TEACHING PRACTICES AND ETHNIC-RACIAL RELATIONSHIPS: REFLECTIONS OF BRAZILIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

Racial discrimination is a social practice that has historical origins in Brazil. Its presence is naturalized in the school space due to the structural racism of Brazilian society. This article seeks to answer the following question: How do teachers act when facing situations of racial discrimination? The answer to this question is inspired by pragmatic sociology, which provided theoretical and methodological support for a sociological ethnography, collecting narratives from teachers in the form of interviews on teaching practices in the face of real situations in which racial identity is mobilized. In addition to confirming the difficulty of teachers to deal with racism as a reflection of Brazilian society, the data revealed that investment in teacher training is more productive when teachers have good working conditions.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION • RACISM • TEACHER BEHAVIOUR • SOCIOLOGY

PRÁTICAS DOCENTES E RELAÇÕES ÉTNICO-RACIAIS: REFLEXOS DA SOCIEDADE BRASILEIRA

Resumo

A discriminação racial é uma prática social que tem origens históricas no Brasil. Sua presença é naturalizada no espaço escolar em virtude do racismo estrutural da sociedade brasileira. Este artigo procura responder à seguinte questão: Como os professores agem diante de situações de discriminação racial? A resposta a essa questão inspira-se na sociologia pragmática, a qual deu suporte teórico e metodológico para uma etnografia sociológica, que recolheu narrativas de professores, na forma de entrevistas, sobre as práticas docentes frente às situações reais nas quais a identidade racial é mobilizada. Além de ratificar a dificuldade dos professores em lidar com racismo como um reflexo da sociedade brasileira, os dados revelaram que o investimento na formação docente é mais produtivo quando os docentes possuem boas condições de trabalho.

DISCRIMINAÇÃO RACIAL • RACISMO • COMPORTAMENTO DO PROFESSOR • SOCIOLOGIA

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PRÁCTICAS DOCENTES Y RELACIONES ÉTNICO-RACIALES: REFLEXIONES DE LA SOCIEDAD BRASILEÑA

Resumen

La discriminación racial es una práctica social que tiene orígenes históricos en Brasil. Su presencia se naturaliza en el espacio escolar debido al racismo estructural de la sociedad brasileña. Este artículo busca responder a la siguiente pregunta: ¿Cómo actúan los profesores en situaciones de discriminación racial? La respuesta a esta pregunta está inspirada en la sociología pragmática, la cual dio apoyo teórico y metodológico para una etnografía sociológica, recopilando narrativas de los profesores, en forma de entrevistas, sobre las prácticas docentes frente a situaciones reales en las que se moviliza la identidad racial. Además de ratificar la dificultad de los profesores para hacer frente al racismo como reflejo de la sociedad brasileña, los datos revelaron que la inversión en educación docente es más productiva cuando los maestros poseen buenas condiciones de trabajo.

DISCRIMINACIÓN RACIAL • RACISMO • CONDUCTA DEL PROFESOR • SOCIOLOGÍA

PRATIQUES D'ENSEIGNEMENT ET DISCRIMINATION RACIALE : REFLETS DE LA SOCIÉTÉ BRÉSILIENNE

Résumé

La discrimination raciale est une pratique sociale qui, au Brésil, a des origines historiques. Sa présence est naturalisée dans l'espace scolaire en raison du racisme systémique de la société brésilienne. Cet article vise à répondre à la question suivante : Comment les enseignants agissent-ils face aux situations de discrimination raciale ? La réponse à cette question s'inspire de la sociologie pragmatique qui apporte un soutien théorique et méthodologique à une ethnographie sociologique. Des récits d'enseignants ont été recueillis lors d'entretiens concernant leurs pratiques pédagogiques face aux situations réelles dans lesquelles l'identité raciale est mobilisée. Tout en confirmant la difficulté que les enseignants ont à faire face à un racisme qui est le reflet de la société brésilienne, les données ont révélé que l'investissement dans la formation des enseignants est plus productif lorsque ceux-ci disposent de bonnes conditions de travail.

DISCRIMINATION RACIALE • RACISME • COMPORTEMENT DE L'ENSEIGNANT • SOCIOLOGIE

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Context and questions[1]

Teaching practices and ethnic-racial relations in school is a recent theme in the studies on the education in Brazil. As shown by Coelho's (2018) state of art on the studies about teacher education and ethnic-racial relation, the topic starts to gain prominence in 2006. At that time, some articles on the topic emerged and, during the years, the research studies have gradually grown, climaxing in 2013, according to the author, due to the 10-year anniversary of Law n. 10.639/2003. This finding suggests the importance of the discussion of ethnic-racial relations in the educational field. It is a reflex of Brazilian society, which has hidden the racial debate in different areas. Some works exemplify the recent emergence of the issue only in the new millennium, while its genesis was in the colonial and slavery period, thus, a long-term problem with a still incipient discussion (Gomes & Jesus, 2013; Muller, 2018; Coelho, 2018). One of the recommendations given was to call attention to teacher education/training and its meaning, due to the fragility of pre-service and in-service education on the theme (Coelho, 2018). This article works in this context aiming to contribute to this discussion by presenting research data on everyday professional practices of teachers and the challenges of ethnic-racial relations in the classroom.

We are grounded on the assumption that the challenge of the theme is connected to the structure of Brazilian society, which has resisted to discuss racism (Telles, 2003; Guimarães, 2009), reflecting in the school. Racial discrimination is a social practice originated in the history of slave-owner Brazil. As a reflex of this social structure, its presence on the school is insidious and, often naturalized and/or invisibilized. However, the national education of a democratic society should concern itself with an antiracist education, mainly in a context of social inequality deeply related to the structural racism[2] of Brazilian society, pointed out by Hasenbalg (2005) in the end of the 20th century. His analysis shows that discrimination has its role in the structure of Brazilian society as, in social competition, black people have a disadvantage of social mobility compared to whites, and education has a crucial role in this scenario (Hasenbalg, 2005; Hasenbalg & Silva, 1999). Recent studies on the inequalities in the last 50 years have shown that the racial issue is a persistent challenge that differs the access to the best work position and the education of the new millennium, signing that racism is still far from being over (Lima & Prates, 2015; Menezes & Kirschbaum, 2015).

Despite the racial disparity in society, Brazil relucts to discuss racism. To understand this national phenomenon, we can refer to the work of Nogueira (2006), who compares the racial situation between the United States and Brazil. He proposes that there is a racial prejudice of origin that characterizes, for instance, the American model, and the racial prejudice of mark, as in the Brazilian context. In general terms, the first refers to the discrimination that an individual suffers for descending of a socially stigmatized ethnic group, while the other takes place due to individuals' physical traces, which correspond to a group stigmatized by the appearance. According to him, "where the prejudice is of mark, the ideology is, at the same time, assimilationist and miscigenacionist; while where it is of origin, it is segregationist and racist" (Nogueira, 2006, p. 297). The author lists the consequences of mark racial prejudice as an "intermittent awareness of discrimination", while it is continuous in the origin racial prejudice. Thus, racism in Brazil is discontinued and veiled, as there is no clear awareness of discrimination.

The cultural factor, which had a great impact in the concealment of racism in Brazil, was the perpetuation of the belief of a racial democracy. It was created based on Freyre's studies, whose classic work *Casa-grande & senzala* (Freyre, 2004/1933) was widely received in Brazil and abroad.

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2 As in Jones (1973) and Almeida (2018).

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As shown by Hasenbalg (2005), racial democracy was a myth credited to the Brazilian people, an instrument to legitimize social inequalities. One of the consequences has been the difficulty to publically debate racism in Brazilian society throughout the time. Miscegenation and the whitening project have not allowed Brazilian black people to build a cohesive community in favor of their rights, as in other countries where segregation was evident. One of the results is the challenge to identify racist practices, because they are camouflaged (Guimarães, 2009).

The role of education in this scenario refers to school as an institutional *locus* of dissemination, or not, of racism. To foment the debate didactically, Almeida (2018) divides racism in three conceptions: individualist, institutional, and structural. The first refers to the direct discrimination produced by an individual, considered as a moral evil in the social body. This individualistic conception is weak, as it does not historicize the phenomenon and its real effects in society. The institutional conception, which is an advancement to the author when compared with the individualistic conception, understands racism in the operation of the institutions that grant privileges or disadvantages based on race; in other words, it is dealt with through the lenses of power and domination. Finally, the structural concept advances in the formulation of racism by understanding it as a materialization of a racist social structure. According to the author: "in a society in which racism is present in the daily life, the institutions that do not actively deal with racial inequality as a problem will easily reproduce racist practices considered to be "normal" by society" (Almeida, 2018, p. own translation).

We assume in this article the existence of structural mechanisms that operate in the social mobility of different groups, granting, for instance, disadvantages to black people. In this sense, school, as a social institution, can disseminate or combat it. In other words, racism, as a counterpoint to the right of education, connects black people to stereotypes and negative representations that are self--fulfilling and limit people's action field.

Schools are institutions of socialization that participate in the process of building an individual's identity through the process of socialization (Darmon, 2016), inserted in the culture of a society. Therefore, they reflect such culture and historicity. Brazilian formal education system emerged in a slavery context to answer the needs of white elites to educate their heirs. The Catholic Church was one the main institutions responsible for this task (Cunha, 2017; Haidar, 2008). In that context, a school was formed in which black people were mostly excluded from its physical space, as well as the curriculum content.

Since then, the racial issue was disseminated through the paradigm of absence, as defined by Nascimento (2016), referring to the nonappearance of black protagonism in school curriculum, thus not allowing an understanding of the role of this group's social achievements. For this author, such paradigm was solidified because there was a white interest to associate black people to the stereotypes of social marginality.

Nowadays, as pointed out by Munanga (2005), there is a set of factors inherited from this slavery past. Among them, the Eurocentric content of didactic materials that discriminatorily represent black people, as shown in the studies of Silva (2005) and Muller (2018). In addition to that, the prejudiced relations among the students themselves, to which teachers do not feel prepared to deal. Such dynamic in the school space cruelly affects black students, resulting in a higher dropout rate and grade retention when compared to white students. Munanga (2005) also alerts to the prejudice rooted in the teacher, a product of the structural racism in which he/she is inserted, requiring an active process of deconstruction to overcome racism. For the last centuries, the organized black movement was an educational political actor, as explained by Gomes (2017). Among the different conquests, the one that faces the problem of the absence of black protagonism in the school space is Law n. 10.639/2003, which establishes the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian history and culture in the basic curriculum as a way to combat this issue.

This article presents results of a research that aimed to understand how ethnic-racial issues were present in teachers' practice. The theoretical support was the pragmatic sociology and, as a methodology,

we were grounded by sociological ethnography (Beaud & Weber, 2014), using field observation and interview with teachers. These two methodological tools allowed collecting situations experienced and described by teachers. Thus, the unities of analysis are established by real situations involving ethnic--racial relations in the school. The analysis aims to contribute to the debate on the naturalization of racist practices when institutional and structural racism is not deconstructed in teachers' practice, as well as to show antiracist practices of professionals kindled by a reflexive professional activity and favorable work conditions. The context of analysis was the assumption that racial discrimination is a difficult topic to be discussed, as we will see later on in teachers' testimonies, a fact that mirrors how Brazilian society deals with the issue.

The situations we present during this work show teachers' setbacks to recognize racism or to convince their peers and students that certain practices are discriminatory. They also reveal the depreciation of dominated culture practices, more specifically regarding Afro-Brazilian religions, as it is difficult to recognize that the Christian religious field has contributed, and still contributes, to the distinction and devaluation of black people in Brazil.

We have noticed during the research a lack of understanding on racism by part of black people or even a lack of self-recognition as black, a challenge to overcome racism even among black students, who often did not see themselves as such, due to miscegenation. This leads to bullying from those with a lighter skin against those with a black phenotype, for instance with darker skin or curly hair. Generally, Brazilian racial prejudice of mark has been characterized by placing racism in a blurry space, of difficult identification, for both the aggressor and the victim, hindering the deconstructing processes. This affects teachers who need to recognize this facet of racism in Brazilian society to position themselves in their teaching practice. Therefore, we raised some questions: How do teachers act when faced by situations of racial discrimination? How do teachers understand Law n. 10.638/2003? Does it guarantee a citizenship education?

The methodological elements to understand these questions, which allowed us to discuss teachers' practices and ethnic-racial relations, as well as the details on the research corpus, will be presented in the first part of this article; after, we will present the analysis of the situations divided into three groups: structural racism, Law n. 10.638/2003, and religious racism. Then, we present our final remarks.

Methodological aspects

Aiming to analyze the real curriculum (Gimeno-Sacristán, 2000), that is, the real practice of teahers faced by certain school situations, we were inspired by the pragmatic sociology (Nachi, 2012) and the sociological etnography (Beaud & Weber, 2014). We conducted interviews to collect teachers' narratives.

We choose the interview as a technique to collect data because it is a way to obtain information on teachers' perceptions, the judgement of values, and representations (Van der Maren, 1995) on their own practices. They were etnographic interviews, i.e. interviews not isolated from the context of the research nor the social and cultural, national and local contexts (Beaud & Weber, 2014). We have tried to understand how these actors are, act, think, and feel, through the report of experiences and the reflection of some of the situations lived by them, as these personal dispositions guided teachers' practice in the classroom. The semi-structured interview script stimulated teachers to show their understanding on some of the situations, as well as gave them the opportunity to reflect on their actions at the time. This research technic was established by the international research coordination of "*Religião, discriminação e racismo no espaço escolar*" [ReDISCO – in English: Religion, discrimination, and racism at school], in which this study takes part.[3]

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3   Research coordinated by Professor Françoise Lantheaume, at the *Université Lumière Lyon 2*, in France. The study approaches the themes based on teachers' real work in an international perspective, involving Brazil (different regions), Switzerland, Canada, and France.

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We interviewed 18 teachers of lower secondary education of seven different public schools in the city of São Paulo and metropolitan region in the first semester of 2016.[4] The contact with the first teachers was through field observations previously held in the schools they worked. As we noticed the need to embrace the diversity of São Paulo teachers, regarding their geographical location, we used the snowball method, in which the first informants indicated others to compose a non-probabilistic sample. Thus, we conducted interviews with teachers, principals, and directors of São Paulo schools until we have reached a saturation point, in which the information started to be redundant (Albuquerque, 2009).

Aiming to analyze teachers' practices in situations involving ethnic-racial relations, the situations described by the interviewees were used as unities of analysis, as they are singular and involve actors' subjective dimensions (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991). The situations allowed us to consider the meanings actors attributed to the actions and demands of specific actions, hardly repeated. In this sense, the actor is challenged, in each situation, to discover his/her potential to act, to explore his/her professional style, building his/her identity, and reactivating his/her dispositions. Furthermore, the action in place includes personal and professional concerns related to social relations in the work collectivity (Amigues, 2003).

The analysis of this material allowed us to count 78 situations involving issues of religion, discrimination, and racism. Only 11 teachers reported 13 situations that they classified as situations involving ethnic-racial relations.[5] Through crossing the inductive method (Blais & Martineau, 2006) and the deductive method (Van der Maren, 1995) we created categories of analysis (action strategies, objectives of strategies, resources for action, logics of action) and coded the situations.

The situations present here are representative of the plurality of behaviors and worldviews that would be shared by the teachers' group, revealing the professional genre (Clot, 2008), the process of teachers' socialization and, at the same time, point out evidences to the origin of teachers' resources and dispositions. Before presenting some results of this analysis, we will profile the interviewed teachers.

Research *corpus*

First, in this item we present the 18 teachers interviewed, without distinguising their workplace and, in a second moment, we will present the characteristics of the schools they work.

The construction of the interviewed teachers' profile was based on a inductive analysis of the material collected during the interviews, in which we have tried to find common elements shared by these research subjects. Among the interviewed teachers, we have ten women and eight men. The female majority is not surprising as the process of teachers' profissionalization was followed by its feminization (Setton, 2012). Only two teachers were black.

Seven of the 18 teachers interviewed taught History and six Portuguese/Composition/ Grammar. Among the ones who did not teach these two subjects, there was a principal (graduated in Physical Education), a vice-principal (graduated in History), a pedagogical coordinator (graduated in Geography), a mediator teacher (teacher specialized in special needs), and a Science teacher.

Fourteen of them have more than ten-year experience in education. Therefore, it is a population with diverse teaching experiences, what was interesting to this research as they had different perspectives on the educational system and the social role of education. Among them, some profiles can be highlighted. For instance, Ana, a History teacher who taugh in a school in Itaquera, East region of São Paulo, was very active in the Teachers' Union. Carlos Alberto, vice-principal in a school in Parque São Rafael, founded the punk-anarchist movement of the East region when he was young.

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4 The Ethics Committee of the School of Education of *Universidade de São Paulo* approved this research. It respected the ethical procedures established for the scientific research. All names used in this study are fictitious to guarantee the anonymity of research participants and the schools.

5 Among the reports collected, no teacher mentioned the Indigenous questions, thus we do not use the Law n. 11.645 of 2008, which establishes the inclusion of Indigenous history and culture in the school curriculum.

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Two schools had more representativeness in this research due to the field observations held in these places and, therefore, are prominent in this article. Six teachers (Sofia, Natália, Sandra, Eduardo, and Henrique) worked in one school, here called Escola Padre Manuel da Nóbrega in the city of Santo André, metropolitan region of São Paulo, and five teachers (Gabriel, Marta, Sarah, Ricardo, and Patrícia) worked in Escola Academia in the West region of São Paulo. Beyond them, we interviewed a History teacher (Anderson) who worked in two state schools in the city of Ribeirão Pires, metropolitan region of São Paulo, four teachers who worked in the East region of the city (Itaquera – Ana; Sapopemba – César; and Parque São Rafael – André and Carlos Alberto), and two teachers who worked in another school in the city of Santo André (Maraíde and Mônica). The teachers of this last school were blunt on the profile of their students: they lived in the East region of São Paulo and had the financial conditions to support a schooling strategy that allowed them to search what they believed would be a better-quality education in a neighboring city.

Escola Academia had a different regime of institutional organization, granting teachers around 40% of their worktime focused on class preparation and meetings with colleagues and students. Besides this, the school offered transversal projects to discuss themes, such as drug prevention, religious intolerance, and racial discrimination. The *Projeto Negritude* [Project Blackness], particularly interested us for its antiracist proposal, which will be resumed in the item "Empowerement of black students".

Teachers' practices in situations involving the racial issue

In the second part of this article, we present some teaching concepts and practices of the interviewees based on three categorical axes. The first is composed by teachers' testimonies that reveal a certain understanding on ethnic-racial relations in the school and in Brazilian society. On the second, we present some situations involving the implementation of Law n. 10.639/2003. Finally, we show other school situations involving race and teaching practices.

"The society of pretending": challenges to recognize racism

The difficulty to recognize racism can be seen in the testimonies of three teachers who, paradoxically used situations of racial discrimination to justify its absence. In other words, a situation of racial discrimination was interpreted as something punctual or just a joke among students:

> *You know, even here, in school, the racism here in school, that "oh, you black one, your hair is frizzy, kinky hair", it is not an issue of racism in our school. Because here, here I call it a "distasteful joke", because they keep joking. I, in social situations, have never seen it.* (Natália)

It is even more worrisome when we know the role Natália plays in the school. As a mediator teacher, she receives the referrals of other teachers, including those involving racial issues. According to the Portuguese teacher:

> *Here in the classroom, for example, when I see the girls calling M. a monkey, I spoke with S. (pedagogical coordinator), "look, there is bullying happening there, I can't control it, for God's sake", then we had Natália's intervention that talked with them and they told her: "relax, it's all a joke".* (Sofia)

Thus, students take advantage of the teacher's fragility to continue with what they call a joke, a part of children's culture (Gomes, 2012). The teacher would not have access to such culture and, because of that, would find it hard to have a deeper conversation on the theme. The existence of this culture can also be seen in this excerpt of Mônica, about racism she says:

> *. . . it is a very concealed issue, because even among them, there is this code. By the way, among us, Brazilians, there is this tendency of not accepting it because it is something that is widely discussed, because it is wrong, because of this and that, but we do notice some concealed things . . .* (Mônica)

What is treated as "children's culture" or simply a "joke" discredits racial discrimination and reflects how Brazilian society has identified racism in the interpersonal relations, interpreting it through the individualist conception, according to Almeida (2018), which minimizes and naturalizes micro-violences. Mônica's perception shows the blurry and veiled place of Brazilian racism, as conceived by Telles (2003), revealing how the discussion on the topic is still incipient. Part of the teachers and coordinators are unable to theoretically understand how this is a mirror of Brazilian society itself and how the practice of not dealing with this can become a dissemination of racism, characterized by the institutional conception, as in Almeida (2018).

Maraíde, Portuguese teacher, shows her difficulty to deconstruct racism. She proposes that all conflict situations happen due to not knowing the position and the world-view of the other. In this sense, situations involving the ethnic-racial relations should be solved through a conversation between the parts. The teacher affirms that students's attitudes of racial discrimination are mainly grounded on family experiences but that, "as it has happened with me", says Maraíde, there can be a break in the chain of family inheritance:

> *What I often notice is that there are teenagers who go with the flow, it is that kind of thing, like, I don't like, an example like "I don't like black people", "but why don't you like them?" "Ah, because my family doesn't like…" "But wait, why?" The person doesn't know. "Ah, they taught me like this, ah…" I'd start by the issue of knowing, of sitting down with those involved and say let's get to know.* (Maraíde)

Maraíde identifies racism in Brazilian society as transmitted through generations. As a professional in education, it is no surprise that the category and the resource mobilized is "knowledge". However, it is not an intellectual or academic knowledge, but a social and individual one about the other which would guarantee an openness to recognize the different through alterity. However, "combat racism does not mean fighting against individuals, but to oppose practices and ideologies" (Muller, 2018, p. 88). In fact, the solution found by Maraíde may work during her classes, answering to a concrete need to neutralize the time and the space of the school and fulfill her professional obligations, but we cannot identify in it a fight against institutional or structural racism.

The solution proposed for the cases involving the racial issue in school is on the individual scope and only when a conflict situation takes places. The inductive conversations with students to know and learn with one another follow the liberal logic in which the relations between individuals are emphasized, thus not touching the core of Brazilian racism problem.

Regarding more specifically the racism of mark and the miscegenation effects, two teachers (Mônica and Eduardo) mentioned that a great part of the agressors and the victims are black. Eduardo comments: "what I find peculiar is the racism among the black, not only between whites and blacks, one calls the other 'oh, you stinking black', one calling the other, you know?" (Eduardo).

This teachers' line ractifies the non-identification of some black students of their color, origin, and culture. Such phenomenon has been historically and culturally build in Brazil, since the slavery times. Teacher Eduardo, as well as the students, do not recognize the seriousness of this type of relational behavior and deals with these cases as natural, punctual, and mundane. His strategy of action is to avoid a deeper discussion on the topic and turn students' attention to the class as quickly as possible.

Mônica's hypothesis is that students notice a difference in the skin color, what would be an argument for racial discrimination. In other words, some black students with lighter skin, who do not recognize themselves as black, harrass black classmates with darker skin. Thus, skin tone determines those who will have greater social challenges and suffer more prejudice. The teacher explicits an experience she lived and was revealing of the marginal geographic position black people occupy in Brazilian society. Mônica had just changed schools, and started to work in the periphery of São Paulo. In her class, she noticed a student crying:

. . . a girl like, really black, those that are hard for us to see, you know, really, really black, with a very short hair, and then, she didn't want to do anything, I had noticed there were some students laughing. I've removed her from class to ask what was going on, she was in shock, she didn't want to talk, so I called the principal's office and they took her to talk, I didn't know many people at the school in that time. . . . Then a student told me "teacher, from the time she arrived, they have been making fun of her because she is black". I seems she came from Minas [a neighboring state]. "Because she is black, because her hair was short, because she wore flip-flops, she had a skirt on, nothing like the clothes girls wear here, like a skirt, a t-shirt..." (Mônica)

The teacher reports she was surprised and "had no idea what to do, despite my experience" she says. The fact that she was new at the school gave her little authority to deal with such a delicate subject. Therefore:

I choose to say something like: "look, let's respect the new student. She is in a new environment, it is already hard for her and you keep mocking her..." but it was nothing more than this, actually, because of the schedule, I couldn't stay at that school. I left. But it was a school in which this question was much more evident. (Mônica)

Though Mônica's action strategy was to involve students in a discussion, the need to protect herself as a newly arrived teacher has made her discourse not approach the key issues that integrate racial discrimination. That is, once more, the opportunity to work with racial issues appeared in the classroom but was removed by the teacher, even when the professional had the personal sensibility and the intellectual ability to deal with it. She justifies the attitude because she was new at the school and did not know the reaction of the principal and her coworkers. Soon after, Mônica left this school.

This phenomenon is understood by Silva (2018) as a teachers' silencing seen in different studies (Pereira, 2011) on racism, ethnocentrism, and other prejudices. The analysis of the articles published on this theme from 2003 to 2014 allowed the author to affirm that the only measure taken by the school was to incentivize students to ignore the agressions suffered, thus stimulating a culture of silence or, as Anderson, another teacher interviewed, said, "the society of pretending". We understand here that silencing is part of a process of social construction that makes social discimination invisible. Other evidences will be presented below.

The Law n. 10.639/2003

Article 26 of LDB[6] n. 9.394/1996 was altered to Law n. 10.639/2003 that regulates the obligation of the including the theme of Afro-Brazilian culture and history in elementary, secondary, and high school. According to Gomes, N. (2012), this change is an instrument to decolonize the curriculum. This means to legally face the ideology historically disseminated in the curricula, which portrays black people pejoratively, as previously discussed. Due to this obligation, the researched teachers needed to face the theme and position themselves.

"I don't like it, but they make me"

Sofia is a hired teacher[7] of Portuguese and English who works in the state system for the last five years and calls herself "content-oriented". She self-identifies as a black woman and, when talking about her life trajectory, describes several moments in which she faced social discrimination because of her skin color. However, she affirms that the humiliations and injustices propelled her to make choices and reach her current position (Dubet, 2014): her profession is seen as a way to social climb.

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6   *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* [Law of Directives and Bases of National Education] – the most important law concerning education in Brazil.

7   São Paulo state education system does not invest enough to hire teachers through public exams. Therefore, there is a deficit of professionals to work in classrooms, the state then precariously hires teachers, without career stability, on a temporary basis.

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Sofia does not identify with African culture and does not bring up the issue of black ancestry in her ways of being, acting, and thinking. Sofia prefers her hair straight and attends the neo-Pentecostal church *Assembleia de Deus* from an early age. Another evidence of her non-identification with black culture can be seen in her speech. She uses the pronoun "they" when referring to black people, those who "practice" africanities. That is, there is a group connected to Africanities that is different from the group this teacher belongs: "they have a religion very... a religion that suffers from prejudice and in this religion we can perceive [situations of racial discrimination]. Thus, though Sofia is aware of the cultural elements and the consequences of her phenotype, working with African history and culture is only a way to answer a legal demand:

> *I'm working with this not because it like it, I'm working with this because I have to and it's in the legislation. . . . it's my obligation, the legislation says that I have to work with africanities in all years. . . . now in Portuguese the legislation says that you have to insert some Africanity project so that the student can get away from common sense and tolerate other religions.* (Sofia)

The determination to work with Africanities in the curriculum is an obligation fulfilled by the teacher through songs, creation of posters, *capoeira* and literature (when available). Her main objective when doing these activities is to transmit the value of *respect,* even if she does not wish to *defend* the right of freedom of belief or the victims of religious discrimination. Respect without defending is, once more, an individual action that does not touch the collective structure, as the attitude of respect does not have the active function of including and, therefore, cannot be understood as a "factor that affects all" (Coelho, 2018, p. 113). Thus, the exclusion ends up reproducing Brazilian structural racism.

Justifications to not follow the law

One of the characteristics of teachers' work is the resistence to change (Dubet, 2000), mainly when imposed from top to bottom, i.e., from prescriptors that do not necessarily know school reality. The implementation of Afro-Brazilian culture and history through a law implies a double resistance: the first related to the change in itself and the second because it proposes a change on social values impregnated in Brazilian society, by valuing what is undervalued.

The conquest of the black movement on the approval of Law n. 10.639/2003 gives teachers a new professional demand, as a curriculum prescription. As we have seen in the case of Sofia, sometimes, the curriculum innovation does not please all students and they end up using strategies to adapt the fullfillment of the law (Valente, 2010; Lantheaume & Hélou, 2008). In other words, the real curriculum does not correspont to the prescribed curriculum (Gimeno-Sacristán, 2000; Forquin, 1993). Besides teachers' personal resistance in accepting (or not) the prescriptions, other difficulties prevent the implementation of Law n. 10.639/2003. Three teachers explicit the challenges faced when teaching.

Natália, the mediator teacher, affirms that the proposal of working African culture and history is "not yet accepted by teachers", as there are a series of prejudices among them when talking about the role of African culture in colonial Brazil. Actually if, on one hand, the law forces the recognition of black people as one of the great reasons for the settlement and enrichment of colonial Brazil and the spark for social and political changes in this historic period (Moura, 1992), on the other, the social structure places them in the less privileged positions. The paradox seems to be much too strong to be approached in the classroom.

Teachers' resistance is explained by Natália for the lack of training/education. However, this justification is always connected to the fact the teachers need to have financial conditions to do so, as well as use their free time.

Training could also be the answer and the motivation for the action of teacher Maraíde. To her, the work on Afro-Brazilian culture and history remains on paper because teachers are insecure and have difficulties to face the questions of parents, students, or colleagues:

It always creates conflicts and internal discussions, you know, and then it ends up been something kinda fragmented, now with the Olympics, it is nice, right, to show all the black people that are part of a sport, make a pannel, you know, you say, those are the black people that are part of the sport and that is it. . . . I think it is a cleavage done by the won teacher.

Researchers: Why?

Maraíde: It is insecurity. I belive it is insecurity. It is not knowing how to place yourself in front of the topic, of saying "I'm not here to change anyone's opinion", it is even contradictory, to say that we are opinion markers, but, like, I'm here to say that within this culture there is such religion that is discriminated against by basically the majority of people that don't like it. I have nothing against it. I don't, I've read about it, I don't have it [prejudice], like, but I notice that, because when we reach this question "ah we'll talk about.." "oh no..." there is an unfamiliarity, this issue that if I'm questioned by a father, for example, how will I argue. To argue you need to know, so people run away from this. (Maraíde)

To Carlos Alberto there are other resistances. The History teacher and vice principal of a school in the East region of São Paulo affirms that there is an objection to work certain themes in the school, not only from the teachers but also the students. Carlos Alberto calls the historical moment an 'unreflected radicality' that censors certain topics to be worked in school, one of them would be Afro--Brazilian history and culture.

The lack of training or the resistance of parents, students, and colleagues, or, even values incompatible with the change of perspective on ethnic-racial relations in Brazil would only be a scape goat to justify the non-fullfilment of the law. That is, the most frequent action strategy of teachers is the relativization of situations related to the Law n. 10.639/2003. By relativization, we understand that, in this case, teachers are aware of the existing debt between real teaching practice and curricular prescription, but are satisfied with it (Lantheaume & Hélou, 2008), as they can ease their work and avoid conflict.

Generally, teachers present the situations as justifications, more or less grounded, to not fulfill Law n. 10.639/2003. As Miranda (2012) affirms, in the context of religious intolerance, the legality does not have enough recognition to deal with situations of discrimination in Brazilian society, also because society itself minimizes these cases. Nonetheless, it is clear that the legal prescription does not go through a process of didactic transposition; it requires an effort of activism, of training/education, and teachers' interest on the theme. This motivation cannot be imposed, it exists only if kindled by teachers themselves. On the other hand, the law, and other curricular prescriptions, supports and legitimizes teachers' practices that, using their teaching autonomy, propose activities that allow a more reflexive and autonomous posture of the students, even when the teacher has no support in the school space.

Religious racism

The black movement created the expression *religious racism* and it was present in the legal debate on racial quotas, mainly in 2012. This term is used to designate situations in which racism is the base of the discrimination against Afro-Brazilian religions, thus the concept of religious intolerance is not enough (Oliveira, 2017). Religious racism is one more way to depreciate black and Afro-Brazilian culture, through its religious dimension, originated in the colonial and slave period. This way of racial discrimination, first practiced by Catholicism, has gained power in another strand of Christianism with the recent expansion of Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal churches. With the increase of black activism, the debate on the respect and religious tolerance has gained certain prominence in an area that was under religious subalternity. We highlight below two situations that approach this question.

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Interpretations on the censorship of jongo

The Physical Education (PE) teacher in Escola Academia decided to work with the dance of *jongo*. Though the case was described by three teachers (Gabriel, Marta, and Sarah), none of them had actively participated in the situation. The situation took place some years ago when the PE teacher prepared a presentation of *jongo* to present in a traditional school part in July. The father of student wrote a letter to complain about the practice, claiming that the dance would bring some elements "of *macumba*".[8]

There were several exchanges between the teachers to discuss how to answer the father. Though only one teacher was explicitly supportive with the father's demand, the decision of the school direction, at that time, was to suspend the presentation. However, during the interviews, the three teachers lamented this decision and affirmed that *jongo* would nowadays be a symbol of the school, representing a peripheric and black cultural manifestation that is part of Brazilian cultural diversity.

To Gabriel, a History teacher, it was a cultural dispute between the student's father and the teacher's proposal. While the father sees *jongo* as a religious manifestation, Gabriel and the teachers perceive the dance, of African origins, as a cultural manifestation.

> *The area of human sciences manifested its support to the teacher, saying they understood that* jongo *was used as a cultural manifestation, not as religious proselitism, that there was not cult to any divinity and so on. . . . it was just music, I remember that at the time we had this discussion and manifested the support [to the PE teacher].* (Gabriel)

For the Grammar teacher, Marta, the school's decision shows an "administrative weakness", that is patronizing when facing students and the school community, accepting parental demands based on the market logic: "the principal office at the time took a very strange position which disrespected the coexistence of all religions". According to Marta, the school's decision hindered not only school's internal rules, but also the rights of individuals as citizens.

The culture of *jongo* as a way to transmit Brazilian cultural diversity is not only an individual principle of these teachers, but one of the main guidelines of the school: "The school will broaden the relation of the subject with the knowledge object beyond the content of traditional school subjects, including cultural production" (excerpt from the Pedagogical Project of the school).

We must say that *jongo* is a popular dance orignated in the African region of Congo-Angola, imported by the slaved blacks brought to Brazil, practiced mainly in rural areas. That is, though it is part of the culture, its black and mystical origin, makes *jongo* a peripheric practice, victim of prejudices, reason why this practice had to be defended by the teachers. The support and recognition of pedagogical choices and teachers' practice is done with the support of the peer group, strengthening the autonomy and legitimation of the education professional, who suffers criticism external to the school. However, the collective action is established by an in-service training/education or, in other terms, teachers' professional socialization and through a school culture, in the terms of Mafra (2003),

> *I think that the school has to have moments for the teachers to debate these questions. It would be part of the 'package' of teacher training. . . . I don't think that these trainings guarantee a change of attitudes or that teachers know what to say and do the right thing when the situations happen, but I think that training increases the chances for it to happen. Now, the training also depends, I mean, there is the teacher's life story, there is a trajectory of his worldview, a reading on who he is, the values of who he is, to comply more or less to what is proposed there, but maybe a less compliant teacher, it is better for him to have 10% of compliance than that when he got there, it is positive, that is why I don't ignore this investiment in training.* (Gabriel)

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8   *Macumba* is a term from the African language *quicongo* referring to a religious musical instrument. In Brazil, it started to be used to generically call Afro-Brazilian religions and is often used pejoratively by non-believers.

Repertoire, experience, and respect are the categories most used by interviewees to evaluate the *jongo* situation. The fact that they have a large experience in the same school (between 15 and 20 years) favours the sharing of categories of thought and worldviews, which values teachers' autonomy, formal and informal exchange between professionals, and Brazilian cultural diversity.

Empowerement of black students

In the same school, Escola Academia, there is a project called *Negritude* [Blackness] which dates before the law of 2003 and is a school project, not the project of a single teacher as it is common to find in schools (Pereira, 2011). It proposes montly meetings and is offered to students from the lower secondary education until high school. Through this project, the school aims to contemplate students' heterogeneity, empowering black students in the construction of their identities and promoting debates on racial discrimination in Brazil.

However, despite this, there was in this school another situation of religious racism, described by the teacher Ricardo, who taugh History. A student suffered retaliations from the classmates because she was using a turban, seen as a symbol of religious belonging. In this sense, the religious and racial dimensions are mixed, as the girl was black. The teacher's attitude when faced by this situation was, in his own words, to "empower the student", mainly using the argument that she did not need to be embarassed of herself or hide her identiy. He justifies his attitude, the following way:

> *The same way that you have to embrace, answer the one harrassed, and try to act in a situation of empowering the harrassed person. So, I think that in these less emblematic cases, that appear less, our interference ends up being much more in this sense, of you answering a group so that the group sees itself as an agressor, as someone who is acting with violence, that is discriminating, that often, doesn't notice this, it doesn't do it deliberatly, it doesn't discriminate because it is aware that it's discriminating, at least not in this phase of K-12, in most cases, so you have to answer the one that is agressed in the sense of trying to establish in him the self-esteem, the empowerement, until you create on him some defense mechanism to, at least try, not accept that way he is been.* (Ricardo)

The word "empowerement" is used here as a native term of the teacher. However, its use as an analytical category has diverse conceptions, according to Perkins and Zimmerman (1995), among them, the community process that allows an internal transformation that leads to mental health. It is no coincidence that black activists have been using the terms in a process to empower the individual towards the self-acceptance and self-valuing of black identity (Berth, 2018).

This action strategy, i.e., the promotion and stimulus for the student to accept and defend her identity characteristics was also used in another situation of racist cursing among students, described by teacher Ana, from the East region of São Paulo. The two experienced teachers taught History. In both situations, empowerement resulted in the identity construction of the student, going beyond school walls, and deconstructing the idea of a social space that can and should be occupied by certain people, thus combating institutional and structural racism. However, the teachers that reported this type of action strategy when facing racial issues have a certain type reflection, a personal activism in favor of social structure, but they are not alone. The sharing of "unquestionable values" (Marta) to a group of teacher provokes a certain axiological homogenization that is protected, reaffirmed, and reproduced in and through teachers' actions.

Then, we have identified in this research that to join the defense of racially discriminated subjects, the teachers, supported by their peers, have the courage, the motivation, and the power to act against racial discrimination in school.

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Final remarks

The *corpus* of this research has shown that the majority of teachers does not place racial discrimation as a priority in their teaching practice. Those who prioritze it were part of Escola Academia, except by one teacher. This school is different in several aspects and the discussions with the students take place not only in the everyday life of the school, but as a broad project guided by many teachers and involving a great number of students. The difference is, in fact, the empowerement of students on one hand and the training/education and awareness of teachers, and on the other, the importance of racial discussion. The fact that the school has a project about blackness allows a continuous in-service formation on the theme of ethnic-racial relations resulting in confrontations against racism in this establishment as part of school culture. In other words, good work conditions favor the exchange between teachers that, on its turn, feeds a reflexivity movement, and allows a space to create professional resources that are able to interfere in social transformation, in this case, the antiracism fight.

In contrast, most situations involving the ethnic-racial relations narrated by teachers in other schools was interpreted by them as a game/joke among students, in which teachers did not have the tools or did not feel competent enough to intervene. Even when the teacher proposes solutions for the conflicts, they happen in the individual and punctual scope and have no potential to raise social awareness on the structural and institutional racism lived in Brazil. That is to say, racism is reduced to an individualist conception.

Such naturalization of discrimination and the presence of a "racist culture" within the school reproduce social inequalities, by institutional racism, and prove the still difficult acces to an education of rights for citzenship. The difficulty of the faculty to deal with the theme of racism suggests that the education for equality needs, first, to be guided towards education professionals. The unfamiliarity with the concepts of racism – individual, institutional, and structural; of mark and of origin – in Brazilian society does not allow them to combat the racist practices that permeate the social relations in the school environment. Thus, the relativization and invisibilization by the teachers of racial discrimination are part of a social project that reflects the structural racism of Brazilian society. We do not want to blame teacher, but show that they are not aware of the influence of their beliefs in their professional practices (Gay, 2014).

Though Law n. 10.639/2003 was an achievement of the black movement, representing a step towards the change of social structure, Muller (2018) shows there were no significant and impactful changes in didactic books. On its turn, this research reveals that the law is little applied in the real curriculum, as it is not followed by public policies of teacher education. Coelho (2018) identifies that the fragility of the formative trajectory is as a recurrent theme in articles, theses, and dissertations published between 2003 and 2014 on teacher education and ethnic-racial relations. Beyond the possible criticisms on this legal tool, based on teacher education, inspired by Glass (2012), we can say that the law proposes a types of racial sensibility focused on the history and the policies of social relations, approching race through multiculturality, but without portraying the diversity of existing racial identities nor pointing out the power relations that transform the differences into inequalities. Hence, Law n. 10.639/2003 would be a first step towards a racial criticism in school, whose creation and implementation need to be known and discussed by teachers to contribuite to the fight against Brazilian structural racism.

According to Glass (2012, p. 898), "racial identity is not a basic known principle", that is, it should be built according to the sociocultural situation in which the individual lives. School provides schooling experiences that do not belong to the individuals, as they are external to them, but allows actors to go through a process to self-build their identities (Dubet & Martuccelli, 1996). In this sense, a teaching intervention that allows students to recognize the contradictions and diversities (connected

to gender, social class, and ethnicities) as culturally and historically built identities could also allow the deconstruction of assumptions when proposing a reflection on the politics of power present in social relations, assuming the responsibility to socially transform oneself and the collective. Therefore, a more qualified teacher education is needed to enact this legal achievement in the real curriculum. However, its effectiveness will depend on work conditions that favor the discussion on ethnic-racial relations and on the social role of school in the antiracist fight.

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Data availability statement

The data for this research are available at: https://data.scielo.org/dataverse/brcp

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