress, reduce, deny and extinguish social rights, to the indigenous, peasant and black people, as well as the less favored class. Some

reflections are necessary! Since ethnicity is a political instrument, capable of raising a banner of struggle in favor of ethnic groups and ensuring the recognition of their identity and conquests of rights, there seems to be little academic interest! When we have already overcome four decades of struggles in which we seek to achieve the fundamentals, which is the right to own housing, the possession and usufruct of land, so that a life with a minimum of human dignity is possible.

The analysis showed that the achievements of ethnic groups can be said to be negligible, due to the significant portion of society, socially marginalized. However, the tiny achievements demonstrated that it is possible to reverse the situation of "penury" in social achievements and thus be able to move towards overcoming disbelief. When it comes to social dynamics, it is not possible to pronounce affirmative or negative sentences, as being irreversible, when it comes to social groups. The achievements presented in this work lead us to the thesis that when it comes to social dynamics there will always be the possibility of doubt. Would it be possible to emerge new ethnic groups, with new social demands and defined strategies, from such achievements?

The conquests achieved by ethnic groups in the South, Southeast and Northeast of Brazil are the result of a process that in certain cases can be achieved by social conquests. Can these social achievements represent an indication of a change in Brazilian political thinking, in the sense of guaranteeing social rights?

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