Raciality, intersubjectivity and transgression in the Brazilian system of socio-educational services: insights for social education

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Abstract

Social work and social pedagogy deal with a diverse and intricate set of social realities, while facing major issues such as racism and interracial relations. In this article, we look at studies of racism in Brazil and data from research into intersubjectivity conducted in the context of Brazilian socio-educational services. We also consider the ideas of Paulo Freire and bell hooks, notably bell hooks's conception of transgression in an engaged pedagogy and Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed and pedagogy of hope. We present and discuss a theoretical model for addressing ethnic-racial issues and racism in

educational settings, involving processes of peripherisation, exclusion, invisibilisation and elimination. We aim to offer insights into social education and social work, departing from the articulation of studies of raciality, intersubjectivity, transgression and education as a practice of freedom. These insights can inform social pedagogy and the development of effective public policies and offer a broader perspective on the role of education and social work in promoting social justice and anti-racism in diverse educational settings, such as youth justice.

Keywords racism; social work; social pedagogy; anti-racist education; transgression; pedagogy of hope

Introduction

Social work and social pedagogy deal with a diverse set of social realities. This complex scenario demands that, besides a strong technical and theoretical grounding, social workers use considerable creativity, sensitivity and ethics to cooperate with the groups they care for and to promote social justice and equity (Oliveira and Yokoy, 2022). One specific context where social workers face very intricate challenges is youth justice, mainly because youth delinquency, particularly in developing countries, is never an isolated phenomenon. On the contrary, it is merely the tip of the iceberg formed by socio-economic inequality and issues of race, gender, age and lack of educational opportunities (Currie, 2020). This article therefore focuses on raciality, power dynamics and racial inequality as topics of paramount importance for a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by social workers in their everyday practice within the youth justice system. At the same time, youth justice facilities are considered important in understanding the impact of racism on the development of Brazilian adolescents.

We examine racism, raciality and racialisation in relation to the unique aspects of the Brazilian colonisation process. We present a theoretical model for addressing ethnic-racial issues and racism in educational settings, encompassing processes of peripherisation, exclusion, invisibilisation and elimination. To enrich our analysis, we engage our studies on raciality and intersubjectivity conducted within the Brazilian system of socio-educational services for young offenders with bell hooks's concept of transgression within an engaged pedagogy, as well as Paulo Freire's pedagogies of the oppressed and of hope. Our goal is to provide valuable insights for social education and social work that can inform the development of effective public policies and offer a comprehensive perspective on the roles of education and social work in promoting social justice and combating racism in diverse educational contexts, including youth justice settings.

The typical profile of adolescents attending youth justice facilities in Brazil consists of unschooled Black males aged 15 to 17 years old (Brasil, 2019). In contrast, most social workers in this system are white, educated men and women. The explicit contradiction that derives from these contrasting profiles concerns intersubjective relations within the youth justice system and indicates the importance of considering the complex network of racial values and power relations that will shape the adolescents' social experiences and the developmental processes permeated by such facilities.

Culture and affectivity are united in human development and the dimensions of subjectivity. It is crucial to recognise the intermingled connection of culture and subjectivity in the development of adolescents (Oliveira, 2021) – especially those engaged in criminal activities – to elucidate complex phenomena such as racism in socio-education. The cultural-semiotic paradigm and other dialogical perspectives in psychology offer a valuable theoretical framework for a more nuanced, critical debate on social work in Latin American countries. Among these countries, it is interesting to see that Brazil is in a peculiar situation, different from other ex-colonies. While other countries jumped from the colonialist condition to one of republican democracy, what happened in Brazil was that the end of the colonial period coincided with the migration of the Portuguese royal family to Brazil, transforming this country into an empire; a political regime that persisted for 60 years (Nogueira and Bizerril, 2021). Therefore, Brazil's socio-cultural values are rooted deeply in this enduring Portuguese heritage, which guides many aspects of contemporary life.

Racism, raciality and racialisation

The concept of race emerged during the colonial period (Kilomba, 2019). It connected skin colour and other phenotypical aspects with a biological basis that legitimised discrimination and the inferiorisation of specific groups. The biological concept of race, however, was developed later – in the nineteenth century – and has since been used largely to explain and legitimise colonial violence such as slavery, sexual violence and torture directed at colonised people. Although the idea of biological race has been disproven by recent scientific counter-arguments (Omi and Winant, 2014; Schucman, 2014; Tate and Audette, 2001; Yudell et al., 2016), discrimination based on ethnic differences persists.

Any human group can be racialised (Hook, 2012; Miles, 1996) and suffer racism. However, racism cannot be explained solely as an irrational hatred of some human beings against others, or even of groups against other groups. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, racist concepts and practices were strongly supported by science, or rather by the alleged scientific field of eugenics. Here, the racialisation of cultural differences distinguishes some racial groups as inferior and to be viewed negatively, fostering discrimination, prejudice and social exclusion (Fallace, 2015).

To fully comprehend racism at the socio-cultural level, it is important to acknowledge its complex and structural nature. Racism extends beyond the individualistic notions of ethical and moral behaviour and rejects the assumption that every member of a racialised society develops in conditions of supposed social equality. According to Almeida (2019), 'Racism is always structural … it is an element that integrates the economic and political organization of society … it is not a pathological phenomenon nor one that expresses some kind of abnormality' (p. 20; authors' own translation).

Racialisation encompasses more than just racism. It is rooted in the historical and social processes that shape a group's collective culture and its general understanding of specific physical characteristics as biological markers of emotional, cognitive or attitudinal abilities. Mostly, racialisation involves the ways in which knowledge and power dynamics shape the identities of various subgroups within a socio-cultural context. This intricate system of meanings concerning race canalises beliefs, values, discourses and emotions, among other things, defining the aesthetic and moral standards that individuals use as external and internal references in constructing their self-image, identity, personal culture and sense of belonging to a constructed community.

Drawing from a socio-cultural and dialogic epistemology in critical social psychology, the concept of racialisation refers to identity patterns linked closely to adherence to socio-cultural values that circumvent specific groups' phenotypic characteristics. This can regulate and influence everyday interactions in ways that either promote or hinder the development of ethical and mutually beneficial intersubjectivity. In societies strongly organised by racial hierarchies, as is the case in Brazil, race assumes a dominant position as a hyper-generalised sign (Valsiner, 2012) that permeates most interpersonal relations, producing stigmatisation and trauma, especially for individuals whose experiences are shaped by a subordinated racial identity. While raciality cannot be detached from other markers of identity, such as gender, class, religion or politics, it holds utmost importance in the personal developmental trajectories of individuals.

Colonisation and the peculiarities of racism in Brazil

Throughout history, Afro-Brazilians have been pressured to conform to white cultural norms, which affect their self-presentation and influence their choices in friendships and romantic relationships. In this 'whitening' process, individuals or groups with non-white or mixed-race backgrounds attempt to lighten their skin tone and/or conform to white cultural norms to gain greater social status and acceptance (Maia and Zamora, 2018).

Despite having a diverse ethnic matrix, the Brazilian national identity is whitened, leading to many forms of racial tension that affect social transactions and limit economic mobility, cultural visibility and political participation. Similar to other formerly colonised nations, Brazil is a product of what is commonly referred to as miscegenation (Freyre, 1933), meaning supposedly fluid, frictionless interracial relations. However, this romanticised term hides various forms of violence, including the systematic rape of Indigenous and Black women and girls.

Brazilian society tends to (pathologically) deny the existence of racism, which exacerbates efforts to combat it and makes the anti-racism fight more difficult (Telles et al., 2021). Although data on

social inequality show that racism cannot be reduced to poverty, racial inequalities often converge with poverty. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2022), the Black population faces diverse social inequalities by colour or race in Brazil. They make up 72.9 per cent of the poor and extremely poor populations and frequently reside in areas with poorer living conditions compared to the white population. They also struggle to access higher educational standards, job opportunities, labour income, property, political representation, health care, good housing conditions and sanitation.

Various studies have demonstrated the paradoxical nature of Brazilian racism. Consistent across these studies is the inference that while most individuals acknowledge the existence of racial prejudice as an important feature in Brazilian society, they fail to recognise it in themselves. Another noteworthy aspect is that, despite its highly diverse ethnic matrix, with approximately 56 per cent of individuals self-characterised as Black or mixed race (turning the white population into a minority group), the typical Brazilian self-image is coincident with that of white people. Thus, explicit and implicit forms of structural racism result in extreme inequality between Black and white Brazilians. Indigenous people also face worse social conditions than Black Brazilians.

One specific feature of racism in Brazil is colourism. Following Góes (2022), the concept of colourism was first coined by US novelist, poet and social activist Alice Walker in 1983 to describe a racial-patriarchal system that values light skin over dark skin within the US Black community. But, unlike the USA, where racial identities are well-established and form easily differentiated categories, in Brazil, the system of race categorisation involves an extensive palette of skin tones. In this palette, individuals with darker skin tones experience even poorer opportunities and more severe forms of discrimination than those with lighter skin tones. Interestingly, in Brazil an individual can be identified as white, even if one of their parents is Black, as long as their skin tone is lighter than that of other family members.

Colourism is often perpetuated by societal norms and media representations that uphold lighter skin as the major beauty standard. Colourism is present in employment discrimination, unequal access to education and health care and biased treatment within the criminal justice system. It is responsible for problems of self-esteem and identity and may induce mental-health problems. Thus, colourism is a multifaceted and complex matter (Nogueira, 2007). Acknowledging its presence and actively addressing it is crucial to promoting equity and fostering inclusivity and diversity in contemporary societies.

Dynamics and impacts of racism on adolescence: the subjectivisation of racism

One important consequence of racism is its impact on subjectivity. This topic was approached first by Franz Fanon (2008), who argued that most of the theoretical models that informed psychiatry, including psychoanalysis and phenomenology, were based exclusively on the perspectives of the white population, while the vantage point of Black people was totally excluded. The subjectivation of racism is dependent on the dynamic interplay between socio-cultural and personal factors. Beyond being part of interpersonal or group experience, racism is embedded deeply in subjectivity, one's personal history and identity.

While socio-cultural factors such as power relations, historical legacies and cultural norms play a significant role in shaping racist attitudes and behaviours, subjective factors such as personal experiences, emotions and the psychological processes throughout life represent a core aspect in the subjective dimension of racism. This refers to how members of a racialised group internalise the social voices by which they are shaped by broader society through semiotic means. Therefore, reaching a deeper understanding of racism and combating it in societies requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges the interdependence of socio-cultural and subjective factors.

The dialectics of social and personal dimensions of racism have particularly problematic consequences for adolescents. During this stage of life, both interpersonal interactions and identity formation are aspects of great importance, and human development tends to be negatively affected, resulting in lower self-esteem and weaker self-image. Weak self-image socially impacted by racism can lead to limited educational and professional opportunities, perpetuating cycles of socio-economic exclusion, as well as limiting lived perspectives. Statistics from the Brazilian Public Security Yearbook (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2023) reveal a shocking mortality rate among young Black people. In 2022, 50.2 per cent of victims of intentional violent deaths were young (12 to 29 years old),

male (91.4 per cent) and Black (76.9 per cent). The data show that in 8 out of 10 violent deaths of Brazilian adolescents the victims are Black individuals. The racial bias in the data is so overwhelmingly clear that the phenomenon has been referred to as the Black genocide (Almeida, 2019; Nascimento, 2016; Ramos, 2021).

Despite Black male adolescents representing the vast majority in Brazilian youth justice facilities, this cannot be taken as evidence of their higher propensity to crime. The complex network of racial values surrounding the phenomenon of Black youth violence challenges most of the moral, psychological and axiomatic causes commonly attributed to it. Our studies with adolescents who were living under socio-educational sanctions within facilities in Brasília, Brazil, have shown that experiencing rights violation, neglect, prejudice, racial discrimination, aporophobia and oppression is part of the daily life of powerless groups, young offenders included (Cunha et al., 2020; Oliveira et al., 2018; Yokoy and Rengifo-Herrera, 2020). Moreover, these are long-standing problems that, most of the time, pre-existed the infraction itself and occurred in various settings, including schools, the proximal community, public facilities and other spaces.

The authors are currently working on a general model to represent the dynamics of the harmful psychosocial impacts of institutional racism on subjectivities, particularly in young people, drawing on specific contributions of the works of Lotman (1996) on the semiosphere, Valsiner (2012) on affective-semiotic fields and Sawaia (2004) on inclusion/exclusion processes. Valsiner (2012) mentions that intolerance is one possible response by the subject in the face of tensioned, opposite semiotic fields associated with power imbalance. Intolerance, according to Valsiner, assumes two alternative forms: the assimilative form – which occurs when the subject or specific group is forced to change their perspective, adjusting it to the most powerful group's perspective – and the eliminative form, in which the powerless individuals or groups are, literally or symbolically, annihilated.

Applying these ideas to the forms of intolerance related to racism in our model of the dynamics of the psychosocial impacts of racism on subjectivities, assimilative intolerance is divided into four other possibilities: peripherisation, exclusion, invisibilisation and elimination (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Dynamics of the psychosocial impacts of racism on subjectivities
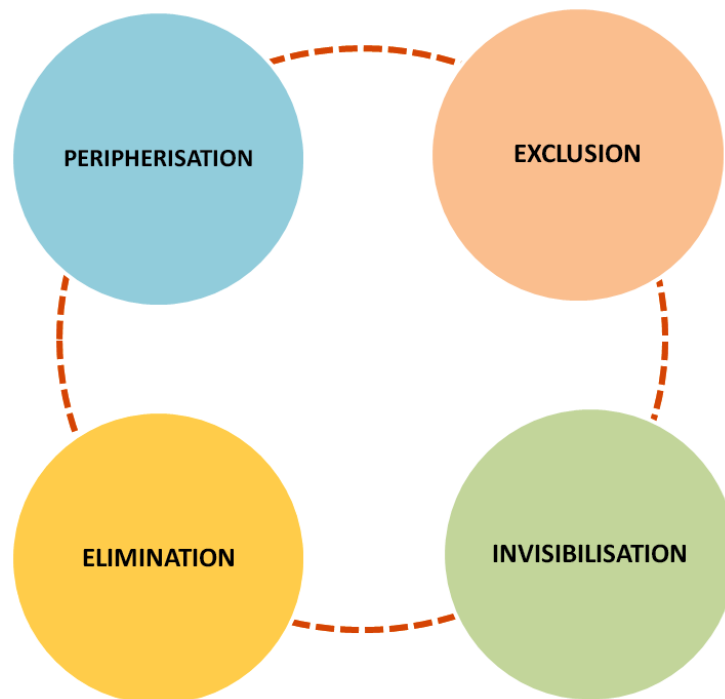
Peripherisation refers to the physical and symbolic process by which certain groups are pushed towards the margins of society and excluded from mainstream social, economic and political life. This can lead to feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness and isolation, as well as decreased access to resources and

opportunities. Specifically, peripherisation affects Black lives by relegating them to marginalised areas such as favelas, shantytowns and ghettos, favouring dropping out of school and informal or illegal work positions. This means the exportation of Black lives to the geopolitical and semiotic periphery of society, resulting in the perpetuation of systemic disadvantages and discrimination.

Another main psychosocial effect of racism is exclusion, which refers to the form of inferiority in which rights are reduced and the subjects are only allowed to access the peripheral zones of the system of values and beliefs shared by their group. According to Sawaia (2004), inclusion and exclusion are two sides of the same coin, so whenever an individual or group is subject to forms of exclusion from a particular context, they are simultaneously included in an alternative, depreciated context. Racial prejudice therefore converts aspects of the devalued group, such as its religion, music, clothing, adornment styles and visual images, as inferior and worthless (Sawaia, 2004). Exclusion is the result of the devaluation and marginalisation of the cultural expressions and practices of these groups, which are often stigmatised as inferior or deviant compared to the dominant societal norms and standards. Exclusion processes deny individuals and groups access to important social and economic resources, such as education, health care and employment. This can create a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities, which can be particularly damaging for young people as they strive to establish themselves in the world.

Invisibilisation is another possible effect of racism, more severe even than peripherisation and exclusion. It refers to the process by which the semiotic markers that signify the origin and lifestyle of a so-called minority group become invisible or ignored by dominant cultural narratives and representations. This leads to a situation where the empowered groups live as though the invisible groups do not exist at all, denying them agency and contributing to their invisibility. Invisibilisation can lead to a sense of cultural dislocation and alienation, as well as the feeling of being othered or excluded from mainstream society. In its utmost form, invisibilisation leads to psychological suffering and mental illness.

Finally, elimination refers to the deliberate actions taken by dominant groups to erase the existence and contributions of marginalised groups from society. This can include symbolic strategies to silence their voices, prevent their political activism and limit their economic participation. It may also involve objective measures to justify or allow their premature deaths through inadequate access to health care, higher rates of mental health issues or higher rates of homicide or suicide, following a necropolitical perspective (Mbembe, 2018). Elimination can take many forms, from direct violence to more subtle systemic processes, and can have devastating effects on marginalised groups and individuals. This can lead to feelings of powerlessness and erasure, as well as the loss of cultural and historical knowledge and traditions.

The mentioned psychosocial effects of racism are systematically related. They are part of the complex network of societal variables present in the chronotope in which a juvenile criminal trajectory develops. Understanding the interplay between peripherisation, exclusion, invisibilisation and elimination can help social workers to better comprehend the challenges that vulnerable youths face and create effective interventions that address their needs. Indeed, it is essential to consider the systemic nature of societal variables that contribute to the development of juvenile criminal trajectories.

It is also important to recognise and address intentionally these effects through meaningful practices in the context of social work, to promote social justice and equity. As social workers and researchers, we advocate that it is crucial to approach these issues with a critical and reflexive perspective, acknowledging our own positions, place of speech (or *lugar de fala* in Brazilian Portuguese) and the power dynamics at play. Collaborating with vulnerable youth and their communities to co-construct alternative developmental trajectories for ex-offenders can contribute to their social inclusion, visibilisation and human rights.

Raciality and intersubjectivity in the Brazilian National System of Socio-educational Services for young offenders

The Brazilian National System of Socio-educational Services (Sistema Nacional de Atendimento Socioeducativo [SINASE]) was set up in 2006 with the purpose of guiding the administration of socio-educational measures imposed on adolescents who committed criminal infractions, as provided for in the Brazilian Statute of Children and Adolescents. The presiding judge has the authority to impose socio-educational measures, which may encompass non-custodial sanctions, such as community service,

or custodial sanctions, such as internment. The provision of support is facilitated by socio-educational services, staffed by a team of qualified social-educators with diverse academic backgrounds.

SINASE comprises the articulation of different public policies and aims to promote the reintegration of these adolescents into society by ensuring their rights and providing them with comprehensive and interdisciplinary care. Furthermore, it aims to enhance the training of professionals working in the socio-educational area, as well as encourage the participation of civil society in the process of formulating and implementing public policies in this area.

Despite the existence of SINASE, the Brazilian youth justice system still faces challenges in ensuring the rights of adolescents and promoting their social reintegration. The system is often criticised for its punitive character and the high number of adolescents in deprivation of their liberty, many of whom are Black and from socially vulnerable backgrounds (Brasil, 2019). There is a need for further reflection and action to promote a more humane and effective youth justice system in Brazil.

SINASE was formally established by a federal law in 2012 (Brasil, 2012), but since then, discussions on racial issues have remained relatively limited in this field. This is significant because the majority of adolescents subject to socio-educational sanctions are Black and discussions on racism are essential for understanding juvenile offences (Ortegal, 2018).

Even before violating the law and undergoing socio-educational measures, Black Brazilian adolescents frequently face racism and criminalisation. Our research indicates that many adolescents in SINASE have experienced peripherisation, exclusion, invisibilisation and elimination along their developmental trajectories (Cunha et al., 2020; Silva and Zamora, 2019; Yokoy and Rengifo-Herrera, 2020). Similar experiences persist while undergoing socio-educational sanctions. In daily interactions, we often hear racist discourse, such as when a social-education agent approaches a complaining adolescent, saying 'Be quiet, nigga boy!' ('Fica quieto, neguinho!').

In the daily life of socio-educational facilities, adolescents are rarely listened to or attended to in a meaningful way. Many social-education agents face difficulties in enhancing dialogicality and reproduce hierarchical, distanced transactions; consequently, these professionals hardly view themselves as genuine educators. This process is exemplified by a female social-education agent who stated: 'Over time, I've learned to talk only about what really matters and then … there's more respect as well. I do not talk that much. I do not approach the adolescents closely, like … because it will not help' (Yokoy and Rengifo-Herrera, 2020, p. 106).

Ortegal and Galiza (2018) found that the majority of Black adolescents who are presently subject to socio-educational sanctions in Brazil became involved in criminal networks after being repeatedly criminalised by society, notably because of the lack of access to social protection policies. Frequently, young people feel like they have nothing to lose – neither dreams nor projects for their future. Ortegal and Galiza (2018), who are themselves Brazilian social workers, have referred to the consequences of this process as the 'death of hope' (p. 3).

The potential of transgression, as defined by bell hooks (1994), is an inspiring concept in social pedagogy and socio-education, particularly if the aim is to develop pedagogical practices that help young Black adolescents maintain hope and if social workers position themselves as 'guardians of hope' (hooks, 2003, p. 105). In the subsequent sections, we delve into issues related to education and transgression, in dialogue with Paulo Freire and bell hooks, and provide an overview of the implications of the transgressive perspective for a new approach to applied psychology in the social field, based on research data.

Keeping hope alive: Freire's pedagogy of hope and hooks's engaged pedagogy

bell hooks, a US feminist theorist and educator, was influenced by Brazilian pedagogue and philosopher Paulo Freire's concepts of the pedagogy of the oppressed (1970/1987) and the pedagogy of hope (1992/1997). Freire is the patron of education in Brazil and is the third most quoted thinker in humanities studies globally. Regrettably, his ideals have been attacked severely in Brazil since the advent of the far right, coinciding with the previous federal government (2019–22).

According to Freire, genuine educational practice always includes hope, considering that education is a practice of freedom. Freire's (1970/1987) 'pedagogy of hope' emphasises critical awareness, denouncing oppression and announcing brand new, communally created futures. Many educators

around the world who oppose dominant pedagogical systems – such as colonialism, racism, sexism and class elitism – are committed to putting it into practice. Freire's pedagogy of hope emphasises the importance of fostering hope and optimism in students, particularly those who are marginalised or oppressed. This approach emphasises the need for critical thinking and reflection and seeks to empower students to become active agents of change in their communities.

Freire (1970/1987) criticises the 'banking' model of education (p. 23), typical in traditional pedagogy, in which pupils are frequently positioned as empty vessels to be filled with information by teachers, using piggy-bank analogies and an assembly-line method of learning. Instead, students are seen as co-creators of knowledge in Freire's (1970/1987) 'liberating' model of education (p. 35) and their social reality is addressed constantly throughout educational activities. In this sense, educators must work with students rather than on or for them. Liberating educational practices take into account students' lived experiences and collectively develop strategies to overcome constraints and expand possibilities.

The principles of social transformation, human dignity, freedom and justice for all are shared by hooks and Freire. They are both committed to establishing democratic educational practices. Both view education as a kind of liberation that must be connected to the pursuit of social justice. Both support the creation of learning communities that transgress and challenge repressive structures. Both acknowledge the colonial legacy of their respective countries and how it manifests in the education system.

Freire and hooks both emphasise the importance of critical pedagogy in addressing issues of social inequality and injustice, including those related to race and racism. To overcome these barriers, it is crucial to adopt a praxis that bridges the gap between our experiences outside academia and academic practices. In a similar vein, hooks (1994) asserts that the teacher's primary objective should be to teach students how to transgress against racial, sexual and class boundaries to attain freedom. hooks investigates the classroom as both a constraint and a potential source of liberation. She emphasises that teaching acts as a catalyst, encouraging individuals to become increasingly engaged in the learning process (Specia and Osman, 2015).

hooks (1994) stands for an 'engaged pedagogy' (p. 13), which holds that educational activities should be liberating for all participants. hooks's engaged pedagogy also emphasises the need for critical thinking and reflection, but goes further in advocating for the integration of social justice issues into the classroom. This approach encourages students to critically examine power structures and to engage in dialogue and action aimed at creating a more just and equitable society. Both Freire's and hooks's approaches highlight the importance of education as a means of promoting social change and creating a better world.

hooks (1994) also provides intriguing intersectional pedagogical insights into issues of racial, class and gender oppression. She presents the concept of 'transgression' (p. 12) in critical pedagogy as the very dynamic that enables education to become a practice of freedom, as postulated by Freire. She suggests that through transgressing, one goes against and beyond conventional pedagogical boundaries, renewing educational practices.

We amplify the appeal for revitalisation and renewal in our pedagogical approaches. We salute forms of teaching that encourage transgressions – a movement against and beyond boundaries – and urge each of us to open our minds and hearts to knowledge beyond the boundaries of what is traditionally valued in education so that we can create new pedagogical practices coherent with diverse educational settings. This movement transforms education into the practice of freedom (hooks, 1994, p. 12).

The barriers of race, gender, class and professional status must be rethought by educators in this transgressive direction and a pedagogical environment must be developed that encourages the development of solidarity and a shared commitment to learning. All participants together learn from and teach each other in a 'teaching community' (hooks, 1994, p. 129) in a democratic and dialogic setting. 'To engage in dialogue' (hooks, 1994, p. 130) and 'sharing experiences and confessional narratives in the classroom' (hooks, 1994, p. 186) are two tactics that aid in this effort.

Freire's pedagogy of hope emphasises the need to view education as a liberating process that helps individuals develop critical consciousness and the ability to act on their social realities. In the context of the Brazilian youth justice system, this would mean empowering young people to understand the social and historical factors that have contributed to their marginalisation and to take action to resist systemic oppression.

Similarly, hooks's engaged pedagogy emphasises the importance of creating an inclusive classroom environment, affirming and empowering all students, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds. This requires educators to be aware of their own biases and to work to create a space where students feel

safe to express their identities and experiences. In the context of the youth justice system, this would mean creating a space where young people can explore and challenge the ways in which racism and other forms of oppression have shaped their lives.

Both Freire and hooks emphasise the importance of praxis, or the integration of theory and practice, in creating social change. This means that educators must not only help young people understand the root causes of inequality, but also work with them to develop strategies for challenging and transforming those systems of oppression.

In SINASE, this may mean working with young people to develop grassroots movements that challenge the structures of power that have contributed to their marginalisation. It may also mean advocating for policies and practices that promote equity and justice, such as restorative justice programmes or community-based alternatives to incarceration. Ultimately, Freire's and hooks's pedagogies offer important frameworks for addressing the systemic inequalities that shape the lives of young people in Brazil and beyond.

An interesting example of educational practices inspired explicitly by Freire's and hooks's pedagogies is reported by Lindsay Scott (2017), who teaches incarcerated young offenders in New Mexico, USA. To improve the learning experience and encourage students' critical thinking and responses to their concrete realities, Scott's pedagogical practice aims to establish a teaching community where all participants are invited to share lived experiences and create collective awareness of them in dialogical encounters.

In Brazil, examples of socio-educational practices that intentionally addressed dynamics of racialisation in SINASE were developed in Brasília by Black Brazilian social worker Leonardo Ortegal (2018). Ortegal created diverse socio-educational strategies that specifically discussed racial issues. In dialogical workshops with adolescents completing socio-educational sanctions, he used a variety of resources from marginal and peripheral culture, including movies, books, rap music, graffiti, breaking and biographies of Black artists, to mediate pedagogical experiences. These 'workshops on marginality' (Ortegal, 2018, p. 51) emphasised the exchange of cultural experiences, the development of a shared identity and the problematisation of racial prejudice, marginalisation, blackness, subalternity and youth on a collective level.

Rap was considered a crucial cultural instrument by bell hooks to create alternative epistemologies, a counter-hegemonic worldview and a culture of resistance in contemporary Black popular culture. hooks herself praised the 'revolutionary potency of black vernacular language' (1994, p. 130). 'In contemporary black popular culture, rap music has become one of the spaces where black vernacular speech is used in a manner that invites dominant mainstream culture to listen – to hear – and, to some extent, be transformed' (hooks, 1994, p. 171).

We view Scott's (2017) and Ortegal's (2018) socio-educational practices as transgressive pedagogical practices, as proposed by hooks (1994). They crossed traditional pedagogical boundaries and collaborated with adolescents to develop cultural resources, renewed educational processes and engaged individuals in dialogic interactions to combat oppression. They valued lived experiences and promoted the development of community awareness and critical thinking. They challenged racism as a dominance and exploitation structure and proposed fresh approaches to education.

The principles of social transformation, human dignity, freedom and justice for all are shared by hooks and Freire. They are both committed to establishing democratic educational practices. Both view education as a kind of liberation that must be connected to the pursuit of social justice. Both support the creation of learning communities that challenge repressive structures. Hope is emphasised as a verb, an action that has a collective impact on education (Freire, 1992/1997). Given the challenges related to racism and intersubjectivity within the Brazilian system of socio-educational services, the insights of hooks's transgressive pedagogy and Freire's pedagogy of hope are valuable contributions to the field of social education, situated at the intersection of psychology and social pedagogy.

Concluding thoughts: beyond a racist socio-education and psychology

Education professionals often lack adequate training and experience to address racial issues effectively, potentially perpetuating racism. Black children and adolescents have frequently reported being rejected by peers without any adult help. Additionally, Black and Indigenous characters are usually absent

from children's books and school books, and when present, are often relegated to subaltern and stereotypical positions.

Psychologists owe a debt to many cultural groups as a result of psychology's Euro-American centred, colonialist, universalist, a-historic and non-critical dominant epistemology (Oliveira, 2021; Oliveira and Yokoy, 2022). Until recently, psychology has been influenced by the natural sciences, leading practitioners to focus on a supposedly universal human experience and to overlook the profound psychological impacts of the diverse range of ethnic groups and cultures present in the world.

Despite growing awareness and overwhelming evidence of the planet's complex multiculturalism and its geopolitical effects, psychology and socio-education remain dominated by a white ontology and epistemology, which hinders people's ability to fully appreciate alterity and difference, as well as agency and resistance. Psychologists, pedagogues and social workers have a responsibility to address the historical legacy of Euro-American colonialism and its impact on marginalised groups in our world. It is crucial that we broaden our understanding of alterity and embrace a more critical, culturally sensitive approach to our work.

Our discussions of intersubjectivity and race, as well as our perspectives on socio-education with young offenders, were grounded in cultural psychology, Freire's pedagogy of hope and hooks's engaged and transgressive pedagogy. In our opinion, despite institutional factors that frequently downplay adolescents' and socio-educators' hope, Freire's and hooks's pedagogies can assist professionals in improving social work. By emphasising the importance of critical thinking, dialogue and action aimed at creating a more just and equitable society, these pedagogical approaches offer a framework for addressing systemic issues of oppression and promoting social change.

As hooks (1994) noted, transgressing in educational institutions that are part of the banking system can be a challenging endeavour. Many individuals resist the notion of reciprocity and the sharing of experiences that are central to engaged pedagogy. However, we recognise the importance of challenging the dominant institutional culture to promote new forms of sociability and intersubjectivity, and to facilitate conversations about racism. This is essential if education is to become a true practice of freedom and if pedagogical communities are to be established within the Brazilian system of socio-educational services and other educational settings.

It is important to highlight that the Brazilian system of socio-educational services is currently undergoing significant changes in its legislative, organisational and operational aspects. One such change is the gradual transformation of the professional profile of socio-educators through a significant renewal of human resources. This shift has enabled the adoption of more educationally focused strategies that are better aligned with human rights laws when working with adolescents, as observed by Yokoy and Rengifo-Herrera (2020). As a result, many socio-educators are now eager to embrace transgressive practices, as suggested by hooks, to work as true educators. This renewed commitment to educational practices and human rights can play a vital role in promoting social change and creating a more just and equitable society within the Brazilian system of socio-educational services.

We are hopeful that our reflections on anti-racist and decolonial perspectives in social pedagogy and psychology have contributed to the ongoing discussions in this area. While our analysis is situated within the context of the Brazilian system of socio-educational services, we believe that our insights can be generalised and applied to other contexts of human development and diverse educational settings in which social pedagogues work. By adopting a critical and reflexive approach to educational practices, we can challenge dominant paradigms and work towards creating more inclusive, equitable and just societies.

Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of interest statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the authors during peer review of this article have been made. The authors declare no further conflicts with this article.

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