4. SCHOOL, SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND RACISM

This chapter concentrates on aspects of the concepts and ideas that emerge in the imagination about the meaning of school in the students’ lives. This encompasses the strategic importance of school for the youths’ future as well as evaluations from the various participants concerning educational quality and school performance. From the point of view of exclusion and social discrimination – with special emphasis on racism – perceptions and attitudes of members of the school community are approached and included in the discussion of symbolic and institutional violence.

The findings demonstrate that although there is a concept of school as a key to opportunities for a better life, school is also seen as a place for social exclusion. School contains cultural and institutional elements. School is also a place with discrimination and stigma that go beyond economic boundaries, including beliefs, values and meanings. These elements include specific attitudes about cultural diversity. In order to contribute to the construction of a culture against violence, it makes sense to deal with discrimination, intolerance and exclusion in the school space. This is especially true in light of the fact that these elements often end up resulting in threats and fights, threats and deaths and physical violence.

In the conceptual construction of the projects developed by
UNESCO, there is a certain insistence on the understanding of social exclusion as a lack or insufficiency of incorporation of a part of the population in the political and social community (Abramovay et al., 1999). This means that placing individuals at the margins of the social contract denies them their rights of citizenship. This occurs in a formal or informal fashion in equal measures in terms of laws and public institutions. It also occurs in terms of State protection and access to various opportunities such as studying, professional training, work, culture and leisure, in addition to other goods and services that are part of a civilization.

It is important to remember that the concept of social exclusion is controversial. One critic, Castel (1999: 26) was attacked for suggesting a perspective of stagnation: designates a ... state of deprivation, omitting processes that cause these situations. From the point of view adopted here, however, social exclusion is understood more as economic inequality that includes cultural and institutional processes and dimensions through which numerous portions of society become strangers to the social contract. They become deprived of the exercise of citizenship and unaided by public institutions abandoned by the State.

One of the socio-cultural aspects of exclusion is the racial issue. This aspect is dealt with here in terms of perceptions and examples of discrimination. In fact, racism is a form of social exclusion that is embedded in Brazilian society in general and in the educational system in particular. Racism at times appears in an explicit form. At other times it appears through attitudes of pseudo-politeness, as is shown in this study.

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52 Race here corresponds to the meaning inherent in social thinking and not to an official category. Along these lines race can be seen as a class of understanding in the social world. It is important to note that in a biological sense the only race that is proved to exist is the human race (Oliveira et al., 1998; Guimarães et al., 2000).

53 It has been widely proved by scientists in the biological and social areas that the concept of race lacks scientific foundation. However, from a socio-political point of view it becomes impossible not
4.1. THE MEANINGS OF SCHOOL

School can be an effective way to access the exercise of citizenship for the students. In contrast it can also be a mechanism for social exclusion. In the first concept school, education and the learning process work as a kind of moral pass, a passport for entrance to society.

In addition to this, studying is increasingly becoming a requisite for job opportunities in modern society. This is without a doubt an essential condition for human survival. However, this intersection between studying and work is where one of the most serious problems of social exclusion is found. This is where quality education opens doors to opportunities and where poor education accentuates exclusion.

The striking fact is that most students indicate that they have a positive view of school, studying and teaching. Half or more believe that school really teaches them something. Percentage rates vary between a minimum of 50% in Salvador, and a maximum of 68% in Cuiabá. However, the flip side of this data cannot be ignored. There are a high percentage of students that say that school teaches little or nothing. This figure is 50% in Salvador, 49% in the Federal District and 47% in São Paulo. The percentage of those with a negative view of school in terms of the adequacy of the teaching is also high (around 40%) in other capitals.

Members of the technical-pedagogical staff that most frequently sustain that school teaches a lot/enough can be found in Vitória (75%), followed by Manaus (70%) (table 4.1). On the
to talk about race. This is because all research shows that it is a fact that a large portion of those excluded are excluded for reasons of race phenotypes. As Seyferth insists: Even though there are no well defined lines or racial barriers, Brazilians give a lot of emphasis to physical appearance and they develop numerous categories to designate skin tones, facial features and other characteristics of the black race (Seyferth, 1989: 28).
Table 4.1
Proportion of students in Elementary Basic (5th to 8th grades) and Secondary School, by capital of Federal Unit, according to evaluation of how much school teaches – 2000*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>GO</th>
<th>MT</th>
<th>AM</th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>CE</th>
<th>PE</th>
<th>AL</th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>ES</th>
<th>RJ</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>RS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School teaches a lot/enough</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>56</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School teaches little/nothing</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(307976)</td>
<td>(173945)</td>
<td>(76720)</td>
<td>(218495)</td>
<td>(174895)</td>
<td>(327938)</td>
<td>(228764)</td>
<td>(102795)</td>
<td>(404994)</td>
<td>(52972)</td>
<td>(624553)</td>
<td>(1333235)</td>
<td>(46853)</td>
<td>(160571)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The individuals were asked: "Do you think school really teaches you anything?" The categories of responses correspond to the alternatives in the table.
* Expanded data.
other hand, the largest percentage rates for those that consider the school to teach little or nothing are found in Recife (48%), Florianópolis (47%) and Salvador (43%). The rates for those with a negative view of school in terms of the adequacy of the teaching is also high (around 40%) in other capitals.

School performance evaluated through information on repeating grades is another way to measure the way school is seen in terms of learning by the students. Survey data reveal that the capitals with the largest percentage rates for repeating grades are 55% in Salvador (55%) and Belém (58%). The smallest percentage rates occur in São Paulo (29%) and Vitória (30%). There are also high percentages of students that were held back more than once in Belém and Goiânia (28% and 27%). It must be mentioned here that in seven of the fourteen capitals where the study was carried out, almost half or more than half of the students had had one experience with repeating a grade.

Although there is a significant perception of school as a place for learning, it is also appreciated for other attributes in the minds of the students. In fact, in the students and other involved participants’ opinions, school appears to be a place that encourages socialization, attitude and opinion forming and personal development. The statements emphasize the school’s capacity to teach the youths how to relate to people, to develop detailed or more focused discussion and to form an opinion about a particular subject:

*Studying makes you know how to have a conversation too (...) you can talk about a lot of different subjects. You know how to talk. That’s something you can really use for a lot of things.*

(Focus group with students, public school, Fortaleza)

Another vision of the objective of school and the learning process emerges among the students as well. This is a vision that
emphasizes the development of citizenship and critical thinking: *The same way it [studying] can alienate you it can make you think too. It trains you because it gives you a head start on your life in society. It gives you more value, the citizen.*

In a similar fashion, the members of the technical-pedagogical staff affirm that teaching has a very real obligation to train and stimulate the true aptitudes of the students, rather than to simply inform or train the students to take the college entrance exam or to train them for a profession. They also point to the school as a permanent space for social coexistence.

The predominant perception among the teachers is that the main function of school is to prepare the youths for the job market: *It's not enough to use critical thinking and to pass the subject on to the students if they're going to leave here and they're not going to be able to get a job. What I mean to say is that the subject is important but without a job, a profession, it doesn't matter.*

The students also frequently emphasize how useful school is in terms of joining the work force in the future. This point of view highlights the importance of studying because a diploma and formal qualification are required by the job market: *You have to have gone to school for most jobs (...) These days, the minimum is a high school diploma. There is no choice, you have to study to work, because schooling allows you to get a decent job, one that is directly related to a good salary. As a rule, the youths show that they are conscious of the fact that the job market is becoming increasingly more selective and demanding.*

When asked about their outlook for the future, both public and private school students stated that they wanted to complete their basic studies (secondary school) and get a job. They indicated school as the only possible channel for making these aspirations a reality:
Chart 4.1
Better future

Focus group with students, public school, Recife; private school, Salvador

I want to study so I can work, get a decent job so I can help my family, mainly my mom, to give a better future to my children. In the future I want to be a (...) I want to get a job, do something to help out at home, to help my parents, my grandparents, make things better for my family. It's not just so I can buy things for myself.

The proposition of a better life for themselves or their families was cited by the students that believe that studying develops intelligence and provides opportunities for personal "security" in the future: To grow more in life and get things because you deserve it, more things, a better way of life for your family and your children.

Some principals, teachers and parents also indicate this expectation of a "better life" for the youths. This is true in both school systems and points to access to socially valued functions above all. The vision of these individuals includes concern for the adolescents regarding their future in that:

Many of them have plans and expectations for the future, they want to be someone in life. Being someone for them is having power and money, being successful (...) (Interview with principal, public school, Manaus)

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54 From the perspective of financial independence and social ascension, according to Barreir (1999: 97), school appears as a positive element independent of social class: The youths value this school and they tend to give it a similar or even higher position than the one they give to their family when they are thinking about strategies for social ascension.

55 A significant gender distinction in terms of the perception of the value and purpose of education is included in the testimonies of some of the female students in the longing for independence in relation to family, and mainly men: To have a good future you can’t depend on anyone. To be someone in life means not depending on a husband when you get married so your husband doesn’t humiliate you at home.
They have dreams like everyone, to graduate, to have a profession. Usually they want to have a better life than the one they’ve got, ok? This is just a place to work! (Interview with principal, public school, Recife)

These references could bring about better understanding of why the learning process is critical both in terms of adequacy and quality. Other data show that over four-fifths of the students believe that school teaches them something useful for their lives and futures. The largest rates for those expressing this position are found in Maceió (91%) and to a lesser extent in Porto Alegre (78%) (table 4.2). In general this perspective is more frequently found in Northeast capitals (Fortaleza, Maceió, Recife) than in the Southeast and South (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre and Florianópolis). This suggests speculation surrounding the critical perception of students in the capitals of the more economically dynamic states, where it might be supposed that the inconsistency between what school offers and the abilities and capacities demanded by the work market become clearer.

Surprisingly, the number of students that consider the
Table 4.2
Proportion of students in Elementary School (5th to 8th grades) and Secondary Education, by capital of Federal Unit, according to opinion of the usefulness of what school teaches – 2000*

| Source: National Survey on Violence, AIDS and Drugs in School, UNESCO, 2001. The individuals were asked: “When you think about the things that you learn in school, you think that:” The categories of responses correspond to the alternatives in the table. * Expanded data. |
things taught in school to be useless are quite low. This opinion relates to the substance of the things taught, even those that are important to maximize chances for jobs. The values vary between 7% in Fortaleza and 20% in Porto Alegre. These numbers stand out mainly in comparison to the number of students that consider these subjects useful and necessary for the future. The percentages of students that think the things taught in school are completely useless or that say they don't learn anything in school are even lower.

Among the members of the technical-pedagogical staff, those that believe most in the usefulness of school learning for the future are found in Manaus (95%) and São Paulo (91%). The larger percentages were registered in Recife (78%) and Rio de Janeiro and Salvador (81%) (table 4.3). However, some teachers and principals questioned the usefulness of the content of certain subjects considered to be "behind" in relation to the information and knowledge demands required by the job market. They are also considered to be "behind" in relation to the youths' personal and professional development.
Table 4.3
Proportion of members of the technical-pedagogical staff, by capital of Federal Unit, according to opinion of the usefulness of what school teaches - 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>MT</th>
<th>RN</th>
<th>RJ</th>
<th>ES</th>
<th>MA</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>SC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life - 95% of the respondent's opinion</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning that the students need in their future</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and skills that the students need for work</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not thinking about anything in particular</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The individuals were asked: "When you think about the things that are taught, as a base for school curricula, you think that:" The categories of responses correspond to the alternatives in the table.
4.2. SCHOOL AS A PLACE FOR SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Exclusion is generated in the twists and turns of the political and economic scenario. This includes the social scenario in its many dimensions that include specific efforts that do not always coincide in the areas of culture, education, work, social policies, ethnicity and societal identity. Stemming from the many-faceted and complex quality of exclusion, any discussion of school clearly reveals profound ambiguity and contradictions. In this sense, Sposito (1998) sustains that the ambiguity of the relationships between students and the school is characterized by processes of exclusion, intermittent attendance, successive registration, drop outs and interruptions that make it difficult for the youths to recognize the importance schooling has in their lives. They do not see it as a way to gain social mobility.

In Brazil, the increase in school attendance is accompanied by another type of phenomenon: as a rule, lower-income youths tend to view studying as a way to gain better job opportunities and access to school is often seen as the only channel for social mobility. This reveals the source of their frustration in that studying does not always assure the desired future. This contradiction is felt by the youths, mainly those from the less privileged economic classes that experience exclusion as a cultural, social and institutional phenomenon that deprives them of their basic rights of citizenship.

Even so, social ascension is seen as something that is made possible through school training. Jobs without requirements or that require only a low level of instruction are found in lower positions on the pay scale as well as lower values of power and

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56 In Brazil, beginning with the Law of National Education Guideline and Bases (Law no 9394/96) secondary school became part of basic education. The Federal Government confirmed the universalization of basic education as a priority, encouraging a larger demand for secondary school. At the same time, this broadened the possibility of access to this level of higher schooling.
social prestige. However, inversely, the most desired positions are not only tied to studying, but to a higher level diploma. This diploma requires crossing the barrier that the college entrance exam represents.

Many students state that they have had to look at the college entrance exam as their main target. However, others argue that not all of the subjects that are required for this goal are taught in the schools and that this has a negative affect on their being selected: *I don’t think it’s really necessary for the future. Some things are [but] Biology and Chemistry...that stuff, no way! It’s because of the college entrance exam. The things that are on the exam are really different. It’s Literature and something else, ok? You get that on the test and you don’t get it.*

Many students emphasize the difference between the opportunities that the public and private schools offered. In reality, this is a crucial socio-economic gap in the Brazilian education system. There are hollow school systems that segregate youths according to social class. This establishes bases for discrimination and causes the opportunities of a system to be unequal. Inequality is treated as a value, nourishing the processes of exclusion and symbolic violence.

One of the most prominent facets of this phenomena regards the quality of teaching and its relationship to expectations for the future: *[If] you’re going to make it in college, it’s already a little harder because you went to a public school. The public schools are really way behind in teaching, it’s much slower. The parents emphasize that the youths that study in public schools make a comparison between the schools more easily. They compare their schools and the quality of teaching there with what they would have access to in a private school: For example, the private schools are always going on these trips to visit places like museums, other schools, things you don’t get. In public school you don’t get that kind of thing.*

The teachers also observe that the future is different for
private school students. The future is more promising than the future is for public school students. Purchasing power, available time and the chance to study at good private schools favors many students’ future success.

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**Chart 4.2**

College entrance exam

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**Focus group with teachers, private school, Federal District**

*I look at it like this, that our students here at (....), with a little more effort, if they don’t pass the first college entrance exam, they're going to pass the second time for sure. There’s purchasing power when a parent can pay for university. So, in general, these are the students that I believe will have a good future. It's different from a low-income student who has to work all day to pay for university at night.*

In addition, opportunities may be even more restricted for the youths that must work because of lack of time to study. These students consider their chances for passing the college entrance exam to be slim: *There are those [students] that have a better chance of passing [the college entrance exam] because they have time to study, they have the [financial] means. They can even study at night their last year. The [other student] can take the second year and if he doesn’t pass it’s because he didn’t have time to study. He had to work.*

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**4.2.1. Standards of exclusion and social discrimination**

Discrimination and social discrimination occur in many ways. They occur in inequalities in terms of learning quality and the possibilities for studying in good schools as well as in the availability of appropriate supplies. Beyond this, discrimination and social discrimination also occur in attitudes about school and
in the relationships among the students. Along these lines it is possible to identify three patterns of exclusion/social discrimination in school.

The first pattern concerns how public school and public school students are seen. According to some teachers’ statements the more privileged economic population sees both the schools and the students as extremely poor in quality. This includes the physical structure of the schools and the teaching that goes on there. Many public school students are seen as criminal, unprepared, bad mannered and harmful to society:

They feel rejected by this society when they study in a public school like ours: it’s the worst! So, from the point of view of prejudice in relation to school, I think some of them are prejudiced. Not so much in terms of the structure, but of the teaching, from the first grade through high school. I think there is a certain prejudice in relation to public school. (Focus group with teachers, public school, Goiânia)

The second pattern refers to the relationships among students from the same school system – either public or private – whose economic levels are unequal.

According to the statements of some public school principals, there is obvious exclusion in the school environment on the part of the students. The youths with greater purchasing power avoid getting close or having contact with the poor students: Some of the poorest students in the public schools aren’t respected in the school because they go to school without having taken a bath, or wearing old or dirty clothes, or because they didn’t bring a snack and they can’t afford to buy one. Some school inspectors also notice discrimination among the students:
The teachers feel the difference in the group. There are some children that are better dressed, there are others that are really poor, abandoned by their families. So they come to school in wrinkled dirty clothes. Even among the students there's this separation, you know. Why are they so neat and clean and they smell good and then the others smell bad and don't wear good clothes? There's a conflict you know: 'Oh, no, I'm not going to sit there, teacher, I'm not going to do my work over there because that kid stinks.' (Interview with inspector, public school, Fortaleza)

In the testimonies, there are indications that those suffering from discrimination react aggressively to the group's backing off. Added to this differentiation are the students that exclude themselves. This attitude is found when students prefer to isolate themselves rather than to relate to people who are better off than they are economically:

**Chart 4.3**

**Bumming off of other people**

**Focus group with students, public school, Vitória**

*You can see that the ones with more money are the ones who discriminate more. And the ones who don't have money stay to themselves so they won't be discriminated against. Some of them stay in the classroom, they don't go out. They don't get close to anyone who's eating something, so they don't feel bad, you know. They don't want people to say they're bumming off people. These are the ones that feel excluded: during the break they don't get near anybody that has money to go to the snack bar.*

One motive for this type of isolation is school supplies. The students who are economically well off have notebooks and good pens and the others don't even have the basic necessities for studying.
Some students act in solidarity with their classmates and contribute in some way so that they will be able to do the schoolwork or participate in extra-curricular activities even though they don’t have the means. School staff members help in the same way with clothes or necessary school supplies:

\textit{We deal with all types of adolescents, not just those from a high middle-class or middle-class background. We help six students from the school, from the favela here (...) these needy kids from these projects they've got around here. They study with us and they always integrate into the school with no trouble. This is really satisfying for me to see [the fight against] inequality within the school. There's no difference, [because] we always try to pass on this idea, this consciousness. (Interview with coordinator, private school, Rio de Janeiro)}

However, the third pattern occurs in the private schools and affects the students with lesser purchasing power. It affects the poorest ones, those that receive scholarships, or that are teachers' or other staff members’ children. Statements from some teachers show that even with this "incentive" on the part of some schools of offering places to students who cannot pay the fees, those who are not on scholarship insist on emphasizing the inequality of their social situation in the form of humiliation.

One inspector observed that many staff members do not register their children in the school where they work because they will be subject to discrimination from those who pay the fees. The inspector then goes on to point out the distinction between children of staff members and teachers’ children registered in the school.
It’s tough to see a staff member’s kid in here. You can do it, it’s just that no one puts their kid in here because of discrimination. There was an inspector who put her son in school here. And I think that the Guidance Counselor came up to her and said: ‘Look, I don’t think it’s a good idea to put your son in school here.’ The Guidance Counselor told her it would be better to put him in another school. Could it be that the Guidance Counselor didn’t want that kid in school because he was a staff member’s kid or was it the students? He was leaving and they said that the student was really discriminated against. The students said that his mom was the maid of the school, you know, stuff like that. It’s different with a teacher’s kid. All of the teachers that have kids, their kids study here. (Interview with inspector, private school, São Paulo)

Especially in today’s Brazil – one of the countries with the largest socio-economic inequality in the world – social exclusion imposes a basic chasm between rich and poor\textsuperscript{57}. This dichotomy establishes differentiated standards for these groups. The groups construct stereotyped images of the other groups and this adds to the distance between them. Each group seeks to defend itself against the threat represented by those that are not like they are.

\textsuperscript{57} Brazil is the leader in world ranking of social inequality. Data from the Institute of Applied Economic Research, based on UN and World Bank data, showing that the richest 10\% of the population retain an income that is 28 times higher than the poorest 40\%. (In: Jornal do Brasil newspaper, March 15, 2001).
4.3. STRATIFICATION, SOCIAL INTERACTION AND PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGEABILITY

It was possible to construct an index of student social stratification based on information on the availability of lasting goods and services. The sample of students that is called class A or high class corresponds to a maximum of 1%. The sample for class B or middle-class is also small. When combined with class A this group varies between a maximum of 21% in Recife and a minimum of 5% in Manaus (table 4.4). The most numerous social strata is the group that corresponds to class C or middle middle-class. This group varies from between 49% in Manaus, Cuiabá and Maceió, and 79% in Florianópolis. The students from class D or low middle-class are numerous in Manaus (46%) and vary from around 1/3 in Belém, Salvador and Cuiabá. These students represent around one-fourth in Fortaleza, Recife and the Federal District and demonstrate small percentages in Rio de Janeiro (14%) and Florianópolis (12%).
Table 4.4
Proportion of students in Elementary Basic (5th to 8th grades) and Secondary School, by capital of Federal Unit, according to social segment - 2000*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Segment*</th>
<th>DF</th>
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<th>AM</th>
<th>PA</th>
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<th>RJ</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>RS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-B</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>51</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>100</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Expanded data.
** The social segment was obtained through the average considered in the variables that indicate access to consumer and service goods: radio, color television, refrigerator, sound system, and CD player, videocassette, microwave oven, bathroom, domestic help, leisure car, cellular telephone. The values obtained were divided into four "classes". A, B, C and D.
The data in this table about social stratification allow for a variety of significant observations. First, the Brazilian pyramid of social inequality is reproduced among students as well in that class A is quite small in comparison to other social strata. Second, classes B and C represent most students, and the most reduced percentages are found for class D. This could mean that a larger portion of school-age youths from class D find themselves outside of school.

Self-identification of socio-economic situation shows the generalized predominance of students that consider themselves as "living well". This was observed found most frequently in Florianópolis (81%), Vitória and Recife (77% and 76%) and least frequently in Belém (57%), São Paulo (66%) and Manaus (64%). The cities that contain the largest percentages of students that identify themselves as poor or extremely poor are Manaus (36%) and Belém (43%).

"Living well" or choosing an intermediate category when the students classify themselves on the social scale could be a way of refusing to take on the situations that are considered as extreme and are viewed negatively from a social point of view. It may also be a way of avoiding stereotypes. In some fashion this indication contains implicit references to one category or another that an individual does not want to be identified with or that doesn't serve as a parameter for comparison.

On the whole, this data also suggests the search to be the same or close to a group. This suggests a certain homogeneity or social leveling through school. In fact, perhaps because they want

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58 Discrimination standards were analyzed in a survey carried out in the Federal District about gangs. This research recorded the tendency to seek differentiation because of differences in lifestyles. In this case, those living in the periphery saw themselves as different in relation to ‘the ones who live in the main part of the city.’ The research highlighted the occurrence among the youths of a ‘compensatory discussion that was inverted in reference to values and moral criteria.’ (Abramovay et al., 1999: 45). Caldeira (1984) emphasizes the compensatory mechanism that occurs in the self-classifications that operate on codes about rich and poor and through compensations and distancing.
to avoid discriminatory attitudes among themselves and society, the students take on an attitude of social leveling when they indicate that they are "living well". This homogenous effect occurs in the average samplings and guarantees the non-existence of prejudice among the classmates. This means that in a setting where most of the people have similar socio-economic conditions, there would naturally be no discrimination of this type.

4.4. SELF-IDENTIFICATION OF RACE 
AND IDEAS ABOUT RACISM

Distribution according to race in terms of student self-identification faithfully follows regional Brazilian definitions for the population as a whole. In Porto Alegre and Florianópolis there are larger percentages of students that define themselves as white (75% and 83%). This is followed by São Paulo (61%) and Rio de Janeiro (56%). The largest percentage of students that define themselves as black occurs in Salvador (23%) and those that define themselves as indigenous occurs in Manaus (5%) and both represent minority groups. In Belém and Maceió, there are larger numbers of those that identify themselves as mixed race (54% and 51%, respectively). This group is quite large in other capitals, however, where the recorded percentages are close to the percentages for those that define themselves as white.

Although the violence related to discriminatory practices that result from preconceptions about race has been institutionally silenced, it is still evident in the school community. In the following statement from a parent focus group the theme of intolerance is revealed:
My daughter suffers from prejudice at school, but that’s the way the world is. Most public schools have more black kids and my daughter is white. So, because she’s white, she’s completely discriminated against in the school. They’ve even threatened to cut her hair because she has this long, straight, blond hair. They say ‘what’s this dirty blond doing here?’ The principal said it like this ‘It’s because your daughter is in a public school and she doesn’t have the public school profile.’ I said ‘This is really crazy, this is nuts, to say they’re going to get her out in the street.’ (...) The teachers really try to help. They call the group together and tell them ‘For God’s sake don’t go out and get this girl on the street.’ (Focus group with parents, public school, Salvador)

In the meantime, principals and teachers from private establishments tend to maintain that there is no racial prejudice in the schools where they work because there is a very small number of black people in the school environment:

Racial prejudice (...) it’s complicated to even say racial because at a school like ours I think if there are 10 black kids here, that’s a lot. (Focus group with teachers, private school, Florianópolis)

Prejudice here is minimal, there’s almost none. You’ve only got a few black kids here. (Focus group with teachers, private school, Fortaleza)

The data indicate discrimination and reveal that the non-white students are much more numerous in public schools than white students are. This fact could be an expression of racial structuring. This means that there is the existence of barriers for black and mixed-race students having access to private schools. Private schools were considered by many survey participants to be better quality schools. However, it must be noted that the
quantitative data do not demonstrate that non-white students are totally absent from private schools. The data merely indicate that the percentage rates for those with access to private schools are much higher among white students.

In addition to differentiated access according to administrative dependency whites and non-whites are differentiated as well by study shift. Larger percentages of non-whites study at night. This is found at a minimum of 23% in Florianópolis and a maximum of 82% in Salvador. The data has shown that studying at night imposes a lot of obstacles for the students. Intellectual activity is more difficult at night and violent incidents tend to occur more frequently at night than they do during the day.

The data indicate another dimension of racial discrimination in the schools where the non-white students are more subject than white students are to verbal violence, especially violence expressed through threats (table 4.5).
Table 4.5
Proportion of students in Elementary Basic (5th to 8th grades) and Secondary School, by report of occurrences of verbal violence in the school environment and by capital of Federal Unit, according to self-identification of color/race - 2000 *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Violence</th>
<th>MT White</th>
<th>MT Non-White</th>
<th>AM White</th>
<th>AM Non-White</th>
<th>PE White</th>
<th>PE Non-White</th>
<th>BA White</th>
<th>BA Non-White</th>
<th>ES White</th>
<th>ES Non-White</th>
<th>RJ White</th>
<th>RJ Non-White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reported</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not report</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The individuals were asked: "What is your color or race?" The "non-white" category includes mixed race, blacks, Asians and indigenous Indians. The states that exhibited significant statistical associations were the only ones considered.
* Expanded data.
There are barriers that result in a process of exclusion that affects the non-white students and ends up creating an image of privileged and non-privileged in the educational system.

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**Chart 4.4**

Prejudice when and if you're black

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**Focus group with parents, private school, Goiânia**

I had already chosen another school before we got here to Goiânia. But at this other school I suspected that there was a certain prejudice, I don't know if it was because of color, but there was something there. I had left the papers so the principal or coordinator could process the registration and they had those papers for a week. They called me and told me that it was much more difficult than it had been to get an opening. Before, they had said they had an opening and then they told me I had to go to another school. Because we were black, it was a problem. They told me about this other school (...) the principal was very nice to me and he's Asian. He told me what to do. He was very helpful. So, appearances count a lot and there's a lot of prejudice when you're black. My son suffered prejudice from not being accepted at the first school.

There is recognition on the part of a number of students and members of the technical-pedagogical staff of the fact that racial prejudice does exist in school. This is underlined mainly by those who have been victimized, by those that have heard expressions like nigger, blacky, stinky and brillo head.

*The girls there call me blacky, a lot of stuff. That really makes me mad and I fight back. At home I say: ‘Mom, I don’t want to go to school because I don’t want to fight. They call me*
names, they call me a lot of things. You think I like that?’ So then I go to the break and I hear them yelling: ‘Look at that stinky one over there.’ (Focus group with students, public school, Porto Alegre).

It’s my daughter who’s going through this [discrimination]. She’s got kinky hair and the students there don’t, so they call her brillo head. (Focus group with parents, public school, Florianópolis).

There are many testimonies that indicate that black students are excluded from the most valued positions with the most status or from prestigious jobs. This occurs in a subliminal or non-subliminal fashion. There is no doubt that day to day racial hostility also has the power to cause prejudice in school by stigmatizing and marginalizing the victim: I notice [that] the black students (....) tend to pull away because we’ve got this prejudice, because society as a whole puts this on you beginning when you’re little.

In the literature about the theme in Brazil, the fact that racism takes place in complex ways is commonly emphasized. This does not mean, though, that racism is admitted to by the majority of the population. It is that attitudes like having friends from another ethnic or racial group do not necessarily exclude practices related to or reproducing racism (Guimarães et al., 2000). At first it is not easy to detect practices or behavior that are described by racist patterns in the schools. On the contrary, denying any type of discrimination is common. This difficulty in being able to notice racial prejudice is due to the ideology that is deeply rooted in Brazilian social thinking. This ideology describes the country as racially idyllic, a place where discrimination by race does not happen because Brazil is a racially homogeneous country, a "brown nation". Even today the fallacy of this "brown
nation" Brazil is embedded in discussion of the school community and Brazilian society as a whole. There is no reason for prejudice (...) Brazil is very mixed. On the other hand, there is a social process that is taking place in Brazil that is starting to demystify the perception of the country as racially democratic. This has been reflected in the schools: *Trying to hide this doesn't work* (...) *There is prejudice. It's hypocritical to say there isn't.*

The students say that there is racial prejudice in the school environment. They tell of cases when this included the Principal's Office against students and teachers and also when it came out among the classmates:

*I think there's racial prejudice from the principal towards one of our teachers. He's black, he's one of the best teachers here at the school. He's understanding and he treats the students really well. But there's this prejudice the principal has with this teacher.* (Focus group with students, public school, Vitória)

*I think that there's not this explicit, declared prejudice. Sometimes it's not even prejudice. The person doesn't think it's prejudice, it's this thing you see that they have, though. The other day we were putting on this presentation (...) and there was this teacher that was walking by. There are a lot of black kids in our class. So, the teacher walked by and said: 'Look at this! The highest concentration of blacks is in this classroom!'* (Focus group with students, private school, Salvador)

A number of those interviewed recognized that racism exists in their schools. They made reference to prejudice in a general way and to racism that involves other people or groups. There are rarely statements where people admit to being racist themselves. Blacks blame whites, blondes accuse brunettes, teachers point to students, students talk about the principal and
children accuse parents. The conclusion: prejudice always involves "the other one."

The statement of a black student reveals declared explicit prejudice and illustrates a situation at the limits of racism that is assumed and "rationalized" by the cultural setting concerning what is beauty and normal is. This excludes blacks:

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**Chart 4.5**

If she's a little whiter you can walk around holding hands

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**Focus group with students, public school, São Paulo**

*I don’t really like blacks, you know. No, seriously now, I don’t really like the color of my race. I don’t like to go after or go out with black girls. I just can’t face that little black face looking at me. If she’s a little whiter you can walk around holding hands, you can go to the mall. Now, I’d like to see you have the nerve to take some black girl to the mall. Because at the mall you can just go around with the trendy girls. Because they [the friends] think that I’m going to the mall to show off my girlfriend. You have to walk around with that girl presence, you know. I’m not going to say it’s not like that because it is. The mall is like any other place in your circle of friends. I mean, I think they get together and say ‘oh, man, my girlfriend is really hot, she’s white, she’s got blue eyes.’ So, now I’m going to go around and show off this brown or black girl with bad hair in front of my friends?*

In Brazilian literature about racism it is common to talk about how racism becomes banal because of "polite racism". This is when racist positions are disguised by false politeness, hiding prejudicial references behind supposed affectionate treatment (Guimarães and Huntley, 2000; Guimarães, 1999; Hasenbalg, 1992; Moura, 1988, among others). The fruit of this denial of direct racist practices is that racial prejudice is expressed through
playful games and jokes. Nicknames are recognized to be the main source of spreading anti-black stereotypes in the school community. These nicknames are considered to be innocent or playful yet they perpetuate segregation barriers and discriminatory concepts: *There's this guy, he's like my main man. I play with him: 'Shut up blacky.' But it's a joke. I know it and so does he.*

Perhaps this is why some students demonstrate ambiguity when they are asked to state whether prejudice exists in their schools or not when they are discussing the theme racial prejudice. At first the students comment that there is no prejudice in their schools and that what goes on is just fooling around. However, nicknames like "asphalt popsicle", "tar face", "chocolate quik", "chocolate" and "little skin" are found to be on the thin line that defines the extremely diffuse line between playfulness and aggression:

_There are those little games that are sometimes in bad taste. They call some people asphalt popsicle, stuff like that._ (Focus group with students, public school, Fortaleza)

_But I've already gotten a few of these jokes because I was the one with the brownest skin in my class. Last year, I don't know, this year they call me black, Michael Jackson, those kind of comments._ (Focus group with students, private school, Cuiabá)

Parents in focus groups also emphasize the use of adjectives that are disguised as "little games" to express and legitimize racial prejudice:
My daughter is in eighth grade. They [the students] call her chocolate quik or chocolate. She’s really dark, too. She says that the white students always give nicknames to anyone who’s brown or black. They say it’s only a joke. (Focus group with parents, private school, Cuiabá)

The other day my daughter was watching a video in the class and the teacher said: ‘I hate blacks and I hate poor people.’ And they got her. ‘You’re not part of this.’ I went there and really made a ruckus. You know what the Principal’s Office asked me? If I knew the teacher. And I said: ‘No, and I don’t want to.’ ‘She’s black.’ And I said ‘But that doesn’t mean she can discriminate against my daughter because she’s white.’ And the Principal’s Office said that she was only kidding. How are you supposed to know what’s a joke in a situation like this.’ (Focus group with parents, public school, Salvador)

Based on the perception of racial prejudice, the students said that there was discrimination against blacks by whites but that the reverse situation happened often as well. They also emphasized that prejudice and discrimination exist between blacks that demonstrates a certain difficulty in assuming their status as blacks:

There’s something I wanted to say about racial prejudice. Lots of people say that the whites discriminate against the blacks and all. But it’s not just the whites that discriminate against the blacks, nope. It’s the blacks that discriminate against the whites too – that little yellow thing, that little pale thing, stuff like that. (Focus group with students, public school, Salvador)

The prejudice that blacks have in relation to whites was also mentioned in some statements: Most of the administrative office is
black. I’m not black, but everyone in the office is. I was almost suspended because of this prejudice from the administration because I’m not black...that happens too.

On the other hand, there are those that feel that the young black students put themselves on guard against situations that they interpret as racist. This may be due to a socially critical consciousness of a culture that tends to reproduce racism or it may be a form of self-defense: You see this prejudice that the black kid has in relation to being black. He thinks that we’re giving him a talking to just because he’s black.

In some way the progressive social consciousness raising about racist attitudes against blacks has also alerted other ethnic groups to the use of negative expressions and pejorative forms of treatment that can affect them in the same way. This has caused warnings against intolerance in a variety of forms:

_They [the students] have racial prejudice, sure. There’s even one who has some Indian features and the students go around giving him nicknames like a tribe name, they make fun of him, they sing some Indian song and go on from there._ (Focus group with teachers, public school, Porto Alegre)

The connection between the feeling of social exclusion and racism is clear in many of the discussions. Some public school students comment that racial prejudice is the product of society. Society is what causes the differentiation, relating demonstrations of discrimination to the class system and to particular cases of racism but not necessarily to the school. They also relate cases when they think racism has its own operational basis, one that crosses the differentiation in social classes, as suggested in the following testimony:
Like Rappa [musical group] says, every paddy wagon has a little black sheep. I think it’s like this, the fact that a guy is black, he’s going to face a lot of discrimination from society, that’s for sure. Society is the first one to tell you that. I’m not someone who can say that I’ve suffered [from prejudice]. Maybe it’s already happened and I just didn’t notice. But I know what’s going on. Sometimes the fact that a guy is black, he can be wearing a suit and tie, but the guy is more suspicious than the white guy who’s dressed up or not. Society does that. (Focus group with students, public school, Rio de Janeiro)

However, in some statements there are notable numbers of teachers that think it’s possible to deconstruct prejudice, as suggested by the following:

Even children have prejudice. I’ve tried, I’ve explained, it’s always the same thing, even in the classroom, here comes some little girl [black], and it’s like this, they [the white students] play with her and then they don’t want her anymore and they kick her out of the group. I’ve been working on this with her [the black student]. (Focus group with teachers, public school, Cuiabá)

The school community demonstrates a variety of opinions about the presence of racism. These range from denying demonstrations of discrimination in their school to denouncing them. Whatever the social position of the involved party, the ways that these perceptions were stated revealed elements that affirmed racism or affirmed the naturalization of racism in the school environment.

Meanwhile, the victims of racism have faces. The great majority of those that say they have been the victims of racial prejudice are people with non-white characteristics, although
they do not always identify themselves as blacks. This data revealed another facet of the naturalization of racism and that is the "whitening" of self-identification.

**DATA SUMMARY**

According to the different participants in the school community about interactions and social positions, it can be concluded that the school is seen as both an effective way to access the exercise of citizenship and as a mechanism of social exclusion. The school community sees school as a place that favors socialization, forming attitudes and opinions and personal development. The school is seen as a place with the goal of promoting citizenship and the capacity for critical thinking as well as a place that has a direct affect in preparing youths for the job market, although it does not always manage to fulfill this potential.

The students demonstrate contradictory and distinct meanings about the role of the school. School is seen as a place to learn and as a road towards positive inclusion in the job market and in society. On the other hand, many students consider school to be a place for social exclusion where violence and discrimination (physical, moral and symbolic) are reproduced. In spite of this, many youths demonstrated a positive view of school, studying, and the teaching.

- The data showed perceived differences between the opportunities offered by public schools and those offered by private schools. The data reveals that the youths are segregated according to social class and this establishes bases for social discrimination, causing unequal opportunities. This nourishes the social processes of exclusion and symbolic violence. The low quality of public schools takes place right from the beginning.
The private schools are in a better situation to prepare the adolescent for high school and university. The data stress that the future of the private school student is more promising than the future of those from public schools. This fact is revealed in purchasing power, availability of time and the chance to study in better high schools.

- It must be noted that half the students had been held back a grade at least once in nine out of the fourteen surveyed capitals.
- In terms of social stratification of the students, the data indicates that a maximum of 1% belongs to class A or the high class. Students in class B or high middle-class are also not very numerous. This distribution directly reflects the higher layers of the Brazilian social pyramid. The most numerous social strata correspond to class C or the middle-class. The students in class D or the lower-middle class are underrepresented in relation to the size of these social strata in the population. This suggests the operation of social exclusion mechanisms that obstruct the opportunities for registration of the poorest part of the population in the schools.
- The students suggest a certain homogeneity or social leveling in the school setting, with the goal of avoiding discriminatory attitudes when they identify themselves as "living well". This homogenizing effect occurs in the average samplings and guarantees the non-existence of prejudice among the classmates. This social homogeneity in the schools is a construction of the students. Even so, the numbers of students that notice differences in social levels in their schools are quite low.
- One of the most outstanding forms of social exclusion is expressed through racism. This appears to be part of the educational system and Brazilian society. Sometimes racism takes on the form of "games and jokes" where racist positions are disguised by pseudo-politeness. Racism is demonstrated in the form of nicknames that are considered to be innocent or playful.
and that perpetuate barriers of segregation and discriminatory concepts. Nicknames like "asphalt popsicle", "tar face", "chocolate quik", "chocolate" and "little skin" are found to be on the thin line that defines the extremely diffuse line between playfulness and aggression.

• The research data demonstrates that the non-white students are much more numerous in the public schools than the white students. In the same way the non-white students are much more numerous on the night shift. These data suggest the presence of informal barriers to access to teaching that is considered to be better quality by non-whites. This is one of the most worrisome aspects of structural racism.

• A denial of racial discrimination could be confirmed in the testimonies from the schools community. However, the absence of accounts of racism results more from the absence of interaction between races than the absence of racial democracy. The statements of denial stem from the data that show that non-white students suffer more from verbal violence and threats than the whites do.