

US Foundations and Racial Reasoning in Brazil

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Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant (1999) claim that ‘brutal ethnocentric intrusions’ by Northamerican ‘cultural imperialists’ have distorted scholarly and social movement ideas of race and identity in Brazil. They specifically point to the ‘driving role played by the major American philanthropic and research foundations in the diffusion of US racial doxa within the Brazilian academic field at the level of both representations and practise.’ These authors accuse US foundations of imposing their conceptions of race on the study of race in Brazil, requiring grantees to implement US-style affirmative action and use dichotomous black/white categories and promoting US-style black movements. They seem to make a facile assumption that because US foundations spend millions of dollars in Brazil and prioritize research on race, regardless of its content, then they must be successfully imposing standard Northamerican conceptions of race to that country. Their analysis exaggerates the power of US foundations in Brazil, fails to understand how programming decisions are made within the foundations, greatly underestimates the intellectual agency of the Brazilian academy and its black social movement and reveals a rather dated understanding of the academic literature and public opinion on race in Brazil.

While I sympathize with a concern for the disproportionate influence of US ideas and sociological concepts overall and, in some cases, the power of US foundations to export them, Bourdieu and Wacquant’s choice of Brazilian race relations as an example greatly diminishes the strength of their argument. In particular, the Ford Foundation does not impose a US model of race in Brazil, especially not in the simplistic way that Bourdieu and Wacquant envision. Certainly, Ford and other US foundations are influential, but by no means are they the “driving force.” The black movement (Nascimento, 1982) and even the use of dichotomous racial categories (Fernandes, 1965) by leading academics all predate the presence of US philanthropic foundations, precluding their credit on this score. Race has

been an important issue in Brazil throughout its 500-year history and the Ford Foundation's decision to work in this area since about 1980 has been a response to pressing needs on the ground in that country. Bourdieu and Wacquant simply make erroneous assumptions based on their severely limited knowledge of the subject.

Based on my experience at the Ford Foundation office in Brazil, I investigate the role of that foundation in fostering such ideas. The Ford Foundation is the largest funder of black movement organizations in Brazil by far and as the largest philanthropic funder of race relations research, mostly through its human rights program. Other US Foundations, including MacArthur, Rockefeller and Kellogg fund this area at a much lower level. As the Human Rights Program Officer for the Ford Foundation's Rio de Janeiro office from early 1997 to late 2000 and as a consultant to that Foundation in 1995, I feel qualified to comment on how US foundations approach race issues in Brazil and evaluate their impact. I have returned to my tenured academic position where I do not have a vested interest in defending the Ford Foundation, if I ever did. Although I would normally refrain from taking a public position that may appear as a strong defense of my former institution, I find a compelling need to demystify its work given the importance that Bourdieu and Wacquant attribute to it and their gross misunderstanding of its activities. Moreover, I seek to demonstrate Bourdieu and Wacquant's general misunderstanding of the role of race in Brazilian society. In addition to my Ford experience, I draw from my academic research on Brazilian race relations for more than a decade.

The Ford Foundation and Race in Brazil: Setting the Record Straight

For the last twenty years, the Ford Foundation has elaborated its program on race in Brazil interactively with the black movement and its (Brazilian) academic and activist allies. Today, that agenda is driven mostly by domestic human rights concerns within Brazil, which have come to the fore as a leading civil society concern since current democratization began in the late 1970s. On the other hand, Ford seeks to integrate this work into its

worldwide programming given the added value from cross-societal exchange and the importance of an increasingly important international human rights system. Admittedly, the Ford Foundation espouses institutional principles that are often carried over into its international work, though probably not enough. During my consultancy for Ford in 1995, Sueli Carneiro, a leading black movement activist, articulated this position well, noting that it would be hypocritical for the Ford Foundation in Brazil to simply ignore the principals they espouse in the US (Telles, 1995).

Although the Ford Foundation has made racial justice issues central to its US portfolio, it has mostly only considered expanding this line of programming to the fourteen worldwide field offices and the 44 countries in which it works. This subject is especially timely considering in the context of the UN World Conference on Racism, Xenofobia and Related Forms of Intolerance, which underscores the universality of race and discrimination. Thus far, outside of the US and South Africa, the Foundation's work in this area is most advanced in Brazil, where understandings of race and racism resonate with much of the population. Although at a smaller scale, Ford has begun to fund programs on the Roma in Eastern Europe, Arab-Jewish relations in Israel, and indigenous peoples in the Philipines.

Its hesitancy to expand programming on race and ethnicity to non-US settings comes from careful study about the appropriateness and nature that such work would take rather than mindlessly imposing US-centric views on those societies. Decisions to expand into such areas as well as general funding principles come mostly from the program officers in the local offices although in consultation with current grantees, local experts and local and worldwide colleagues, which include natives of the regions in which they work, North Americans and others. The program officers themselves are experts in their areas of programming, generally drawn from academia or long experiences as civil society leaders. Ford program officers decide to fund specific grant proposals and have almost complete autonomy in designing their programs. In the roughly 400 and some program officer initiated

grants from the Brazil office during my tenure, not one was overturned, either by high level Ford staff or by the Foundation's Board of Trustees. The greatest impact of high-level staff is in the hiring of specific program officers, nonetheless they are from homogenous nationally, ethnically or ideologically (although the large majority tend to be left of center on the US scale). The growing national diversity of senior Ford personnel including program officers and directors in the New York and in the field offices, would surprise Bourdieu and Wacquant. The Board of Trustees is increasingly diverse but its role is to appoint and oversee the President of the Foundation and it occasionally promotes major program shifts but it does not interfere in short to medium range planning or grant decisions made by programming staff. Currently, for example, the Ford-Brazil office is comprised of a naturalized Brazilian representative (of British origin) and two of the four program officers are Brazilian. Roughly half of field office representatives and program officers are natives of the region that they work in. The New York office currently employs Latin Americans, Africans, Asian Indians, and Middle Easterners, including highly-respected scholars of these regions, in high-level positions.

Thus, the bulk of Ford-Brazil's race programming was my responsibility during nearly four years from 1997 to 2000. Contrary to Bourdieu and Wacquant's suggestion, I don't believe I was a transmitter of US racial doxa although given the emblem on my passport, I probably could not totally avoid it. If anything, as a Latino, like the Puerto Rican director of Ford's worldwide Human Rights Program since 1994, I understand the limits of the US black/white paradigm am aware of the phenotype continuum throughout Latin America. More importantly, my own academic research points out the differences between the US and Brazil regarding intermarriage, residential segregation, racial classification and inequality. Bourdieu and Wacquant even cite me to show that Brazilian levels of urban residential segregation are substantially lower than in the US (Telles, 1994). I am the first to

note how Brazil's celebration of miscegenation¹ as opposed to the US's legacy of segregation has had profound implications for distinct patterns of inter-racial sociability as measured by residential segregation, intermarriage² and friendships, as well as for the development of a black middle class and anti-racist movements (Telles, 1999).

Markedly lower levels of residential segregation in Brazil do not mean that there is no racism or less racism than in the United States, as the authors imply. After all, there is almost no residential segregation between men and women. Indeed they live in the same households. But does this mean that there is no sexism or that its virulence is less than that of racism? Sociologists in the US have called residential segregation the lynchpin of black-white inequality in the US (Bobo, 1989; Massey and Denton, 1993; Oliver and Shapiro, 1997) but this is clearly not the case in Brazil. Do Bourdieu and Wacquant imply that for Brazil to be racist that this US based assumption must be met? For them, Brazilian social relations among persons of different colors or race seem to require passing a US-based acid test for them to be considered racist. The fact that they use US categories to make the claim of distinction for Brazil would seem to belie their general analytic point.

White-nonwhite inequality is greater than the US³ and explicit expressions of racism in popular entertainment would be unthinkable today in the US. For example, even the lyrics of a recent children's song are explicitly racist. Titled 'Look at her Hair', a clown performer named Tiririca recorded by Sony Music Co. reveals the acceptance of racial insults as

¹ This idea of miscegenation as a positive attribute of Brazilian identity was first articulated by Gilberto Freyre (1933). This was in contrast to previous Brazilian thought which equated miscegenation with degeneracy and was thus pessimistic about Brazil's future (Schwarcz 1995).

² Roughly 20 percent of whites are married to nonwhites in Brazil while less the corresponding figure is less than 1 percent in the US. However, this difference is largely, though not entirely explained by differences in the size of the nonwhite population. See Telles 1993.

³ For example, since 1960 average black and brown males have earned between 40 and 60 percent of white males, with no pattern. Black and brown women earned roughly 10 percent of white males in 1960 with steady increases since then to 30 percent by 1996 and compared to white women the figures are 15 and 40 percent (Telles 2000). Comparable

humor despite their offensiveness. The offensiveness of the song seems to be shared by most Brazilians as verified in a survey of the State of Rio de Janeiro in which 67 percent of the population found the lyrics ‘racist’ or in ‘bad taste’, with no differences by color. To quote several lines of the song: It looks like brillo to scrub a pan; I already sent her to take a bath; The stubborn girl won’t listen; That black woman (*nega*) stinks, can’t stand the way she stinks; Smelly animal (*bicha*) smells worse than a skunk.⁴ Thus, racism in Brazil is currently at least as insidious than in the US on some dimensions. However, these dimensions are often ignored as others, particularly miscegenation, are touted to demonstrate that Brazil is closer to a racial democracy than the US.⁵ Fortunately, anti-racist activists are now beginning to challenge media and record companies and the makers and legitimizers of popular culture thanks partly to support from Ford. While this may seem to be an exportation of North American liberal values, it also represents the values of many Brazilians as recent racial attitudes studies suggest.

Throughout Brazilian history, race has been on the national agenda. After all, Brazil was the country that imported more slaves from Africa than any other and was the last to abolish slavery (1888). Guided by the then accepted scientific view of racism throughout much of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, its elites were obsessed about the enormous barrier to development that its large nonwhite population presented. They sought ways to circumvent this apparent straightjacket, including subsidizing of European immigration and discouraging of non-European immigration. Because of the tremendous influence of Gilberto Freyre (1933) beginning in the 1930s, Brazilians were able

ratios for the US are 60 to 75 percent for black men and 40 to 55 percent for black women from 1960 to 1982 (Farley 1984).

⁴ Translation from the original Portuguese is my own. I have put in parenthesis two words that have may have other meanings. Nega, although it literally means black women and is sometimes used perjoratively when directed at such women, is also used as a term of endearment for any women. Bicha may also mean a worm, snake, leach, an angry woman or a lesbian.

to find their salvation through the celebration of miscegenation and the ideological construction of racial democracy. However, this miscegenation was and continues to be exclusionary. Ironically, it was built on the racist idea of whitening, where whiteness was given the greatest value while blackness was to be avoided. Unfortunately, the whitening ideology continues to be strong and Brazilians, like the citizens of many other countries, are beginning to recognize the deep roots of racism in their culture.

Rather than being unwitting dupes to US academic doxa, the lively and growing academic debate on race in Brazil is independently minded and set in the context of a vibrant, sophisticated and self-validating academic community. Contrary to Bourdieu and Wacquant's assertions, there is little to no reliance on publishing in English, another alleged carrier of US doxa, and most researchers in this area do not receive US foundation funding. Aside from occasional articles, I cannot recall a single book on contemporary race relations by a Brazilian author that was published in English since Florestan Fernandes's classic was translated in 1969 (Fernandes, 1969). Although reliance on US Foundations might be greater in small countries and those with few resources, Brazilian scholars engaged in the race debate are largely faculty and students at relatively well-funded universities and the Brazilian government, mostly through its National Research Council (CNPq), funds most of their research. Most are trained in Brazil but many have advanced degrees in countries as diverse as the US, France, Holland, and Germany. Many of these researchers meet at least once each year at the ANPOCS meetings, which is comprised of the leading graduate social science research programs and where there is little patience for orthodoxy or simplification, either of the Northamerican doxic, vulgar Marxist or Racial Democracy kind. Although Northamerican scholars are important contributors to this debate –they are generally quite familiar with the Brazilian literature -they are by no means central to it. This is especially

⁵ I seek to explain these apparent paradoxes in a forthcoming book.

true today as increasing numbers of black students (self described as such) and as racial inequality has become a central concern to many of the issues that have appeared in the mounting national human rights and social policy agendas. Unfortunately, problems of language make it appear that way to those who cannot or don't bother to read Portuguese, as Bourdieu and Wacquant's own knowledge of the literature demonstrates. The importance they give to Michael Hanchard's book *Orpheus and Power* (1994) is further proof since it was only translated into Portuguese in March of this year.

As a program officer, I developed an initiative for Ford Brazil's funding in the area of racial justice, which sought to address racism in Brazilian society through judicial, advocacy, media and research activities. The centerpiece of this initiative includes several black movement organizations in key cities that focus on fighting racism through legal actions and public policy interventions. Representatives of these organizations meet regularly to discuss a unified strategy for combating racism and recently formed a network of black movement attorneys. Their strategies include sensitizing justice system and other government officials to racism in Brazilian society and taking on exemplary cases with potential large-scale media and juriprudential impact.

Besides support for these organizations, in recent years this initiative of the Human Rights program funds social science research activities that can show the mechanisms of discrimination and supplement the legal and public policy work, including research that includes differential hiring practises by race, differential criminal sentencing and police shootings by race, affirmative action research and similarities and differences in legal cultures and anti-discriminatory law in the US and Brazil which would serve as a basis for effective exchange between legal professionals in the two countries. The Human Rights program also sought to strengthen black leadership by supporting training activities, such as courses in public administration, election campaigning and English language.

Moreover, this initiative sought to strengthen links between anti-racist organizations and other human rights organizations throughout Brazil and in other parts of the world. This includes the funding of Brazilian organizations so that they can leverage international law or the United Nations or InterAmerican human rights systems. Relatedly, the Human Rights Program has promoted cross-national exchanges between Brazilian black movement attorneys and US civil rights organizations, in the belief that the latter's long experience in anti-racist litigation may provide important lessons for their Brazilian counterparts. The exchanges thus far have consisted in lively discussions with professional translators that, despite the cultural and legal differences that become readily apparent, enrichen the knowledge and effectiveness of both sides. Finally, with the Sustainable Development Program, this initiative supports indigenous rights activities and, during my tenure, supported a single research grant on discrimination and ethnicity among Japanese, Koreans and Chinese in Brazil.

Imposing Affirmative Action and the Black-White Dichotomy?

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1999) claim that 'as a condition for its aid, the Rockefeller Foundation requires that research teams meet US criteria of affirmative action, which poses insuperable problems since as we have seen the application of the black/white dichotomy in Brazilian society is, to say the least, hazardous.'

I was surprised to hear this based on my knowledge of the Rockefeller and other US foundations. The director of the Rockefeller funded program at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro assured me that they were never required to implement any type of affirmative action program.⁶ Moreover, that was the only program dedicated to race in Brazil funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, at least in the last decade. However, it was the one program that Wacquant was somewhat familiar with it, where he participated as a fellow. The authors

mistakenly credit Rockefeller with funding the Centro de Estudos Afro-Asiaticos (CEAA). For twenty years, Ford has been the primary funder of CEAA and its library has become the leading source of information regarding race in Brazil.

The very legality of US style affirmative action program in Brazil is questionable⁷ but more importantly is the great care that US Foundations take in funding programs that might seem to be intrusions to the local hosts. After all, US Foundations are guests of local governments at their consent. Indeed, Ford hesitated funding race related activities for several years in the 1970s because of strong resistance by the military governments. The Ford Foundation began (carefully) funding research on race at the CEAA in 1979 as Brazil began a process of redemocratization. Two years earlier, all activities of the Inter American Foundation in Brazil were ‘suspended’ two years earlier pending a review by Brazil’s foreign affairs department (Itamaraty) because it funded two projects that sought to address “the persistence of racial discrimination.”⁸ The Brazilian government at the time was known to consider research on race and black movement activities as subversive and a threat to national security. Although we do not know for certain since there were no public opinion surveys, public opinion seemed to accept that Brazilian society constituted a racial democracy where race made little or no difference to life chances. However, that climate has changed completely in recent years. The President of Brazil created a task force to propose solutions for attenuating racial inequalities, the existence of racial prejudice and

⁶ Based on correspondence with the former director of that program, Yvonne Maggie.

⁷ This is the standard legal belief and is based on the Brazilian judicial standard of universality (*isonomia*). However, quotas required for women in political parties and trade unions and special protections given to the physically disadvantaged are recent particularist actions that challenge standard legal thinking. A recent book by legal scholar Joaquim B. Barbosa Gomes (2001) argues the constitutional basis for race-specific policies to promote blacks.

⁸ Correspondence with Bradford Smith, former program officer for the InterAmerican Foundation.

discrimination is almost fully recognized and there is strong support for race-specific government policies to promote blacks.

Although naming the Rockefeller Foundation, Bourdieu and Wacquant may be referring to the “diversity tables” used by the Ford Foundation in Brazil. Ford-Brazil requests a “diversity table” and an explanation from all of its grantees in all its fields of work. This includes more than 100 grants each year, of which less than twenty are primarily on racial issues. The table enumerates all of its staff at different levels according to whether they are male or female, white or nonwhite and the explanation requires grantees to explain why they do or do not reflect the local gender and color diversity and what steps they can take to improve it. There is no obligation to meet certain values and as far as I could tell, funding is not conditioned on it. Rather the diversity table is a tool for program officers to begin discussions with directors of programs about current race and representation among their staff and how to improve it and the relevance of race and gender issues to their substantive concerns. While some grantees value diversity more than others, among our hundreds of grants, I do not recall a single complaint of its inappropriateness, lest its ‘hazardousness.’

Also, the diversity table asks about whites and nonwhites, never whites and blacks. Ford Foundation personnel are well aware that the nonwhite term includes many color categories and that even the white/nonwhite distinction is often ambiguous. We nevertheless ask grantees to complete it to the best of their knowledge and have found that grantees tend to ask their staff to self report their color rather than assuming it for themselves. I don’t sense that grantees felt a sense of sanction for having a predominately white or male staff as long as they were honest with the program officer and were making attempts to recruit nonwhite and female staff. As I show in a recent article, Bourdieu and Wacquant overstate the amount of ambiguity that their intellectual standard, Marvin Harris and his self-described follower, Carl Degler, proposed as I show in a recent article (Telles, 2001).

Having said that, the white/black distinction is not as foreign as Bourdieu and Wacquant make it out to be. This distinction is constantly used by the media and by federal and local government institutions, including the Ministry of Justice's Program on Human Rights. The use of black and white is perhaps more common in the southern half of the country compared to the Northeast, where black/mulatto distinctions are more frequent (Telles, 2000). Indeed, Florestan Fernandes' (1965) classic text funded by UNESCO used the white/black dichotomy. Moreover, at least one recent ethnographic study shows the frequent use of the black and white distinction in the favela she studied in Rio de Janeiro (Sheriff, 1997) and other studies show growing preferences for these terms among young cohorts (Sansone, 1996; Schwartzmann, 1999; Telles, forthcoming).

Rather than impose a US conception of race, the important point of the table and its explanation was to insure that grantees were aware of our concerns and hopefully create a sensitivity to race and gender issues where it did not already exist. Given the widespread recognition of discrimination and inequality in Brazilian society, it seems that this was not difficult. One might ask what would happen if not for Ford's presence? Perhaps nothing but it is difficult to know for certain given the growing general concern for inclusion at least among progressive individuals in Brazil.

Ford's concern with diversity outside of the US has been mostly around issues of balanced gender representation while it has been hesitant to espouse its concerns for race and ethnicity outside its borders for reasons I have already given. The essence of Ford's diversity policies is found in the five paragraphs of 'A Foundation Policy Restated from The Ford Foundation Letter (1987:7). The first paragraph states that:

In its work throughout the world, the Ford Foundation seeks to promote pluralism and equal opportunity and to end discrimination based on race, ethnicity or gender. This effort is shaped by the conviction that all segments

of society benefit from pluralism and equal opportunity - that diversity is not merely compatible with excellence but actually promotes it.

The following paragraph asserts that this policy is to be pursued in three ways: (1) by funding activities that promote pluralism and increase opportunities to historically disadvantaged groups, (2) by seeking broad representation on its own board and staff and (3) by encouraging diversity on the boards and staff of grantee organizations.

The third paragraph states the importance of diversity in making funding decisions. It further declares that 'Outside the United States, diversity in gender and, *where appropriate, ethnic, racial or national origin is considered*' (italics added by author). The fourth paragraph makes the case of why diversity is important and the final paragraph neatly summarizes, albeit in an ambiguous way, Ford's commitment to diversity in non-US settings.

It states

Efforts to achieve pluralism and equal opportunity require vigorous and sustained attention, both in the United States and in other countries. Although appropriate strategies necessarily vary according to the particular constraints and possibilities present in different societies, the Foundation is committed to working with others to promote these efforts and to ensure their success.

In a 1995 consultancy for Ford (Telles, 1995), I interviewed numerous Ford Foundation staff and the wide range of grantee directors. The 17 grantees interviewed included both those with and without race-specific programming and both those with good and poor or mixed records on diversity. They also included a variety of programs from each of the Foundation's program areas: governance and public policy, reproductive health and population, rural poverty and resources, education and culture, and rights and social justice. Grantee institutions included universities and both research and advocacy NGOs.

When I conducted these interviews in 1995, I was surprised that most, but not all, grantees were sensitive to issues of racial discrimination. This either reflected a change in attitudes about and understanding of racial issues compared to the presumably longstanding racial democracy ideology or a selective population that was particularly attune to these issues. My sense was that both factors were important. Clearly, many of the grantees were leading academics and activists in Brazil. While racial issues had been largely absent from academic and activists agendas during the military regime, the sudden interest about and sensitivity to racial issues among these individuals may have been due to the general exposure that the middle class population has had to these debates in the media, ranging from debates in daily newspapers to programming on popular evening *telenovelas* (soap operas). It may have also reflected Ford's continuing commitment to make its Brazilian grantees sensitive to racial issues.

Among most mainstream grantees, Ford's Diversity Initiative was generally perceived as the equivalent of quotas. The association of diversity with quotas seems to reflect a stereotypical conception of diversity from the US that is played up in the Brazilian media. If anything, it reflected the ability of conservatives (and their foundations) to frame affirmative action or diversity in this way. The Brazilians that I interviewed perceived that employers in the US, under the mandate of state law, are required to have a certain statistical representation of different racial groups in all jobs. Also, this impression about affirmative action was strongly reinforced through legislation that required thirty percent of leadership positions in labor unions and political appointees be reserved for women.

I found that the extent to which grantees accept diversity depended on their particular conception of diversity. As a quota system, they were cautionary but upon explaining what diversity means under the Ford Foundation Initiative, grantees supported the general concept. That is, when diversity was cast as a program to seek out and prepare members of minority groups for better jobs and educational opportunities, grantees were for

it but when cast as quotas, there was opposition. Clearly, diversity or affirmative action may be broadly defined and includes anything from the noncontroversial programs that help the poor and minorities write better essays in college to creating quotas for minorities in university admissions. Ford's efforts to educate its grantees about this have had little effect on the larger society. Only in the past year, has Ford funded grantees to begin publicizing alternative ways of thinking about affirmative action. Although Ford staff would have liked to do more in this area, their relatively scant resources hardly make it a driving force, especially when it is up against a status quo that is propagated by Brazil's powerful media and well funded private and public interests.

Interestingly, a 1995 survey by Data Folha revealed support for affirmative action. It demonstrated that opposition from the general public even to quotas is not as strong as the authors would suggest or that the grantees manifested. A national survey showed nearly half of Brazilians (48%) supported quotas for blacks in the university and at the workplace (Telles, 1995). This included 34 percent that completely supported them and 14 percent that supported them in part. Forty percent disagreed completely and 9 percent disagreed in part with the concept of racial quotas (4 percent did not know). Thus, quotas have even greater support in Brazil than they do in the US. Note that the idea of quotas was explained to respondents so that it is unlikely that they did not understand their meaning⁹.

A more recent survey in the State of Rio de Janeiro yielded similar results.¹⁰ Table 1 shows that 51 percent of the population believed that government has a special obligation to improve their 'life conditions', 55 percent believed that there should be quotas for blacks in

⁹ The question was "Given past and present discrimination against blacks, there are people who defend the idea that the only way of guaranteeing racial equality is to reserve a portion of positions in the university and in employment for the black population. Do you agree or disagree with this apportionment of slots in the universities and jobs for blacks? Completely or in part? (translation by author.)

¹⁰ The 1995 national survey revealed no significant regional differences on the similar question of the previous paragraph (Folha de São Paulo 1995).

the university and 57 percent believed in quotas in high level occupations.¹¹ This is hardly a rejection of affirmative action (Telles, 1995). Support for affirmative action as quotas was especially strong among the low educated and the poor generally, both white and nonwhite although nonwhites were more in favor of quotas than whites at all educational levels. Opposition to quotas was especially strong among highly educated whites. Only 17 percent of university-educated whites favor governmental intervention, 4 percent favor quotas for entering the university and only 6 percent favor quotas for good jobs. White-nonwhite differences in favor of compensatory policies or quotas are greatest among university-educated persons. Eighteen (18) percent more nonwhites than whites believe the government has a special obligation and 32 percent more support slots for blacks in the university. In the case of quotas in good jobs, the difference is also 18 percent (Telles and Bailey, 2001).

¹¹ This survey was funded by the Ford Foundation to a grant to the Center for the Articulation of Marginalized Populations (CEAP) and was carried out by the Survey Research Center of the Federal Fluminense University (Data-UFF).

Table 1. Percentage of persons that agree with antiracist policies by race and Educational Level, Rio de Janeiro State, 2000.

	Educational Level				
	Primary Incomplete	Primary Complete	Secondary Incomplete	Secondary Complete	University Complete
Government has a Special Obligation					
Whites	68	54	37	37	17
Nonwhites	75	60	51	39	35
Difference	7	6	14	2	18
Quotas-University					
Whites	78	69	38	35	4
Nonwhites	84	78	52	39	36
Difference	6	9	14	4	32
Quotas-Good Jobs					
Whites	75	59	44	35	6
Nonwhites	86	76	53	50	24
Difference	11	17	9	15	18

Thus, there is strong support for affirmative action among many sectors of the Brazilian population. What makes Brazil different from the United States is the relatively small gap in such support between whites and blacks. Moreover, it suggests a widespread base of support among people of different colors. The major barrier, and ultimately the most important, is the opposition by the white elite.

In March 1995, the current President of Brazil created a working group under the Ministry of Labor to seek ways to eliminate racial discrimination in employment and in

November of that year he instituted a multi-ministerial task force to develop public policies that would valorize the black population (Martins, 1996). This included calls from the President to develop affirmative action policies that were appropriate for Brazil (Ministerio de Justiça, 1996). Despite such support from the President, these groups have ended and the Brazilian government through the executive branch has withdrawn its original support for sponsoring a regional conference and later a national conference in preparation for the UN World Conference on Racism, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance.

As far as promoting affirmative action in Brazil, Ford funded at least three grants to examine ways to reduce racial inequality in Brazil. Often referred to as 'affirmative action', the research sought to examine the potential of public policies to reduce racial inequality. These included empirical research that examined international models and some informal experiments in Brazil as well as promoting debates and conceptual work that would yield ideas for appropriate public policies. Ford's interest in this is to find ways to reduce racial inequality and combat a culture of racism through appropriate public policies rather than impose US style affirmative action. Indeed, the largest grant to the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro 'allowed them to examine both government policies and civil society activities that seek to combat racial inequality' and 'establish a comprehensive program of discussion and appropriate public policy design.' ¹² Researchers on that grant include a wide spectrum of perspectives including those that reject race-specific policies (e.g. Fry, 2000). Other grantees held position that would support some aspects of US style affirmative action (Guimarães, 1999) while others looked to models within Latin America (Sansone, 1998).

AfroAmerican Imperialists?

Finally, to top it off, Bourdieu and Wacquant make a particularly curious comment: 'what are we to think of those American researchers who travel to Brazil to encourage the

leaders of the Movimento Negro to adopt the tactics of the Afro-American civil rights movement and to denounce the category of pardo (an intermediate category) in order to mobilize all Brazilians of African descent on the basis of a dichotomous opposition between Afro Brazilians and whites?’ As the primary funder of black movement organizations, this shows surprising naivete. Who are these self-proposed saviors?

However, it seems as Bourdieu and Wacquant are not pointing to any one specific but a general belief that some Afro-NorthAmericans are eager to export their civil rights recipes and lessons and therefore be the unwitting dupes of US imperialist thought. This would take lots of either nerve or innocence. Even if such persons are to be found, Bourdieu and Wacquant imply that their interventions would make a difference and thus Northamerican imperialist reason would be successful once again. During my tenure at Ford, I must admit that I once witnessed something close to what Bourdieu and Wacquant describe. In this case, a young African American student came to me raising his concerns about the strategies of the black movement in Brazil and he wanted to meet some of their leaders to teach them strategies that had worked in his (limited) Midwestern US context. He was able to talk to the director of a local black movement NGO that we funded, who cordially educated him about the inappropriateness of such strategies in such a distinct context like Brazil. I am certain that this exchange had absolutely no impact on that black movement organization. If the leaders of this organization were influenced at all, this experience should have made them even more skeptical of Northamerican intrusiveness but it seems that greater numbers seeking to learn from their experiences offsets these relatively rare experiences.

Like the academics, these leaders would surprise the authors by their independence and intelligence. Sure they are attentive to black liberation strategies in the US, but they use the examples from these and other social movements as ideas, not recipes, for their own

12 Ford Foundation grant memorandum, February 5, 1998.

work. Their collective knowledge extends to liberation struggles in Africa and the Caribbean and to human rights struggles worldwide but they are especially informed about other social movements in Brazil, which are especially appropriate models for developing their own strategies. They are a heterogeneous group trained in contexts as varied as the street children's movement, Leonardo Boff's liberation theology, progressive wings of the Catholic and Protestant churches, the Worker's Party or even in conservative parties such as the Liberal Party (PFL). Moreover, they tend to have a strong national identity and eschew foreign intrusions, including those by black Americans that do not understand their struggles.

The independent thinking of black movement leaders in the context of an important US civil rights community is exemplified by a recent exchange that I witnessed. At the Americas preparatory conference for the UN World Conference in Santiago, funded in part by US Foundations, three black movement leaders - from Brazil, Honduras and Uruguay – rebuked the leader of a major US civil rights organization. The Brazilian reminded the North American that several years ago the latter had agreed to reprimand a US recording company for releasing a song by a Brazilian performer that was very offensive to black women. Instead, nothing had ever been done. The Honduran and Uruguayan followed up, noting that although the US civil rights movement and the actions of black people in the US have always been an important model for them, they were bothered by the rhetoric of brotherhood and the implicit imperialism of North American blacks against their continental brethren. The Latin Americans accused his and other North American civil rights organizations of failing to even recognize them, much less act on their behalf. They singled out their silence and even support for US interventions in the region that disproportionately hurt black populations. These include the US embargo of Cuba, not sending relief to the hard hit coastal areas affected by Hurricane Mitch, the US government financing of the drug war in Colombia and the ecological disasters of US companies off Ecuador and in the

Caribbean. Rather than reinforcing the US dominance, Ford and others have sought to empower the alliance of Latin American black movement organizations to better represent their interests and promote effective exchange with their US counterparts about the special needs of African origin people in the region. Given the importance of the US in the region, Latin American black movement leaders are anxious to get on the agenda of powerful civil rights organizations, which they perceive as natural allies, but they insist that it be done on their own terms.

Final Remarks

If anything, the US is attractive for understanding race in Brazil because of its comparative possibilities. It has long been the perennial referent for Brazilian and Northamerican researchers because of some obvious similarities like the enslavement of Africans by European colonizers but some distinct outcomes. Fortunately, the extent and nature of similarities and differences is informed by a variety of perspectives which continue to be debated and interactively enrichen our understandings of race in Brazil. This is increasingly occurring across languages and national borders. Although the academic debate gradually seeps into black movement thinking, the movement itself has little patience for the debate. The Ford Foundation supports the black movement in Brazil to help it respond to pressing human rights issues including racism and racial discrimination and inequality. While the black movement struggles for legitimacy just as other social movements do, it faces a greater barrier because it directly challenges central tenets of the Brazilian nation.

I felt that Bourdieu and Wacquant's article was especially unfortunate given the importance of the first author in the Brazilian academy. Despite their lack of evidence or even minimal understanding of Brazil, the simple fact of authorship by Bourdieu and the instant credibility and ready consumption of his ideas by eager young social scientists might

be considered academic imperialism, if I am also to be allowed a loose interpretation of the term. I note this because of an experience related to me by a black activist-scholar that taught a course at a leading Brazilian university. Despite making inroads with her entirely white student class in convincing them about the racial discrimination in Brazil, the release of the “Cunning of Imperialist Reason” was to turn that around. Despite the weeks of intensive study of Brazilian race relations based on their study of the academic and experiential world, a conservative colleague of hers had given that article to his students and noted that it was written by Pierre Bourdieu, whom he referred to as “the world’s preeminent social scientist.” I agree that certain sources of ideas are especially seductive and poorly understood threats to social science scholarship but I would also include those of a handful of prominent French theorists. I am left wondering why they wrote an article about something they know little about. Perhaps cynically, my guess would be that there was a political motive and they had to bet on Bourdieu’s intellectual capital rather than solid evidence for making their point about “imperialist reasoning.”

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Abstract:

This article examines the role played by US Foundations in shaping the academic field of race relations and a black social movement in Brazil. It takes issue with Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant's assertion that US Foundations use their power to impose a US model on understanding race in Brazil. Their analysis exaggerates the power of US foundations in Brazil, fails to understand how programming decisions are made within the foundations, greatly underestimates the intellectual agency of the Brazilian academy and its black social movement and reveals a rather dated understanding of the academic literature and public opinion on race in Brazil. The author relies on information gleaned from his former position as a Program Officer of the Ford Foundation in Rio de Janeiro and as a researcher of Brazilian race relations.