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Racism against immigrants in Brazil: a critical analysis of employers' discourse

Racismo contra imigrantes no Brasil: uma análise crítica do discurso dos empregadores

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This article investigates the discursive representations related to racism of Brazilian employers and human resource managers on hired immigrant workers.

Theoretical framework: The socio-cognitive theory proposed by Van Dijk is presented together with studies on discursive representations of immigrants.

Methodology: The qualitative research used semi-structured interviews with 12 employers in the cities of São Paulo, Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre. Data analysis was based on critical discourse analysis (CDA), on Van Dijk's socio cognitive approach.

Results: The research showed that the employers' discourse is based on the assumptions that the immigrant workers: i) are more efficient than Brazilians; ii) subject themselves to any kind of work; iii) are destined for unqualified and hard work; iv) threaten Brazilians (different cultural identities; different community values; may be criminals; are disease spreaders); and v) are an economic burden. The Brazilian employer's discourse maintains and perpetuates all the characteristics of the racist ideology and makes it difficult for immigrants to enter the Brazilian labour market, forging domination practices that favour social inequality.

Originality: This study contributes to broaden the CDA scope of analysis when investigating employers and immigrants. It also dialogues and contributes to the literature in Brazil on CDA by specifically adopting Van Dijk's socio cognitive approach instead of the more adopted Fairclough perspective.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis; Van Dijk's socio cognitive approach; South-South immigration; Employers; Racist ideology

RESUMO

Finalidade: Este artigo investiga as representações discursivas relacionadas ao racismo de empregadores e gestores de recursos humanos brasileiros sobre trabalhadores imigrantes contratados. **Abordagem teórica:** A teoria sócio-cognitiva proposta por Van Dijk é apresentada juntamente com estudos sobre as representações discursivas dos imigrantes.

Metodologia: A pesquisa qualitativa utilizou entrevistas semiestruturadas com 12 empregadores nas cidades de São Paulo, Belo Horizonte e Porto Alegre. A análise dos dados baseou-se na análise crítica do discurso (ACD), na abordagem sociocognitiva de Van Dijk.

Constatações: A pesquisa mostrou que o discurso dos empregadores parte do pressuposto de que os trabalhadores imigrantes: i) são mais eficientes do que os brasileiros; ii) se sujeitam a qualquer tipo de trabalho; iii) se destinam a trabalho não qualificado e árduo; iv) ameaçam os brasileiros (diferentes identidades culturais; diferentes valores comunitários; podem ser criminosos; são propagadores de doenças); e v) são um fardo econômico. O discurso do empregador brasileiro mantém e perpetua todas as características do ideário racista e dificulta o ingresso de imigrantes no mercado de trabalho brasileiro, forjando práticas de dominação que favorecem a desigualdade social.

Originalidade: Este estudo contribui para alargar o âmbito de análise da ACD na investigação de empregadores e imigrantes. Também dialoga e contribui com a literatura brasileira sobre ACD ao adotar especificamente a abordagem sociocognitiva de Van Dijk em vez de Fairclough, mais comumente utilizada.

Palavras-chave: Análise crítica do discurso; Abordagem sociocognitiva de Van Dijk; Imigração Sul-Sul; Empregadores; Ideologia racista

1 INTRODUCTION

Data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019) attest that in 2017 there were 258 million international immigrants, corresponding to 3.4% of the world population. In Brazil, the percentage of immigrants may reach the figure of 1% of the population, around 2 million people. The presence of immigrants from the most diverse regions of the world in Brazil nowadays is noteworthy (Gallo, 2018). The Brazilian labour market has absorbed this increasingly diverse population in terms of geographic, social and cultural origins, in highly qualified activities and much more in those jobs that require little qualification (Almeida, 2014).

In 2017 alone, 122,069 immigrants entered the formal Brazilian labour market (Araújo & Quintino, 2018). The largest number of immigrants inserted in the formal labour market during the first semester of 2018 was from Haiti (47.21%) followed by Venezuelans (9.3%) (Cavalcanti, Brasil, & Dutra, 2018).

In 2017, the immigrants occupied mainly low qualified and low paid jobs in Brazil: production line feeders, construction workers, janitors and professionals working in the slaughter, cutting and processing of poultry, cattle, goats, sheep and pigs (Cavalcanti *et al.*, 2018; Gomes & Pereira, 2015; Silva & Lima, 2017). It is clear that the majority of immigrant workers in Brazil work in low-skilled activities (Suzuki, 2018).

This research also corroborated the literature (Gomes & Pereira, 2015; Silva & Lima, 2017; Villen, 2015) that points out that the majority of the immigrant workers were performing work activities that generally require physical effort and do not require any kind of formal qualification. Almost all the immigrants were in occupations such as: production line feeder; bricklayer; construction worker; cook; assistant in food services; concierge; janitor; elderly caregiver; production and packaging assistant; woodworker, among others.

Despite working in low qualified jobs, the number of immigrants with a higher level of education is more expressive compared to Brazilians. In general, immigrants have a technical and professional training superior to those required for the jobs they find in Brazil (Cavalcanti, 2014; Suzuki, 2018; UNESCO, 2019).

Of the 122,069 immigrants that entered the formal Brazilian labour market in 2017, 29% had completed primary education (against 48.1% of Brazilians in general), 40.3% had incomplete and complete secondary school (against 31.4% of Brazilians in general) and 30.8% had completed graduation (against 16.5% of Brazilians in general) (Araújo & Quintino, 2018; Pesquisa Nacional de Amostra por Domicílios [PNAD], 2018; 2019).

Most of these immigrants who work in low qualified jobs receive between 1 and 2 Brazilian minimum wages (Araújo & Quintino, 2018), while Brazilians in the same jobs receive between 1.5 and 2 minimum wages (PNAD, 2019).

Brazil ratified ILO Convention No. 97, which obliges citizens not to "discriminate against nationality, race, religion or sex" (Diário Oficial da União, 1966). However, despite the Brazilian legislation condemning discrimination practices against immigrants, racist expressions and discriminatory practices have

manifested themselves in less explicit ways, reproducing racism without flagrantly challenging current anti-racist laws (Cabecinhas, 2008; Marinucci, 2018).

Several authors have dedicated themselves to the study of these racist manifestations, referred to in the literature as: "new racism" (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013; Van Dijk, 2000b); "neo-racism" (Wodak & Matouschek, 1993; Zaman, 2010); "xeno-racism" (DiMasso, Castrechini & Valera, 2014; Sivanandan, 2001); "cultural racism" (Oliver, 2001); "sociocultural racism" (Duffield, 2006); "symbolic racism" (McConahay & Hough, 1976; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986), among other denominations.

The concept of "new racism" is often associated with those of xenophobia and ethnocentrism (Actis, Prada & Pereda, 1995). This is because the main change between the "old racism" and the "new racism" is that, while the first bases on a set of deterministic ideas that categorize social life according to physical or racial characteristics, the second is based on cultural differentiation among people (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013; Duffield, 2006). Consequently, this "racism without race" has its main target on immigrants (Actis et al., 1995, p. 05)

In this context, immigrants are discriminated not only because of the colour of their skin. It happens mainly because of their cultural characteristics (Taguieff, 1990). Of course, contemporary racist attitudes can also invoke biological references, but some researchers claim that racist dispositions that find their claims in the cultural distinction of a certain group of people are more common (Cabecinhas, 2008).

This research aimed to analyse the discursive representations of employers about immigrant workers inserted in the formal Brazilian labour market in relation to racism. Therefore, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used as a theoretical and methodological resource to support the analysis of the interaction between the employers' discourse and its role in the (re) production of the system of domination and inequality between these two social groups. This study dialogues and contributes to the literature in Brazil on critical discourse analysis (Irigaray, Cunha & Harten, 2016; Onuma, 2020).

By specifically adopting Van Dijk's socio cognitive approach, it contributes to a gap in the literature in Brazil that deals mainly with Fairclough's CDA approach (Onuma, 2020; Salles & Dellagnelo, 2019; Scussel & Dellagnelo, 2018; Tonelli, Borges, Brito & Zambalde, 2018; Valadares, Alcântara, Boas & Emmendoerfer, 2017).

2 DISCOURSE, IDEOLOGY, RACISM AND IMMIGRATION: THE SOCIO-COGNITIVE THEORY PROPOSED BY VAN DIJK

Van Dijk is one of the most prominent CDA scholars, along with Fairclough, Kress, Van Leeuwen and Wodak (Del-Teso-Craviotto, 2019). The literature in Brazil on CDA deals mainly with Fairclough's CDA approach (Onuma, 2020; Salles & Dellagnelo, 2019; Scussel & Dellagnelo, 2018; Tonelli, Borges, Brito & Zambalde, 2018; Valadares, Alcântara, Boas & Emmendoerfer, 2017). In this paper, we focus on Van Dijk's contribution, since we understand the Fairclough's contribution is already well known.

The literature dedicated to a deeper study of the Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach is rare in the Brazilian literature, and virtually inexistent in the national management literature. Which is why Van Dijk's studies provided the necessary theoretical support for this study.

Van Dijk's studies (1992; 2000a; 2000b; 2013) focus on the relationships between ideology, racism and discourse. Racism is constituted as a form of ideology that expresses and reproduces itself through social practices - especially through discourse (Al Khazraji, 2018). Van Dijk states that racist discourse, in addition to being one discriminatory racist practice is also the main source of acquisition and reproduction of racist prejudices and ideologies. The critical perspective adopted by the author seeks to analyze how racist discourse reproduces the systems of domination and social inequality in society (Forchtner, 2012; lanni, 2004a; 2004b).

The adoption of a critical perspective makes the concepts of power, history (context) and ideology indispensable for the CDA. Such perspective and the use of these concepts differentiate it from other paradigms of discourse analysis and textual linguistics. For Wodak (2004), a really critical discursive approach is based on the premise that every discourse: i) is structured by power relations; ii) is historically produced and interpreted (that is, it occurs in specific social situations); iii) it is a form of social practice of dominating and legitimizing the ideologies of groups that hold power.

It is important to note that in the Wodak´s last premise there is a point of divergence to Van Dijk's (1992; 2000a) theory of ideology. According to Van Dijk, ideologies are not limited to dominant groups. Thus, any social group, under specific social conditions, can develop an ideology. For example, even dominated groups can develop ideologies of resistance to domination through the propagation of more egalitarian attitudes and practices. Ideologies arise from the interaction of groups with the political and social circumstances in which they are located and are shared in groups through the discursive practices established among their members. Thus, analyzes at all levels of the theory of ideology require: i) a macrosociological component (political and social situations); ii) a microsociological component (speeches or other forms of social practices); iii) a socio-cognitive component (mental models, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values).

Based on these three components, Van Dijk (2000a) approaches racism through a complex system of domination and social inequality defined by combining the following elements: i) social representations of ideological base of groups (and about groups); ii) mental models of group members about concrete ethnic events; iii) daily discriminatory discourse and other social practices; iv) institutional and organizational structures and activities; and v) power relations between dominant and minority ethnic groups.

Racism, although based on ideology, cannot be solely reduced to ideology.

After all, racism is not only expressed at the micro level of social practices as in

discriminatory discourses and other acts of interaction, but also at the macro level of institutional and organizational arrangements and power relations between dominant and minority ethnic groups (Van Dijk, 2000a).

Racist ideology can present the following related categories: i) affiliation devices by color, "race" or nationality; ii) activities that involve negative discourses about minorities, discrimination, differentiation, exclusion, inferiority, problematization, etc.; iii) objectives of keeping minority ethnic groups in a position of inferiority or outside the endogroup; iv) values that establish priorities for the group itself; v) positions of superiority and dominance over others; and vi) distribution and use of resources of territory, space, nation or social resources (Van Dijk, 2000a).

One way of manifesting these ideological practices is through discourse which can act in two ways, according to Van Dijk (2000a): i) in the reproduction of the domination system through discriminatory practices, such as excluding, problematizing and marginalizing immigrants or minorities members; or ii) in the justification and legitimation (Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006) of this system.

Numerous researches on discursive representations of immigrants have been carried out in different social, political, historical and cultural contexts. In general, the discurse reveal negative and stereotyped representations. Such representations are mainly associated with derogatory metaphors, such as criminality, illegality and threat, as shown by research carried out in the USA (SantaAna, 1999), in Canada (Reitmanova, Gustafson & Ahmed, 2015), in the United Kingdom (KhosraviNik, Wodak & Krzyzanowsky, 2012; Lynn & Lea, 2003), Australia (Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010; Teo, 2000), Hong Kong (Flowerdew, Li & Tran, 2002), in Ireland (Burroughs, 2015) and in Malaysia (Don & Lee, 2014).

Defined by Van Dijk (2000b) as "new racism", current racist discourses do not manifest themselves through a biologically based racial ideology, but through socio-cultural differences and hierarchies. In summary, this form of racism would not be explicitly based on the biological inferiority of immigrants, but on their cultural inferiority, including lifestyles, habits, customs and religion (Resigl & Wodak, 2001;

Verkuyten, 2003; Zaman, 2010). For example, Arabs are discriminated against not because of their skin color but because they are 'religious fanatics' (Cabecinhas, 2008).

For Van Dijk (2000a), these discourses must be analyzed in relation to their consequences and functions in social interaction. It is through discourse that social actors establish roles and social relationships between the different groups with which they interact (Fairclough, 2003).

3 METHODOLOGY

This research aimed to analyse employers' discursive representations of immigrant workers in relation to racism. Therefore, we used a qualitative approach. Although there are no specific methods associated with CDA, some authors claim that, in general, researchers in this field tend to use qualitative methods due to the deep and detailed analyses (Baker et al., 2008).

Twelve employers who live in the cities of São Paulo (SP), Belo Horizonte (MG) and Porto Alegre (RS) were interviewed. The individual interviews were in person or via Skype, using a semi-structured script. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in full. It was generated an analysis *corpus* of more than 100 pages.

Access to respondents took place in 2019. A search was conducted through Facebook using the keywords: Immigrants, Haitians, Bolivians and Venezuelans (the ones that currently most seek Brazil as a destination country) and found websites created to support and hire immigrant workers: "Hire an immigrant"; "Immigrant Jobs"; "Job Centre for Haitians in Brazil"; "Haitians in Brazil"; "Haitians in São Paulo"; "Bolivians in Brazil and around the World".

The selection criteria was: i) being owners or managers of companies that employed immigrants; ii) companies operating in different economic sectors in the private sector, such as commerce, industry, services and construction; iii) companies of different sizes (small, medium and large); iv) have Brazilian nationality.

While six of the interviewees were the owners of the companies themselves, four were Human Resources managers and two were operations managers. To

expand the construction of the interviewees' social network the snowball technique, which consists of creating a network of contacts based on the interviewees' own indications, was also adopted (Van Meter, 1990).

These 12 firms were randomly selected from the interviewees' social network, using the snowball technique. We stopped at 12 companies because the information started to get repetitive from then on.

In addition to the interviews, data were also requested on the sociodemographic profile of the respondents and their companies, such as: i) age, sex, marital status, education, professional training, economic sector, size of the firm, gross annual sales and number of employees.

All but one of the interviewed had completed graduation. The firms were large (6), medium (3) and small (3), from the sectors of civil construction, industry (automotive, food, furniture), information technology and services. They hired Haitians, Venezuelans, Angolans, Ghanaians, Tunisians, Syrians and Guinea-Bissauans.

The data collected were analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis, more specifically through Van Dijk (1992; 2000a) socio-cognitive approach. The research was limited to the analysis of the discursive content, which involves topics and local meanings. The reason for this choice was justified by the fact that such forms of content are more directly related to the beliefs and, therefore, to the racist attitudes and ideologies that employers employ when talking about immigrant workers (Van Dijk, 2013).

4 DISCURSIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF BRAZILIAN EMPLOYERS

The research showed a series of racist representations in the discourse of Brazilian employers when discussing the insertion of immigrants in the labour market. This discourse expresses all the racist ideology characteristics pointed out by Van Dijk (2000a): i) negative discourse about immigrant workers; ii) the objective of keeping immigrant workers in an inferior position; iii) values that establish priorities for the

dominant group; iv) positions of superiority and dominance over others; and v) distribution and use of territorial, spatial, national and social resources.

The research showed that the employers' discourse bases on the assumptions that the immigrant workers: i) are more efficient than Brazilian workers are; ii) subject themselves to any kind of work; iii) are good for unskilled and heavy work; iv) are a threat to Brazilians (in terms of cultural identity, community values, discussed from now on.

In general, employers describe immigrant workers as "efficient" people. This representation was expressed mainly in terms of a polarization between immigrant and Brazilian workers. An example comes from an employer who hired twenty immigrant workers from Haiti: "[...] if I were to compare with the Brazilian, the immigrant is more efficient, he generates more returns for the company" (Employer 7, owner of a Footwear Components Industry).

Another employer justified the supposed efficiency of immigrant workers as follows: "they are easier to indoctrinate" (Employer 4, owner of a Retail Trade company). The choice of this word has several implications, such as expressing the employer's ideological perspective of a position of superiority and dominance over immigrant workers, revealing a social practice of subordination of these to his interests, a hallmark of racist discourse as Van Dijk points out (2000a). After all, as in lanni (2004a, p. 25), it is possible to affirm that this employer elaborates his identity in counterpoint with the identity of the immigrant worker: representing himself as a "civilizer" and the immigrant as a passive subject unable to offer resistance, who he commands or demands in order to preserve "the law and the order". According to SantaAna (1999, p. 202), it is as if this worker could be "domesticated".

This representation provides the basis for justifying and legitimizing social power and domination (Verkuyten, 2003), by intensifying the economic exploitation of the immigrant workforce. The statement made by Employer 7, owner of a Footwear Components Industry, confirms it: "They were working practically for the rest of the team, working hard, taking the job with pleasure [...]." At this

point, it is clear that the immigrant worker possibly tries very hard to respond to the high demands of productivity.

Another common representation among the interviewed employers is about the condition of vulnerability in which immigrants find themselves. When immigrants arrive in the receiving country, they often do not speak the native language, do not have family or friends, do not know well the social and legal rules, customs and culture of the host country. Most arrive without a job, desperately looking for work to support themselves. This vulnerability intensifies even more due to ethnic prejudices, xenophobia and racism, which makes it even more difficult for the immigrants to integrate into society (Silva & Lima, 2017).

This vulnerability makes the immigrant worker accept various forms of oppression and exploitation imposed on him (Actis et al., 1995). Brazilian employers take advantage of this condition to intensify the exploitation of immigrants further more than the exploitation of Brazilian workers. The origin of immigrants from countries even poorer than Brazil and their willingness to undergo long working hours make them extremely attractive to Brazilian employers, as pointed out by Gomes and Pereira (2015).

Employer 4, owner of a retail trade company, expresses this representation: "They are taking anything to kill the hunger." In the same line, the manager of a civil construction company says: "these immigrants, which are unfortunately fleeing catastrophes, fleeing problems in their country of origin, end up accepting to work on anything, for any amount". Employer 5, who owns another civil construction company, revealed his motivation to hire Venezuelan workers: "as long as he has a hard time in his country he will even carry a stone on his head."

Brazilian employers and managers often recognize that immigrant workers are more qualified than the Brazilian ones but the representation that they "subject themselves to any kind of job" persists (human resources manager of an industrial furniture company). The speech by Employer 10, a recruitment and selection analyst for a company in the food industry confirms this perception: "[...] they are people who

really want to get a job... many even had college there in Haiti. You see that they even had a background and they were getting a job here a lot less qualified than their own background".

The discursive representation that immigrant workers are vulnerable and subject to any kind of work generally leads employers to offer jobs with lower social status, heavy work, poor working conditions and low pay as in construction or cleaning services, according to the literature (Cavalcanti et al., 2018; Silva & Lima, 2017).

The option of hiring immigrants is a cheap alternative in view of the high cost of labour in Brazil in terms of taxes (Gomes & Pereira, 2015). In fact, as Silva and Lima (2017) state, in most cases, immigrants end up occupying jobs in which Brazilian workers have no interest.

In summary, it is clear that employers represent immigrant workers as efficient, vulnerable people who subject themselves to any kind of low-paid job. These representations further increase the conditions of vulnerability faced by immigrants, leading them to subject themselves to even more intense and precarious working conditions. In addition to the exploitation situation that immigrant workers face and the low wages they receive, they spend a lot of money on transportation, rent and food, which further compresses their remuneration (Gomes & Pereira, 2015).

Immigrants were also represented as workers destined to perform "more basic jobs" (Employer 4, owner of a retail trade company), thus reinforcing the tendency to open these more precarious segments of the labour market to immigrants, regardless of their experience and training. It is important to note that this representation gives way to a progressive racialization of certain segments of the labour market, that is, the insertion of immigrant workers in a hierarchically organized work system, which differentiates and exploits them exclusively based on their immigrant status (Marinucci, 2017; Villen, 2015). This is what Marinucci (2017, p. 09) calls "immigrant jobs".

In fact, this employer's speech demonstrates it: [...] **Depending on the job** niche, maybe these Venezuelans may not fit in, but for more basic jobs like

ours, which still depends a lot on the arm, on the strength, they fit very well [...] (Employer 4, owner of a retail company). This is another representation perceived in employers' speeches, that immigrant workers are for "heavy work":

Analysing the immigrant, I think it is a solution for those employers who hire this hardworking workforce. [...] If I need to hire a Brazilian to do heavy work, he does not want to do this kind of job. The Haitians still want to. Haitians do not belong to this body building culture, to this quality of life culture, they ... gym? Oh, no. They want to earn good money, go to the mall and buy cloth, take a picture and send it to Haiti. They want it, but quality of life in the workplace ... no, they do not care about that. This is a good thing. (Employer 7, owner of a shoes components factory)

In the above excerpt, it is clear that there are characteristics of prejudice related to the "new racism" which is linked to cultural differentiation between people. In stating that immigrant workers "do not have this culture of quality of life as excellence", this employer assumes there is a cultural inferiority in this group of immigrants in contrast to Brazilians. The employer believes that these immigrants come from an inferior culture, so they would be more suited to the "heavy, manufactured service" in contrast to Brazilian workers. In this way, culture was built as an immutable collective quality (Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010), analogous to "race". Here culture is what justifies and determines the kind of job and the working condition of the Haitians, and not a supposed phenotypic characteristic as pointed by the employers' reports that follows.

In other reports, it is possible to see some forms of prejudice and discrimination linked to the characteristics of the "old racism", whose central organizing elements of racist discourse are biological characteristics. However, employers cite certain supposedly biological characteristics of Haitian workers without resorting to judgments and distinctions about the skin colour. It is noted, therefore, that the characteristics of the "new" and the "old" racism coexist side by side and are interconnected. This finding is in line with the literature (Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986; Zaman, 2010). In the example

below, the employer justifies hiring Haitian workers due to their alleged physical strength:

Companies absorbed Haitians well, because they came with a mass of strength, they are very strong, have physical strength and overlapped the Brazilians ... you know, biologically they are strong. I don't want to compare it to the time of slavery, or anything else because they're blacker than Brazilians, or nothing. I saw that they absorbed more hard work in handwork, of physical strength (Employer 4, owner of a Retail Trade company)

Through the speech of the employer 4 above one can perceive clearly the representation that this group of immigrants has a supposed superior physical strength determined by biology. For this reason, he hired the Haitians to perform heavy and low-skilled jobs such as transportation of heavy goods. Thus, based on this representation, he justifies his discriminatory attitude. This employer reiterates psychological and biological stereotypes that make Haitian immigrants inferior and reduce them to a supposed physical force, completely disregarding their intellectual capacities, academic training, skills and previous work experiences. We can perceive here that prejudice expresses through racist statements encoded in disguised terms. Thus, racism manifests itself without the need to resort to distinctions and judgments about skin colour as an explicit determinant of discrimination, a striking feature of the "new racism" as the literature points out (Actis et al., 1995; Cabecinhas, 2008; Van Dijk, 2000b).

Nowadays it is unacceptable to state publicly that blacks have a physical strength superior to whites or that they are less intelligent. That is why racial discourse gives way to an ethnic discourse through the national designation ("the Haitians"). However, these two discourses (racial and ethnic) have the same point in common: the process of naturalizing difference (Cabecinhas, 2007). Although the employer seeks to conceal the racism present in his speech, these same representations existed in colonial society and in imperialist culture in relation to blacks, to whom were destined unskilled and hard jobs (Villen, 2015). In other words, the representations about the physical appearance of this group of immigrants do not have biological and a-historical support,

they are the result of ideologies belonging to a certain historical period (slavery), in which certain physical characteristics marked the difference between people (Cabecinhas, 2007).

In addition, there is a discourse of denial of racism by this same employer when he says: I don't want to compare it to the time of slavery, or anything else because they're blacker than Brazilians, or nothing. I saw that they absorbed more hard work in handwork, of physical strength. Denial is one of the crucial properties of contemporary racism. In this example, at first the employer shows an attempt to hide or deny his discriminatory attitude towards immigrants from Haiti and then utters a blatantly racist speech. This employer is well aware of the fact that his speech could be misinterpreted because it is an outrage to the social norms of tolerance or acceptance, so he wanted to avoid a negative impression (Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010; Van Dijk, 1992).

It is notable in the employers' speeches how often they use affiliation devices by nationality as "Haitians" and "Venezuelans" which, according to Van Dijk (2000a), indicates a racist ideology. This type of affiliation presupposes a stereotyped representation, in which "Haitians" and "Venezuelans" are organized as part of a homogenized collective with intrinsic, immutable and very marked physical, intellectual, moral and cultural dispositions that describe, qualify, disqualifies or subordinates them, as also highlighted by lanni (2004b). In other words, it is not a strictly ethnic representation, but an ethnic-racial one, since these groups of people are systematically referred to and built as a unanimous group", as noted by KhosraviNik *et al.* (2012, p. 289). These employers only differentiate them by their nationality, disregarding or suppressing their personal and subjective particularities.

As Hanson-Easey and Augoustinos (2010) point out, the inferential implication of this categorization is the immigrants' own fault and responsibility for their working conditions. After all, it would be the supposed Haitians "physical strength" that would determine the exercise of unskilled and hard jobs. The social, political and historical issues essential to understanding such conditions would, according to this logic, be supplanted by essentially biological qualities and, therefore, innate and immutable.

According to Sivanandan (2001, p.1), "racism has always been an instrument of discrimination. And discrimination has always been a tool for exploitation ... racism, in short, is conditioned by economic imperatives". In fact, it is possible to see that the racist ideological representation of Brazilian employers provides justifications for the exploitation of immigrant workers. In other words, the way in which Brazilian employers represent immigrant workers serves as a basis for justifying the most diverse forms of discrimination and exploitation in order to legitimize their own privileges, as also noted by Tilbury and Colic-Peisker (2006).

Some employers also expressed several problems regarding the entry of immigrants in the receiving countries, another characteristic of the racist ideology pointed out by Van Dijk (2000a). These speeches produce a negative representation of immigrants as a source of several kinds of problems, in line with the literature (KhosraviNik et al., 2012). In the Brazilian employers discourse these different problems may be seen under two axes: threat (to cultural identity, community values, violence and the spread of diseases) and economic overload for the Brazilian state, which would have to bear health expenses, for example.

Verkuyten (2003) states that cultural essentialism bases on representations of incompatible cultural differences that necessarily lead to conflict. Based on this assumption, the interviewed employers believe that cultural differences would pose a threat to the identity of Brazilians. Furthermore, in this discourse immigrants have denied their right to "cultural difference" (Taguieff, 1990). An example comes from an employer who said "[...] if you start to put only immigrants, immigrants, immigrants, neighbourhoods of immigrants will be created [...] it starts to change the country's culture, it starts to change indeed." (Employer 3, Condominium Manager).

Employers represented immigrants in Brazil as possible criminals, a discursive representation widely noted in the literature in several countries, such as The USA (SantaAna, 1999), The United Kingdom (KhosraviNik et al., 2012; Lynn & Lea, 2003), Australia (Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010; Teo, 2000), Hong Kong (Flowerdew, Li & Tran, 2002), Ireland (Burroughs, 2015) and Malaysia (Don & Lee, 2014). As an example,

the following speech stands out: "you have ... a large number of people who end up fighting for survival, falling into marginality and cannot prosper, cannot achieve anything." (Employer 6, Manager of a civil construction company)

The Brazilian employers represented immigrant workers also as a threat in terms of disease transmission. Several authors report stereotyped representations of various groups of immigrants as a threat to public health (Reitmanova et al., 2015). In fact, this employer says: "[...] the spread of diseases that had already been eradicated in Brazil, without a doubt. At health facilities many diseases such as syphilis, which nearly disappeared here, began to appear one after another [...] in places where the Haitians are concentrated". (Employer 7, owner of a shoes components factory)

Employers who saw immigrant workers as an economic overload for the Brazilian state justified their speeches in terms of the distribution and misuse of the country's economic resources (Van Dijk, 2000a). This representation corroborates the literature (KhosraviNik et al., 2012). In this case, the discourse adopts a posture of priority in relation to jobs, education, health care as a privilege of the national population, as shown in the following examples:

- [...] if you start to shove people here inside the country that are looking for jobs, that are in difficulty, and within Brazil itself you have millions of people who are in the same situation, then it gets complicated. (Employer 3, Condominium Manager)
- [...] the health issue is very serious, [...] moreover, not only health, all public offers of free services at first become overloaded, without due return. (Employer 7, owner of a shoes components factory)
- [...] if you stop to think it goes like this: 'damn, sometimes the country has invested so much in helping foreigners, why couldn't it look more at education, look more at the health of Brazilians? (Employer 10, Recruitment and Selection Analyst for a Food Industry company)

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In summary, the employers' discourse reveals the representation that immigrant workers are a threat to the cultural identity, community values, safety and health of Brazilians, in addition to representing an economic overload for the Brazilian state. If, on the one hand, immigrant workers are thus discriminated against, on the other hand, the employer's racist speech extols their "qualities" (physical strength and subjection to heavy work) to legitimize the exploitation of their work.

According to Van Dijk (2000a), ideological discursive practices can act in two ways: i) in the reproduction of the system of domination through discriminatory practices; or ii) in the justification and legitimation of this system. The discourse of Brazilian employers in general acts in both ways, since it presents itself as a discursive practice that discriminates against immigrant workers through their exclusion and marginalization as well as contributing to forging a set of beliefs that legitimizes this social system marked by strong inequalities.

This system has as its most striking feature the place and role that immigrant workers and employers occupy in society: subordination versus superiority and dominance. The place chosen for immigrant workers reveals a prevailing racism as in general it is restricted to jobs that require exclusively physical effort, low paid and limited to ensuring their own survival, as observed in the literature.

This study brings contributions by relating the Critical Discourse Analysis of the employer discourse and immigration. As most of the studies in Critical Discourse Analysis investigate the mass media, this work, when investigating the employers' discourse, also contributes to broaden the scope of analysis of this theoretical-methodological approach. Finally, this study provides a reflection on how employers' discursive representations establish practices that intensify the economic exploitation of the immigrant workforce and forge domination practices that favour social inequality.

This research showed a racist discourse that presents strong similarities in all those 12 firms. If we take into account that these 12 firms were randomly selected, this study allows us to infer a certain degree of generalization.

This study has a limitation which suggests new researches. The first refers to the fact that here the work experiences of the immigrants are viewed only from the discourse of their employers. More research through the discourse of other social actors such as co-workers and, above all, through the discourse of the immigrant workers themselves are needed.

In addition, as the experiences of the immigrants are shaped by different dimensions of identity and social structures (such as "race", class, gender and sexuality) it is necessary to recognize the need for future studies on the migratory phenomenon within a context of intersectional analysis.

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3. Development of theoretical propositions (theoretical work)	\checkmark	\checkmark
4. Theoretical foundation / Literature review	\checkmark	
5. Definition of methodological procedures	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$
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