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Racism and medicalization of life in the context of the militarization of education

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Abstract: This article aims to analyze the role that psychopedagogy and psychology can play in militarized educational institutions, based on the National Civic-Military Schools Program, implemented by Bolsonaro's presidential administration (2018-2022), highlighting the racist and medicalizing tendencies imposed in this process. In order to do so, several press reports were analyzed, as well as academic research on the militarization of schools, from which elements were extracted to compose the narrative of a witnessed fiction, describing a pedagogical scenario through which we sought to reflect on the structural limits of the psy field's performance in this form of institution. Focusing on medicalization present in the common demands of these professionals, we reclaim some historical aspects of their role in Brazilian education and, in opposition to the hegemonic "invitation" for reinforcing domination, we seek to strengthen theoretical-political discussions that stress the structure and its perverse operating mechanisms. The debate proposed here will hopefully serve as a nutrient for the collective construction of counter-hegemonic readings and coping strategies, from an anti-racist and de-medicalizing perspective.

Keywords: militarization; medicalization; racism; Psychopedagogy; Psychology.

1 Introduction

This article analyzes the roles Psychopedagogy and Psychology can play in militarized educational institutions, based on the context of the National Civic-Military Schools Program. It highlights the racist and medicalizing tendencies present in this process¹. The program was established on September 5, 2019, by decree No. 10,004 (Brasil, 2019) during the administration of former President Bolsonaro (2019-2022), a government characterized by its affinity for uniforms and weapons.

Although Lula's administration officially ended the program in 2023, its foundational concepts remain prevalent in many public schools, especially those

¹ The following text is inspired by Psychopedagogy Graduate Final Paper (Carvalho, 2022a).



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managed by the states and municipalities that chose to continue this authoritarian pedagogical approach using their resources. For instance, states like Bahia, which did not initially join the National Program under Bolsonaro's government, have since sought to create militarization projects that permit military personnel to occupy public schools². They attempt to differentiate their initiatives by using different terminology and branding. Instead of referring to civic-military programs, they have expanded the activities of Military Police Schools (MPS) through a shared management model of education offered by the Military Police to local governments. Conversely, in a different political context, the governor of São Paulo, Tarcísio de Freitas, recently sanctioned a law to establish civic-military schools in the state, which was quickly suspended by São Paulo court.

A notable similarity between these alternative models and the National Civic-Military Schools Program is the criterion for participation: the school must be in a "[...] situation of social vulnerability and exhibit low performance in the Education Development Index [...]" (Brasil, 2020, p. 12). Furthermore, approval from the school community is required, a process that has not proven challenging. It has become commonplace for teachers, family members, and students to express their desire for militarization, often citing concerns about indiscipline and the belief that this model is more effective in addressing crime and drug use, as well as instilling more respect for hierarchy. Another significant incentive for the school community, promoted by the National Civic-Military Schools Program, is the public investment in these institutions, both technical and financial. The substantial budget of BRL 14 million in 2020 increased by 309% in a year, reaching BRL 46 million in 2021 (Aguiar, 2022). This increase occurred when funding for public education and health was frozen, marked by a 20-year validity in the budget constraints under the Spending Limits Constitutional Amendment (Aguiar, 2022).

In order to regulate the management model of public schools participating in the National Civic-Military Schools Program, the Ministry of Education (MEC), in

² In 2018, the then-governor of Bahia, Rui Costa (PT), created an agreement with the Military Police to manage hundreds of schools in Bahia. State Militarized School has a regiment based on State Military Police, with autonomy to build the pedagogical structure of the school. (cf. <https://ponte.org/a-militarizacao-das-escolas-na-bahia/>).

collaboration with Ministry of Defense, has produced a 324-page manual. This document delineates guidelines for students, school administrators, teachers, educational professionals, military personnel, and the broader school community (Brasil, 2021). Within its pages there are outlining guidelines for students, managers, teachers, education professionals, military personnel, and the school community (Brasil, 2021). It can be read that:

Does Civic-Military School aim students' militarization? For no means. Civic-Military School aims to contribute to the teaching quality of basic education and to provide to students, teachers, and workers a safer place, susceptible of an acting focused on the improvement of the environment and school familiarity. (Brasil, 2021, p. 12).

According to Aroldo Cursino, the director of Politics to Civic-Military Schools, the manual was based on three areas of excellence management: educational, didactic-pedagogical, and administrative (Brasil, 2020). Stating it is a form of "prioritizing the quality of public schools," the manual is divided into:

schools regulation; political-pedagogical project; value project; rules of pedagogical support; educational evaluation; school psychopedagogy; school supervision; administration; behavior and posture; use of uniforms and student personal presentation; and instructions for the families (Brasil, 2020).

Among institutional strategies to ensure the proper functioning of the schools, there is a reference to Psychopedagogy as more suitable to "act with School Supervision (Pedagogical Coordination)." According to the manual (Brasil, 2020, p. 66),

[...] the product of Psychopedagogy action should be the improvement of the teaching and learning process. For that, they should support and stimulate the work of the staff. This staff should seek a systematic, permanent, scientific, effective, coherent, and integrative Psychopedagogic action.

According to Article 1 of the Psychopedagogy Code of Ethics, it is about "the learning process considering the subjects and the systems, the family, the school, the society and the social, historic and cultural context" (Associação Brasileira de Psychopedagogy, 2019, chap. I, art. 1). Fontes (2005) highlights that Psychopedagogy has traditionally dedicated to "[...] understand, prevent, and treat learning problems" (Fontes, 2005, p. 51). It is not necessary to be too close to the debate about the so-called "learning issues" to understand its historical link with scientific racism and disqualification of poor people, being the diligent research of Maria Helena Souza Patto

highly recommended (Patto, 2022a). In that sense, both Psychology and the Psychopedagogy that comes from it and, at the same time, inherits its principal theoretical references, tend to be impregnated with not-noticed prejudice when observing and preparing strategies of intervention facing situations that challenge everyday school life.

At the same time, it is well known how much scientific racism impregnates the military practices in the country, with a pattern of “risk population” as a Lombrosian model of Nina Rodrigues (Ferla, 2009). Such prejudice occurs in schools whose working dynamics are crossed by a military intervention. Studies like the one by Santos e Pereira (2018) or the one collected on Dossiê sobre Militarização da Escola Pública, published by Revista Brasileira de Política e Administração da Educação (2019) help to gauge concrete situations activated by the not new civil-military order, whose center is conservative, antidemocratic, excluding, and, therefore, it denies the right to education.

This article suggests, then, to articulate both dimensions, in order to think of some challenges imposed on the performance of professionals from Psychology and Psychopedagogy in civic-military schools. This was made documental research with articles reporting racism situations in militarized schools from the printed press as the principal source. The following articles are highlighted from such research: *Ataque racista em colégio cívico-militar gera revolta e explosão de solidariedade* (2021); Ortiz e Garonce (2021); Rodrigues (2021); Santiago (2021); Moura (2022); Mídia Ninja (Forças [...], 2022) and Torres (2022). The researches by Santos e Pereira (2018) were also adopted as a source, such as the Dossiê sobre Militarização da Escola Pública (Dossiê Militarização [...], 2019).

From the reading of such material, a synthesis with the marking elements in the intersection between school militarization and racism was prepared, to elaborate some problematizations about the challenges imposed on the professionals (from psychology, psychiatry, and psychopedagogy field) facing these situations. To emphasize the complexity of what is on, such synthesis was turned into a fictional tone built with a reliable basis, permeated by the concrete reality of such institutions, as reported by the Press.

The translation of real situations into fictional language has been an important poetic resource for treating sensitive topics in the field of human and social sciences

(Harayama, 2022; Carvalhal, 2022a, 2022b; Pereira Junior, 2025). The narrative similar to fiction makes it possible to illustrate concrete situations, inspired by the knowledge of reality but keeping the focus on the circumstance itself, instead of on the people involved in the specific case.

In this sense, the choice of this methodological stratagem is implicated with the non-individualization of structuring issues without taking responsibility away from the involved people. The challenge of this writing is, at the same time, to avoid the possibility of recognition of the names, but to allow all the people to recognize themselves potentially (Carvalhal, 2022b). As inspiration, we seek to absorb Conceição Evaristo's writings (2020) and the fictional narratives by Jeferson Tenório (2020).

In the case of the present article, our witnessed fiction has the silhouette of a “pedagogical scenery” created from circumstances lived in civic-militarized schools collected by our direct or indirect testimony. It is not pure fiction or caricature because it is based on concrete facts throughout the country. However, these situations have a fictional nature to keep the complexity of the situation in focus. The expression “witnessed fiction” comes from that.

After building our pedagogical scenery, the presented situation was analyzed from the history of the constitution of the racist and classist explanations to school failure, where it is possible to feel the processes of medicalization of life. With the debate, we hope to provoke some reflections around the limits and the possibilities of an anti-racist performance in institutions historically compromised with inequality.

2 A pedagogical scenery which is not so far from reality

The year is 2022. The space/time is a civic-military school in the countryside of Brazil. First act: an employee, a retired military officer, hampers a student to access school because, according to him, her “frizzy” hair did not comply with the school's rules.

The Manual of Civic-Military Schools, in the section “Rules for the use of uniforms and personal appearance of the students”, decrees that women must have their hair “carefully arranged to suit the beret better, maintaining aesthetics and harmony in the student's appearance” (Brasil, 2020, p. 18). The manual imposes that the female hairstyle must be a ponytail or a simple braid. Hair must be kept combed

and with good appearance” (Brasil, 2020, p. 18). In many parts, the expression “good appearance” is used.

After a long time of hating her hair, historically unqualified by racism, the teenager had started to feel better about it, but her hairstyle displeased school rules. Prohibited from entering school, the 12-year-old teenager went back home by herself, something unusual for her but irrelevant to the retired officer. Crying at home, she told her mother what happened. After insisting, her mother found out the girl was under racist attacks, and she took notes in her notebook anonymously during breaking time. She was afraid and didn't want to go back to school anymore. The mother, scared and devastated by the violence her daughter suffered, visited the school.

To support the girl, her classmates pinned drawings by Carlos Latuff³ depicting police violence on the hallway wall. This move generated a harsh reaction from the military, forcing the drawings to be removed. A student who tried to prevent this imposition was taken to the police station to “be startled,” said a military officer. At that point, Officer Viagra (Forças [...], 2022) summoned a school staff meeting. Amidst an awkward silence, a single civilian teacher caused some tension in the meeting, speaking about authoritarianism and highlighting that she felt monitored during her work in the classroom. Days later, she was fired. Another teacher then requested medical leave, claiming to be suffering from mental health problems.

The student and her mother cannot ask to leave. The city does not offer another public school, and they know that education is a necessity and an obligation for those economically vulnerable. In other words, for this and other black students to complete their basic school education, it is necessary to “tame” their hair, adapting to the criteria of “good appearance” imposed by military school norms.

Upset, the teenager returned to school, even though she did not want to be there since the institutional control is violent towards her. These circumstances affect her performance and behavior at school. With low grades, the following institutional action is to send her to the Psychopedagogical Assistance Room. On her academic file is recorded the reason for the referral: the student presents learning and concentration issues. She is anxious, depressed, and hyperactive. She cries easily and sometimes responds to orders aggressively.

³ Carlos Latuff drawings can be seen in: https://www.facebook.com/realcarloslatuff/photos_by.

As it has been told, the pedagogical scenario above was constructed based on research and articles in the Press focusing on racism in militarized educational institutions. It is also based on our experience and studies in the field of psychological interventions in schools. There is a vast bibliography that shows that such approaches are common. Therefore, it is urgent to critically reflect on which practices are expected and possible for psychological professionals in civic-military and/or military educational institutions, whose disciplinary framework tends to impede a democratic debate.

Before proceeding, it is important to emphasize that criticism “[...] is not a complaint, opinion or personal attack on theories and methods, it is not a rejection of one form of knowledge in the name of another” (Patto, 1997, p 55). It involves understanding the genesis and the reason behind specific knowledge, considering its epistemological and political dimensions as inseparable (Martins, 1997). In this sense, thinking about hegemonic psychology theories and practices is thinking how they are related to the constitutive dimensions of the society in which it was created, marked by structural inequalities that operate macro and micro political.

In our desire to go beyond appearances, we understand that it is necessary to pay attention to the concepts of humans, society, education, good looks, good behavior, intelligence, aggressiveness, and others that support referrals with this profile for professionals in the field of psychology. This task gains strength when it focuses on the historical construction of the dominant social structure to the extent that “we cannot know the present without knowing the past that built it, and we cannot plan the future without knowing the present. The past, the present, and the future are a unity of continuities and discontinuities” (Patto, 1997, p. 36). This pedagogical scenario summons us to take a brief step back.

3 Resorting to History: It may include traces of racism

Europe, the end of 19th century, post-Revolution France. The bourgeoisie, with the fundamental support of the explored ones, overthrew the monarchy, something that could not be imagined. Once power was taken, the motto that strengthened the French Revolution – Liberty, Equality, Fraternity – was disused. In fact, inequality challenged the new-born human sciences to not “make propaganda of a society in which inequalities would disappear,” but to justify its existence “[...] without risking the

thesis of equality of opportunities in the social order that replace the caste system, seen as inevitably unfair” (Patto, 2022a, p. 72). As a product of that litany:

The fact that the new men were successful apparently because of their skills and personal credit – since they did not have birth privileges – validated a vision of a world where success relied on the individual; [...] Everything contributed to the development of a belief in individual freedom on a rational world, like the maximum value in which all positive results in terms of scientific, technic, and economic progress would come (Patto, 2022a, p. 59).

With these principles and purposes, French philosophers, doctors, and educators endeavored to “unravel” the so-called “problems” and/or “disorders” that could compromise or disrupt the order. Considered “the beginning of the theories of racial determinism,” these ideas were spread by the “dethroned nobility” and “[...] monarchy supporters, that move through the resentful path left by the revolution” and by the “middle-class ideologist,” the “French revolutionary thinkers” (Patto, 2022a, p. 74). Not by chance, it happened during eugenics, “[...] a pseudoscientific movement that intended to improve human race preserving white people genetic purity [...]” (Hernández, 2017, p. 31), supposedly superior in front of the “delay of the blended nations” (Hernández, 2017). Hernández (2017) highlights that Latin America “[...] developed its form of eugenics from whitening and blending concepts” (Hernández, 2017, p. 32).

In the Brazilian case, from studies about the First Republic, Patto (2004) highlights the fascination given to imported ideas from the so-called “cultured nations,” that were just the colonizers. To earn legitimacy, Brazilian authors added to their publications “[...] endless quotations from eminent foreigners and frequent complaints about the inexistence of child attendance institutions similar to the ‘modern civilizations’” (Patto, 2004, p. 207). The search for “turning education more scientific means, mainly, transforming the psychological knowledge into pedagogical rules” (Patto, 2004, p. 208). Here, such science is reduced to tests and devices of psychophysical measurement, “paraphernalia” seen as “flawless” to measure individual differences and justify the organization of the schools. The fetish around those instruments is recorded on the “[...] pictures published by Escola Normal de São Paulo, on which educators and authorities pose solemnly alongside devices of reaction time, memory, attention, intellect, associative ability measure” (Patto, 2004, p. 208).

Under the intense influence of the hygienist movement, the country embraced the naturalization of the learning process with an individualistic and psychologizing tone. Prophylaxis becomes the watchword, which decrees to infancy the “[...] best place to prevent ‘moral and social dissolution’, expression the scientists used to explain the evils that devastated the country” (Patto, 2004, p. 212). Based on the idea of regeneration of the degenerated, education institutions were then invited to take the role of prevention, tracking, and treatment of the ‘child and juvenile abnormalities,’ including the tendency to criminality. Patto (2004, p. 208) is precise:

[...] doctors, jurists, and educators concerned with childhood issues were also haunted by the ghost of the fate of backwardness that they believed was inscribed in the organic constitution of the non-white majority, and participated in the commitment to regenerate the race and collaborate in the construction of the country's future through corrective and prophylactic measures while giving hope to put the country in the path of the civilized nations, conjured up the fear of the domination of the crowd, the ‘urban chaos’ and the social revolution. [...] From this period, the motto ‘full schools, empty prisons’ and the legislation that sentenced parents who did not send their children to school to prison. Some spoke of combating illiteracy and improving academic performance by applying the principles of mental hygiene to all dimensions of the school, from periodic exams of students to the distribution of subjects, the organization of programs, timetables, etc. In this niche, the introduction of the subject ‘Civic and Moral Education’ into the curricula of primary and secondary schools had special support from hygienist doctors, who saw it as a powerful adjunct to other ‘psychic orthopedic’ measures, which would prevent, among other evils, the influence of revolutionary political doctrines, considered harmful to mental health.

In the context of industrialization and urbanization, education would assume the vanguard on the profusion of the “ideological cement” that ensured “the transformation of subjects into citizens.” School “[...] would be a social lab of labor, discipline, patriotism, cooperation, and solidarity organized in scientific bases, a place of construction of the ‘new man’ demanded by the new-born urban-industrial order: active, disciplined, a lover of his homeland, cooperator, healthy” (Patto, 2004, p. 209). Hard-line schools to prevent, host institutions accustomed to forced and unpaid labor to treat. When it comes to children and teenagers in conflict with the law or coming from so-called dangerous families, since the free womb law, Brazilian policies focused on socio-education, denying the condition of subjects to children and teenagers, have had a far from noble history (Viégas; Pereira Junior, 2023).

The influence of the New Education Movement⁴ is highlighted, especially in the 1920s and 1930s. Self-titling differentiated for breaking with the formalism and rigidity of the traditional school, the New Education Movement continued to feed the illusion that education would guarantee social mobility and success. The defense of school education as an instrument of social equalization and combat marginalization is combined without crises with the understanding that the environment (the family) is a determining factor in learning. In a country marked by racism and the disqualification of poor people, difficulties in schooling were translated as problems acquired outside the school environment, more precisely at home and on the street. Patto (2022b, p. 93) exposes that such explanations are based “on the assumption that poor women are not good enough mothers for promoting the mental health of their children.” However, they seem likely to be overexploited in the job market, often as nannies and housekeepers, women who are good enough to care for children of more affluent families.

The “[...] biopsychological terms that came in the wake of the New Education Movement” (Patto, 2022b, p. 94) were taken up again in the 1960s by the theory of cultural deprivation. Created in the United States, it was one of the state’s weapons to confront racial movements that fought for civil rights and were, therefore, “[...] the bearer of all social stereotypes and prejudices” (Patto, 2022b, p. 94). To explain the social marginalization, this theory uses the high correlation between education and socioeconomic level, reinforcing the motto of “full schools, empty prisons,” a myth as empty as the prisons of well-educated people from the ruling class, but not at all clean in their conduct.

This version contains a political dimension only in the appearance: although it refers to poverty, it naturalizes it by reducing to a question of lack of material resources, by putting aside the issue of domination present not only in the rebellious behavior but also in the legal-police system and the sciences themselves (including psychology) that advise it through diagnostic reports that often have a strong moralistic accent, as well as being reductionists, as

⁴ The New Education Movement originated in Europe and the United States at the end of the 19th century. It is marked by a biological and psychological approach to education based on the needs and abilities of the children. With democratic jargon and critics of traditional schools, it is based on liberal principles and meritocracy. Such movement received an impulse in Brazil in the 1930s, after Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação. We highlight Anísio Teixeira, Fernando Azevedo, Lourenço Filho, and Afrânio Peixoto among the signers. To an interesting critic of the New Education Movement, we suggest the reading of Patto (2022b).

they are closed in the plane of the individual and the family taken as abstractions (Patto, 2022b, p. 93).

The intense production of referrals to professionals in the psychology area, students that do not match the expectations of performance and behavior, such areas have responded with the production of reports that conclude the existence of disorders, deficits, disabilities, or mental disorders in students. Both extremities - the referral made by the school, and the psychologists' diagnosis - expose the effervescent psychologization of school life. "[...] the inequality and the exclusion are scientifically justified (therefore, with supposed impartiality and objectivity) through explanations that ignore their political dimension and are limited to the level of individual differences in capacity" (Patto, 1997, p. 47).

Psychopedagogy also arrives in Brazil and is strengthened by a hygienist and psychologizing base. Welcomed by São Paulo locomotive, the Brazilian Psychopedagogy Association (Associação Brasileira de Psicopedagogia or AMPq) had a robust investment in the educational market, ensuring prominence and rapid expansion through specialization courses (Fontes, 2005). The origins of it is rooted in Europe and its history is directly linked to Western hegemonic thought. The learning process is its objective, which follows preventive and therapeutic approaches, striving to "correct deviations" and "re-educate students who are maladjusted to the school environment" without giving up the ideals of prophylaxis, control, and adjustment (Fontes, 2005). Preventing or treating, a conservative conception of normality slips away.

Even though Visca (1991) states that Psychopedagogy uses "its own diagnostic resources to correct and prevent," it is grounded to a hypothesis from psychology and education that took Patto (2022b) to define it as a "two-headed monster." Composing this body, the heavy hand of neurosciences living together with the unconscious from psychoanalysis. To Fontes (2005, p. 77), the adoption of psychoanalytical concepts was a way to "[...] change the learning evaluation as an exclusively organic problem," which could not impede to cancel the individual-society tension for the ideal of harmony. This way, the dominant Psychopedagogy tends to concentrate efforts on investigating the twist and the twisted instead of questioning the social structure or the political context in which school is. By doing so, it repeats the mistakes made by psychology since the last century, involving the naturalization of the individual and the

reaffirmation of psychologism and clinicalism to treat “[...] issues of social order in the field of individual or group clinic, trying to adapt these individuals to the adverse situation [...] (Fontes, 2005, p. 218).

By legitimizing the hierarchical classification of differences, Psychopedagogy serves as a technology of social control, adding to the established educational project for adaptation to imposed standards – development, learning, behavior, and “good appearance.” This worldview disregards the complexity of such processes, which are permeated by multiple conceptions and determinations that are anything but natural, by historical presence, political, economic, social, institutional, pedagogical, and relational, just to name a few.

Contrary to this dominance, research on school education produced “[...] from a theoretical position that takes it as a social institution that can only be understood within the social relations of production in force in the society that includes it [...]” (Patto, 1997, p. 48) have repeatedly shown that these difficulties cannot be understood without taking into account school and social practices and processes that hinder schooling.

Such practices and processes boost students' attitudes and behaviors that are always taken as 'indiscipline', 'maladjustment', 'emotional disorder', 'hyperactivity', 'apathy', 'minimal brain dysfunction', 'aggressiveness', 'mild mental disability,' and so many other labels expensive to teachers and psychologists (Patto, 1997, p. 48).

Regardless, it is a militarized institution, the practice of professionals in the educational field has been fed since the formation's centers have been historically dominated by the naturalization of life and the stimulus of adaptation. If it is the force in command, it is intensified in militarized institutions, where the thought, the word, and the action are not in circulation. Once adaptation is natural to psy areas, they can adapt to the institutional limits, working actively producing the “good citizen” that, in a system not interested in forming thinking people, is obedient, polite, and menial. A specialized ability treats technically an issue that is not technical. And even the technic cannot be dissociated from its worldview.

4 Turn right! Neoliberalism and medicalization

The premise of obedience to the superior orders is consistent with neoliberal precepts. Such a model is related to expressing interests on the aegis of the lowest rights and most significant repression to the most vulnerable groups and the lowest taxation and greatest privileges to the owners of great fortunes and military families.

Neoliberalism, structured in deep and non-natural inequalities, haunts the belief in the myth that says that social mobility depends on individual effort. It is just a case of people adjusting to the game's rules – but the game is a fix. In a system in which the interests of the international financial capital prevail, people have been defunctionalized. Disposable or discarded,

[...] the work of millions of inhabitants of the planet is not necessary to the capital in the era of the financial games managed, on a global scale, by a few that shape the economy and retain the power. [...] The field deeply neglected by the rights to work, to school, to health, to housing, to cultural goods, to social respect, and personal safety is prepared. The field of the predominance of the repressive action of the State is prepared (Patto, 2022c, p. 11).

In the same direction, taking advantage of historical-dialectical materialism to analyze racism in Brazil, Cristiane Sabino de Souza (2021) emphasizes that repression and ideological domination go hand in hand to serve the interests of the logic of surplus value production. In other words, the formatting of subjectivities does not prevent genocide, ethnocide, and deculturation from continuing without ceasing. Such process

[...] has been expressed differently throughout Latin American history without changing its target: the native peoples and the Afro-descendant population. Nowadays, the extermination of black and Indigenous peoples, the incarceration of black youth, the militarized territorial control, the pseudo-war on drug trafficking, etc, are intense. Still, there is also a battlefield that intensifies ideological control and mystifies the foundations of misery that spreads under the sociability of capital. It is necessary to control and undermine the potential for the rebellion of the miserable, of those who have nothing – not even the possibility of selling their labor force, since there is no job for a huge and growing portion of workers and the unemployment rate reaches exorbitant levels (Souza, 2021, p. 24).

In this command, the ideals of adjustment got intense. Stimulated by an ultraconservative government from 2018 to 2022, the rising institutionalization of the military grammar at public schools also seduced management self-nominated progressists, as the state government of Bahia, from the party PT, which adopted the

military methodology in 98 public state schools, in a partnership with city halls of all political aspects, as it was highlighted (Gomes; Oliveira, 2022). This measure was not unusual since it was taken by an administrator who compared the slaughter of young black men by Military Police in Cabula neighborhood as a "great goal" ("It's like a scorer in front of the beam," says Ruy Costa about Military Police action with 12 death people in Cabula (Duarte, 2015)).

When it comes to controlling subversions, the strategic role remains to blame people who are massacred by systemic violence, who find themselves in increasingly precarious conditions, and who are told that more significant effort is needed to win; after all, the very fair system rewards the best. Resilience is the aesthetic of the moment. Discussions about medicalization help us to think about this force.

It is important to reiterate that medicalization is not medicine abusive use synonymous or diagnoses abusive production, although it is an essential thermometer in these two phenomena (Viégas; Carvalhal, 2020). Supporting such practices, medicalization is a broader process of managing life and death, which even goes beyond medical or paramedical practice. Quoting the "Manifesto Desmedicalizante e Interseccional," medicalization

[...] involves a rationality that naturalizes human life and, in the same way, formats that are "naturally" appreciated or depreciated, desirable or undesirable. Its penetration in daily life begins with many strategic and practical devices installed in every place and institution (schools, health centers, churches, temples, toilets, buses, streets, media) which operate around standard matrices and regulatory ideas, prescribing patterns (of development, behavior, learning, gender, sexuality, efficiency, aesthetic) that must be strictly followed by everyone, turning the complexity of existence invisible and hiding the fact that life conditions are extremely uneven (Forum sobre Medicalização da Educação e da Sociedade⁵, 2023, p. 241).

Using the most diversified strategies of monitoring and adjustment, universalizing and individualizing principles support such rationality:

Universalizing because it creates and legitimates aesthetic patterns, usually based on biology and essentialization of the human experience. And individualizing because the acceptance of these patterns feeds and strengthens the generalized belief that each one needs to make an effort to adjust; in a way those who cannot do it are undesirable, depreciated, and disposable. Their fate divides them into those who are passive of being treated, educated, corrected, or controlled by educational, legal, health, and social assistance policies and those who can be eliminated for being (seen

⁵ The "Fórum sobre Medicalização da Educação e da Sociedade" is a social movement to face the medicalization processes in Brazil. To know more about it, access: www.medicalizacao.org.br.

as) superficial or even abhorrent to the interests of the actual system (Fórum sobre Medicalização da Educação e da Sociedade, 2023, p. 242).

Blaming people for situations that originated from historical problems never fixed, the medicalization insists on attacking social profiles crossed by oppression, especially black people who are economically vulnerable, sexual and gender dissidents, and disabled people, among others (Forum sobre Medicalização da Educação e da Sociedade, 2023). That's how racism and medicalization are put together in a meeting based on the science of the capitalist world, where social inequalities were translated into racial inequalities by medical science that, far from being neutral and objective, justified colonial violence (Caires, 2025). Just remember drapetomania's diagnostics created by American physicist Samuel Cartwright in 1851, through enslaved people who aimed to run from such oppression were treated as if they had a mental illness (Gould, 2003). Running away from slavery was an issue, but slavery was normalized.

Comprehending that this is barbarity, Patto (1997) emphasizes that oppression is “multiform,” recording its presence:

[...] in the prison system and juvenile detention centers; in dilapidated public hospitals and health centers; schools located in neighborhoods inhabited by the greatest victims of the capital logic; in the arbitrariness and the police brutality; in racial prejudice; in the boorishness of TV programs; in the imposture and banditry of politicians and those in power (Patto, 1997, p. 68).

Contradictory to the interests of those in power, the attempt is made at all costs to eliminate threats to social change. This is how

The death policy is naturalized for the “unreformable” (or undesirable?). The necropolitics is intentional, systematized, planned, and has a specific target. It is enough to recognize that neighborhoods marked by poverty are the main territory for the militarization of public security and the school system, as well as the growing presence of militias; it is also from there that the lucrative system of incarceration is fed”. (Fórum sobre a medicalização da educação e da sociedade, 2023, p. 246).

Racist and cisheterosexist⁶ ideologies support the extermination of the impoverished population in Brazil, most of whom are young, black, indigenous and

⁶ A normative gender system that genitalizes human bodies, defining that the penis refers to the masculine gender and the vulva refers to the feminine gender. Such biological reductionism disregards the fact that gender, as well as sexuality, are social constructs permeated by power relations, which tend to legitimize sexist and LGBTIQ+phobic oppressions. As a way of putting

LGBTQIA+. Naturalized, in broad daylight, with exquisite perversity, under the applause of wealthy people who, in a shameless reversal, treat them as abject.

Brazil did not overcome the official slavery abolition but rather improved mechanisms of violence against black people. In its primitive sophistication, racism, as well as cisheterosexism and many other forms of oppression, remain directly or indirectly ingrained in schools, in the police, and, of course, in civic-military and/or militarized schools. Our pedagogical scenario screams that racism continues to manifest itself daily within these institutions in more or less explicit forms. Despite its deep historical roots, its naturalization exposes the need for us to understand its foundations and act critically in the reality that generates, creates and sustains it.

Almeida (2020) helps us to understand three distinct perspectives in which racism manifests itself, present in our pedagogical scenario/fictional witnessed: beyond the individual plan, more visible (the retired military man who prevents the student from entering school “because of her hair”), there is the institutional perspective, insofar as the power in institutions acts in the production of rules and standards that directly or indirectly make life of the black population difficult and racism becomes naturalized, through the invisibility and silencing of discussions that challenge its perverse norms. It is not by chance that hair is the trigger in our scenario. According to Gomes (2002), racism expressed in the disqualification of black people's hair has been present since slavery, when enslaved people had their heads shaved, as an attempt to eliminate the identity and cultural bond. Silva, Nascimento, and Arantes (2018, p. 1) highlight that “[...] curly and frizzy hair is seen as exotic and ‘scary’ [...],” outside the standard of beauty. In the school environment, racism is revealed, for example, in “[...] nicknames such as: ‘tree top, ‘hard hair’, ‘steel sponge hair’ among others” (Silva; Nascimento; Arantes, 2018, p. 1).

Black women of different ages, as listened to by Gomes (2002), say that schools reinforced stereotypes and negative representations about black people, impacting negatively on the construction of their identities. Britto (2021) exposes that black teachers and psycho-pedagogues also experienced racist discrimination during childhood and adolescence, focusing specifically on their hair. Diversified, racism then

pressure on this structure, playing with words has been a powerful resource. We like the creation of neologisms, among which we highlight “cis-tema” and “corpa”, present in transfeminist authors such as Jesus (2013) and Vergueiro (2016).

represents an imposition on black women to straighten their hair. We emphasize: “periodically children subjugate themselves to this process denying their identity for an aesthetic and standardizing imposition” to “be accepted in the society and the classroom that they study” (Silva; Nascimento; Arantes, 2018, p.2). Gomes (2017), Silva, Nascimento, and Arantes (2018), and Aguiar e Costa (2021) highlight that, as a way of confrontation and empowerment, several women who used to straighten their hair decided to do the so-called “hair transition,” reversing years of chemical dependence, accepting their locks in black powers, dreads, braids, in colorful extensions, recovering and creating hairdos that are part of African culture since the roots. But this change is still tense.

According to Aguiar e Costa (2021, p. 67)

[...] there are many cases of racism in which the frizzy hair is the protagonist. Many cases were reported in which people were embarrassed and even barred from attending a place like a school. It indicates that although there is a campaign that incentivizes freedom and hair acceptance by different groups that echo in media, there is still a strong refusal of a high number of Brazilians to contest the phenotypic racism built over the image of black men and women.

Education, captured in this eugenics scenario, is treated as a public health case, contributing to the whitening maintenance. From the history presented, the predominance of the adaptative expectation of the acting of professionals from the psy field, and the profile of the target that has been sent to attending, we think about the fate of these professionals. How can they take care of the teaching-learning process of female black students in civic-military/militarized schools, considering the racist and classist limits imposed by its structure, in which authoritarianism and discipline predominate, suffocating possible breaches? Is there a way of acting on the contrary path of the adequacy to racist rules?

On the horizon is the construction of disobediences and (im)possible refuses to the worries that stick on the professional badge. In our comprehension, the proposal of developing resilience and emotional intelligence to learn how to deal with racism doesn't contribute to an anti-racist education. The rage Fanon (1968) expressed in “Os condenados da terra” suits our history never mended.

A precarious school is offered to vulnerable people. Poorly evaluated in the performance index, it is a preference for a militarized system based on the authoritarian idea that for “those people,” quality education is built with control, discipline, and

repression. In the meantime, the grades in the system of pedagogical evaluation are unshaken. But people are more obedient. And those who are not are exterminated by the same government that is supposed to act for their protection (Cerqueira, 2021).

We have been taught to trust, respect, obey, and admire our executioners on the dominant tune. We were also taught to believe that the best way to develop and protect our children, teenagers, and young people is to discipline their bodies to avoid degeneration. Above all, if they are part of vulnerable groups. In the process, psy professionals have historically taken the place of authority that marks these bodies the failure of an education structurally offender of rights. To Patto (1997, p. 49), several psy reports are “true crimes against citizenship.” On the other hand, Chico César teaches us (2002): “Respect my hair, white ones.”

5 Final considerations: love it or leave it?

In 2023, Brazil had 200 civic-military schools (Vilela, 2021). Bolsonaro was not reelected by a short percentage, making it clear that authoritarianism inhabits a meaningful fragment of the voting population in the country. On the first month of his third term, marked by the revocation of the decisions of his predecessor, Lula announced the end of the administration responsible for those institutions.

Although celebrating this measure, there is no time for naivety. It is not the end of the military indoctrination on the corners of this country, the militaries wearing uniforms and grasping guns on parades suggesting obedience as a way of surviving. As Millôr Fernandes teaches, “Brazil has a huge past ahead” (Cf. Loredano; Kovensky; Pires, 2016, p. 70).

By looking at the rearview mirror, it is possible to see military trails come from far away. Preceding many years of the civil-military dictatorship that brutalized the country between 1964 and 1985, authoritarianism is a brutal mark through our history, being the main characteristic of the colonial period, the imperial period, the first republican period, the New State, the developmentalism (Patto, 2022a; 2022c). With that coverage, the dictatorship had all the ingredients that need to reinforce the authoritarian ethos at Brazilian schools, militaries or not. Minimally, the echoes from Moral and Civic Education can still be heard. Those themselves echo the precedent authoritarianism (Souza, 2019). Reaching the present, Débora Maria da Silva (2023)

is incisive in reminding us that the past is not the only one claiming for memory and repair.

It is not a surprise, then, that the imposition of militarized, patriotic, and nationalist cultural models is present in the policies of the bodies, being the tone of both right-wing government and shy left-wing government. Ultimately, this is the look that is taught most of the time. This is a consequence of the many authoritarian regimes imposed since Brazil was baptized. Furthermore, the public education “opened” to vulnerable groups is born and raised as an instrument of domination. While oriented by middle-class interests, the tendency is to keep acting to make these institutions work normally. We need to be attentive and not transform ourselves into risk managers or watchdogs of the system (Fanon, 1968; Patto, 2009).

Considering the paths opened by our rebel ancestries, may we keep widening the existent roads and opening new tracks to disobedience against unfair inequalities. There is still much to analyze in this field, and other research can cover the remaining gaps. Among the viable studies, the adhesion of left-wing governments to authoritarian projects in education and the acting of psychology and psychopedagogy professionals in militarized schools are interesting possibilities. This last one demands challenges; once to research into these institutions the authorization of those who tend to be impacted with the study is necessary. These challenges can be faced as in Pereira Junior (2025) research. The researcher could live for one year in a school located inside an institution devoted to the compliance of socio-educative measurements, whose structure is similar to a prison. The way Pereira Junior conducted makes it possible to access institutional meanders that reinforce the impossibility of construction of an experience of dignity and citizenship in institutions built based on racism and brutal and authoritarian control.

It is essential to sharpen our ethic-political responsibility, which is different from taking the shortcut of the individualization. Nor wild adhesion, nor lack of hope that immobilizes and conservates tradition. It is about the importance of politicizing our professional acting to build collective care and confrontation on the radicalism that somebody made us believe was impossible.

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