Reconstructing the Public School Child:

Darcy Ribeiro, Paulo Freire, and Education Policy in Brazil

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Abstract

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This dissertation investigated the development of stereotypes surrounding public school children in Brazil, primarily focusing on poor students of Afro descent. It explored how these stereotypes have influenced education policymaking and examined the efforts of Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire to challenge these prevailing notions. Employing archival research to trace the historical creation of stereotypes about Black Brazilians from impoverished backgrounds since the country's declaration of independence, the study delved into historical accounts and perspectives offered by various political actors—policymakers, educators, families, and society in general. The aim was to understand how ideas and images about poor and Black students have been constructed and impacted the education policy process in the country.

The findings revealed that historically, governing elites associated vulnerable populations with societal problems such as crime, diseases, and idleness. Consequently, different policies were designed and implemented, predominantly proposing work as a solution to restrain Black and poor populations. For children, schools emerged as spaces where they should be disciplined and tailored to meet the needs of the workforce. To understand the historical construction of these stereotypes, I conducted interviews with education stakeholders to assess the persistence of

these ideas and the efforts schools make, or fail to make, to counteract the influence of negative social constructions on public school students.

The research also delved into Ribeiro's and Freire's perspectives on public education—how they attempted to translate their theories into practice, and the complexities encountered during the design and implementation of their policies in the state of Rio de Janeiro and the city of São Paulo, respectively. This occurred during a pivotal period: the redemocratization of Brazil. As influential figures in policymaking, they faced resistance from those adhering to traditional narratives reinforcing stereotypes. Archival research and interviews with individuals who worked with Ribeiro and Freire in the design and implementation of their policies were central to understanding the challenges they faced in attempting to transform public schools in Brazil.

The findings underscore the intricate connections among historical narratives, policy formulation, and the persistent endeavor to reshape the educational landscape for marginalized communities in Brazil. This research contributes to unraveling the dynamics of challenging stereotypes in education and delves into the transformative potential inherent in policy interventions. By focusing on Brazilians who are most reliant on public policies, the study not only informs the academic discourse but also provides insights for policies that can meaningfully impact the lives of those historically underserved.

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Dedication

Dedicated to my grandmother, Juracy, a public school child who faced not only poverty and racial inequality but also the denial of education simply because she was born female. Despite wanting to continue her studies after the fourth grade, her father believed homemakers and mothers did not need further education. Nevertheless, she remains one of the most brilliant people I know. In a conversation about the importance of education, I asked, “Grandma, can you imagine who you would be if you could get all the education you wanted?” She replied, “I would probably have earned a PhD from Columbia.” *Eu te amo, vó*.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Capanema Palace was the first home of Brazil's Ministry of Education. It was constructed in the 1930s in downtown Rio de Janeiro to symbolize what political actors wanted the republic to be: modern. To that end, President Getúlio Vargas's administration (1930-1945) invited prominent modernist architects from Brazil and around the world, such as Lúcio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, and Le Corbusier, to collaborate and design a building for the newly created Ministry of Education and Health (*Ministério da Educação e Saúde* [MES]). The building was named after the country's longest serving (1935-1945) minister of education, Gustavo Capanema, who aimed to reform the Brazilian school system and forge the national identity through public schooling (Bomeny, 2001; Schwartzman et al., 2000). Capanema participated in all the decisions concerning the construction of the MES headquarters. From the minister's perspective, the building should represent his aim of modernizing public education, and every detail should represent what he envisioned for the future of Brazil.

Capanema oversaw all the artistic work on the MES premises and commissioned the design and construction of *The Brazilian Man*. This sculpture was supposed to embody Capanema's conceptions of the country's modernization and simultaneously solve a riddle that occupied his mind: "How will the body of the Brazilian man, the future Brazilian man be, not the vulgar or inferior type, but the best example of the race?" (Capanema, 1937b, para. 3). The MES would play a central role in shaping this conception and making it a reality since it was "dedicated to preparing, forming, and crafting the man of Brazil" (Capanema, 1937a, p. 1). Inspired by the work of eugenicists, Capanema and other Brazilian intellectuals wanted the

future (i.e., modern) Brazilian man to possess specific characteristics, namely, to be White like the Mediterranean type (Rocha Vaz, 1937; Roquette Pinto, 1937). However, Celso Antonio, the artist responsible for the sculpture, had a different perspective. He created a figure representing the miscegenation he saw as characteristic of Brazil or, as he put it, an image that conveyed not the man from abroad but "the man from here" (Paulo Filho, 1938, p. 4). The artist likely drew inspiration from the idea that Brazil, the primary destination for the transatlantic slave trade and the last country in the Western hemisphere to abolish slavery, bore the mark of miscegenation. The so-called Mediterranean type was a concept far removed from this reality. This controversy swept through the government, media, and intellectual circles, and Antonio's sculpture was deemed unacceptable and never displayed. The Capanema Palace remains one of the most important symbols of modern Brazilian architecture. However, the man Capanema envisioned as the "best example of the race," the ideal representative of education in Brazil, never came to fruition (Capanema, 1937b, para. 3).

The Brazilian man anecdote highlights how political actors design public policies with specific individuals or groups in mind. More than that, they envision the future and create policies toward their goals influenced by stereotypes of people and groups. These stereotypes are generalizations that do not always reflect reality. Still, these notions and images may underpin a misleading worldview and translate into a biased policy process that neglects the demands of populations who need public policies the most. When influencing public schooling policy, for instance, stereotyping can marginalize certain groups of students, perpetuating social divisions and excluding them from policy considerations. Moreover, stereotype-based education policies

may neglect marginalized students' needs and perspectives, exacerbating inequalities and hindering their educational experiences and life outcomes.

Although education scholarship has considered the impact of the formation of stereotypes in schools, mainly focusing on gender and race (Cvencek et al., 2011; Del Toro & Wang, 2023; Islam & Asadullah, 2018; Tiedemann, 2000), more research is needed to better understand how widely held notions about students are constructed, how they influence the policy process, and how political actors can reinforce or challenge these stereotypes through their perspectives on schooling and their resulting policies. Researchers in policy studies asserted that stereotypes negatively influence the design and implementation of solutions for issues predominantly impacting historically marginalized communities (Chard et al., 2019). However, much of their research focuses on the experiences of individuals and groups in the Global North. In addition, until recently, scholars often (falsely) assumed that research conducted in one country, namely, the United States, was generalizable to other countries. Given the issue's complexity, further research must acknowledge that context matters when assessing how stereotyping influences the images and notions created about public schools and their students and how it impacts schooling policies.

Considering specifically Brazilian public schools from a policy perspective, in this dissertation, I examined how the stereotypes about public school students were historically constructed, what causal stories underpinned education-related decision-making, and how both affected the policy process. The bulk of the research on Brazilian public school students is comprised of quantitative data, such as student demographics (i.e., age, race/ethnicity, sex, and socioeconomic status). More studies need to ask the following: "Who is the public school child?

How have policymakers used stereotypes and causal stories to create policies toward this population?" Although historical research has attempted to understand how policymakers considered these children (Dávila, 2003; Fonseca, 2002), little is known about how stereotyping of this group has developed and impacted the policy process. To ensure Brazil's public education system provides equitable learning opportunities, it is imperative that we better understand how the education system developed and how it viewed the students it was entrusted with educating. As such, additional research that builds upon the existing body of evidence is needed to expand our knowledge and offer a more nuanced perspective on this complex topic.

Scholars in education, history, psychology, sociology, and related fields have examined how the Brazilian schooling system has been shaped for the past 2 centuries and contributed to socioeconomic inequality and other disparities within Brazilian society. In doing so, researchers have primarily analyzed the public school child, who is presented as representing the idea of school failure (Patto, 1991). This literature focuses on students' academic achievements, families' and communities' involvement in schooling, and schools' pedagogical approaches as factors that could explain why public schools are not up to the challenge of offering quality education to Brazil's most vulnerable children. Still, how policymakers interpret their policies' targets, impoverished and racialized children, remains relatively unexplored, thus necessitating further research to shed light on other aspects connected to public school students.

Aligned with the social constructionist perspective, this dissertation revolves around the formation of stereotypes concerning the public school child, particularly racialized students from impoverished backgrounds in Brazilian public schools. The objective was to scrutinize how historical ideas and preconceptions about these students shaped the policies crafted for them. The

study also delves into how Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire, esteemed education scholars in Brazil who advocated for public schooling as a catalyst for democracy, introduced fresh perspectives regarding the target populations of public schools in Brazil. The focus of this research was to unravel the development of stereotypes around the public school child, primarily impoverished students of African descent, in Brazil and to assess whether challenging conventional assumptions about these children and their education may have influenced the success of the policies proposed by Ribeiro and Freire.

Taking a perspective aimed at grasping the foundational roots of these stereotypes, I adopted a historical lens, exploring ideas and policies in Brazil since its emergence as an independent nation. Although delving into events from 2 centuries ago may appear daunting, it was crucial to recognize that stereotypes about public school children were deeply embedded in longstanding social constructs related to race and class that evolved during Brazil's early nationhood. Therefore, examining historical contexts became imperative to comprehend the evolution of these stereotypes. Moreover, I also adopt a contemporary lens, that not only facilitates comprehension of the entrenched nature of these ideas within public schools but also sheds light on how various actors in the educational landscape—ranging from teachers and principals to students and their families—treat social constructions as inherently "natural" and rarely subject them to scrutiny (Schneider et al., 2014). The focus on the construction of stereotypes within the realm of education is essential for understanding how education policies can inadvertently perpetuate prejudices and injustices, impacting children, their learning experiences, and their communities.

More than assessing how widely held notions about students developed, it is necessary to analyze cases in which policymakers questioned stereotypes and causal stories and what challenges emerged in the process. This approach is especially relevant in moments of significant political and societal change, such as Brazil's transition from a dictatorship to a democracy in the 1980s: The country's transformations gave reformers the window of opportunity to go further in designing and implementing schooling policies. In this context, the fact that two of the most prominent Brazilian educators became policymakers and had the chance to implement schooling policies based on their theories and worldviews makes these case studies even more significant. As such, in this dissertation, I aimed to analyze how the stereotypes and narratives about the Brazilian public school child were created and questioned, filling gaps in the literature pertaining to policy studies and Brazil's education system.

In the subsequent sections, this introduction unfolds with the presentation of the problem statement, elucidation of the main objectives of the study, a concise historical background, exploration of the research's relevance, articulation of my positional statement, and a comprehensive overview of the chapters constituting the study.

1.1 Problem Statement

The construction of stereotypes has been at the forefront of scholarship in various fields of knowledge. Based on generalizations, assumptions, or beliefs about a particular group of people, these widely held notions and ideas often involve oversimplifications based on race, socioeconomic status, and other social categories. Researchers have delved into how individuals and groups develop stereotypical notions and images, highlighting that these processes can have different purposes and outcomes. Their findings clarify that, although simplistic perspectives of

social phenomena offer the foundation for stereotypes, these notions are formed by complex processes influenced by diverse factors. Cognitive scientists, for instance, argue that stereotyping results from social categorization, a universal mechanism for making sense of a vast social world that happens without much thought on our part (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007; Rhodes & Baron, 2019). Social psychologists, however, suggest that even though social categorization may seem natural, it distorts individual perceptions about people and social groups, promoting overgeneralization. The categorization process makes it more likely that we will think about and treat all group members similarly (Jhangiani & Tarry, 2022).

Socialization, media exposure, and personal experiences also play a crucial role in stereotype formation. Social norms, values, and expectations influence individuals from an early age within their families, schools, and communities. These socializing factors often perpetuate stereotypes through explicit and implicit messages, reinforcing certain beliefs about groups. Research in psychology and child development suggests, for example, that when groups are labeled or treated differently in school, children come to conceptualize groups as dissimilar in meaningful ways and show preferential bias toward the group in which they are members (Bigler & Liben, 2007; Miller et al., 2018). The portrayal of individuals and groups in stereotypical ways in the media, including television, film, advertising, and news outlets, can also shape public perceptions and reinforce or counter biases, contributing to the formation of stereotypes. Studies on media suggest that mass communication plays an essential role in constructing gender and racial/ethnic stereotyping (Ibroscheva & Ramaprasad, 2008; Kitsa & Mudra, 2020).

Although stereotypes offer often inaccurate, oversimplified generalizations that do not account for the diversity and complexity of individuals or groups, they are central to how people

interpret the world, make decisions, and assess social issues. Political scientists have been interested in understanding how social institutions and their members' practices and discourses contribute to creating and reinforcing stereotypes. Based on the notion that the identification and categorization of groups are not inherent or natural but constructed through social processes, they propose theoretical frameworks such as the social construction of target populations (SCTP) and causal stories to understand how stereotypes and the creation of narratives impact the policy process. According to SCTP, a target population is a specific group of individuals who are socially constructed through stereotypes created by politics, culture, media, history, and religion, to name a few (Ingram & Schneider, 1993). This perspective suggests that the categorization of individuals into target populations can be subject to bias, stereotypes, and power dynamics that can lead to prejudice, discrimination, and the perpetuation of inequalities. Causal stories, that is, narratives that explain why some social issues or social phenomena occur, create stereotypes and reinforce them. These stories help individuals make sense of complex issues by attributing causality and providing a framework through which individuals identify the ones responsible for creating problems, solving social issues and locate the burdens of reform (Stone, 1989).

The construction of target populations and causal stories can influence the policy agenda and the selection of policy tools. When supported by widely held negative notions and ideas about specific groups, they make the policy process even more complex since negative stereotypes are most prevalent for those most needing change (Lepore & Brown, 1997). These frameworks become central in understanding which groups benefit from the policy process and how policymakers deal with poverty, health, work, and schooling challenges. Education research has offered examples demonstrating how popular stereotypes of disenfranchised communities,

including impoverished children and students of color, impacted education practice and policy. The deficit narratives, for instance, frequently attribute inequality to individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, simultaneously overlooking the external factors that contribute to this complex issue. This perspective significantly shapes how the topic is addressed in policy discussions (Gorski, 2012). It is crucial to approach these stereotypes critically and recognize the diversity of experiences among school children worldwide. Moreover, it becomes paramount to understand how stereotypes are created in different contexts and what challenges arise for policy actors who dare to question them.

1.2 Background and Context

The transition from dictatorship to democracy in Brazil in the 1980s is fundamental to understanding how the policies enacted by Ribeiro and Freire challenged the status quo in education. Although the dictatorship officially ended in 1985, this study began the analysis 2 years earlier, when the "process of openness" (*Abertura*), that is, a slow transition to democracy, began. By the mid-1970s, the civil-military dictatorship started showing signs of weakness and began facing growing internal and external pressure for a more open political system; the transition to democracy was inevitable. The dictatorial government established in 1964 initiated a political liberalization process by the end of the 1970s and implemented measures to foster a more open and democratic environment. These measures included the amnesty law, which allowed for the return of political exiles, such as Leonel Brizola, Darcy Ribeiro, and Paulo Freire, and the release of political prisoners. It also paved the way for re-establishing political parties that had been banned or suspended and the creation of new political groups. Within this context, the foundation of the Democratic Labour Party (*Partido Democrático Trabalhista*

[PDT]), in 1979, and the Workers Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* [PT]) in 1980 altered the country's new political landscape. In opposition to the elitist policymaking that marked the 2 decades of dictatorship, both parties aimed to represent the interests of the working class.

The relevance of the new parties would be evident in the 1982 state elections and the 1988 municipal elections. The 1982 ballot represented the first opportunity in more than a decade for Brazilians to participate in a meaningful electoral process. In that year, Brizola, the founder of PDT and a declared enemy of the dictatorial regime, won the election as the governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro. He was known for his strong leftist stance, commitment to social reform, and dedication to workers' rights. Six years later, the country saw the election of Luiza Erundina as the mayor of São Paulo, Brazil's largest city, and a prominent economic and financial center. Erundina, a PT member, ran on a platform centered around social justice, participatory democracy, and the inclusion of marginalized groups in decision-making processes. From 1989 to 1992, the first female mayor of São Paulo prioritized programs that addressed the needs of low-income communities, including providing affordable housing, access to healthcare, and education opportunities.

The country's redemocratization translated primarily into a political regime change that brought about meaningful transformations across multiple sectors, including public education. During the 21 years of civil-military dictatorship, education assumed a technocratic bias and emerged as a tool to legitimize the authoritarian regime (Agapito, 2016; Ferreira & Bittar, 2006). The opportunity to rethink policy practices and alternatives to address historical issues faced by Brazilian public education and its students only materialized after the military relinquished power to civilians. In this context, two main strategies emerged: to look outside for alternatives

and to develop policies connected to the needs and context of Brazilian students. Focusing on the solutions offered by external actors, a group of educators became inclined to adopt the development agenda proposed and led by international organizations, such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (Souza & Faria, 2004). A second group of educators had a different perspective on how public education in a renewed Brazil should be: less informed by one-size-fits-all solutions and closer to local communities' needs.

Within the second perspective, one of the most ambitious initiatives was the creation of the Public Education Integrated Center (*Centro Integrado de Educação Pública* [CIEP]). CIEP was the primary education project of Leonel Brizola during his first term as governor of Rio de Janeiro (1983-1987). The democratic administration of popular public education policy (g*estão democrática da educação pública popular*) was another reform proposed under the government of Erundina (1989-1992). Inspired by the return to democracy and this moment of new possibilities, Brizola and Erundina invited two of the most prominent Brazilian educators to lead their respective education agendas.

In the state of Rio de Janeiro, Governor Brizola opposed the neoliberal logic embedded in the international education agenda and preferred to center his public schooling philosophies on one aim: to meet underprivileged children's needs. He invited his vice-governor, Darcy Ribeiro, to create education centers offering low-income children an "integrated education," which meant full-time schooling and comprehensive care based on health, nutrition, and sports (Mignot, 2001, p. 158). Ribeiro was a well-known Brazilian anthropologist and former minister of education who saw in the CIEP the chance to enact an "education revolution" (Ribeiro, 1997, p. 476). The goal was for children from slums (*favelas*) and other vulnerable areas in Rio de Janeiro to attend

a CIEP from 7:30 am until 5:00 pm, engaging in academic, cultural, and sports activities. They would also eat balanced meals and shower daily before going home. Proposing a new rationale for schooling, the government of Rio de Janeiro promised to trigger an education transformation by constructing 500 CIEPs across the state. The promise, however, was not fulfilled, and by the end of Brizola's first term, only 117 CIEPs were open and running.

One of the most influential education thinkers of the 20th century, Paulo Freire is often credited for his scholarly work and seminal book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) but is less frequently seen in the academic literature as a policy designer and decision-maker. However, Freire occupied relevant positions in public administration and contributed to reconstructing democracy upon returning to Brazil after 16 years of exile imposed by the dictatorship. While acting as the secretary of education for the city of São Paulo (1989-1991), Freire took this opportunity to put into practice the central tenet of his philosophy: public schooling must play a decisive role in reforming a democratic society (Freire, 1993a).

Because the country was going through significant political change, it was time to create policies *for* the people *with* the people and give public education a new perspective. Freire clarified his intentions in the first document issued by his secretariat: "School must be a place that promotes popular culture, according to the community's needs . . . the son of the worker must find in this school the means of intellectual self-emancipation independently from the dominant class values" (Freire, 1989a, pp. 8-9). Like his fellow educator and friend Ribeiro, Freire faced challenges connected to specific contexts in the region and society, confronting several systemic and historical inequities associated with Brazilian society. These included the elites' general disregard for public schooling and the paucity of consistent public policies

directed at marginalized populations that were supported by the stereotypes about the public school child and the narratives surrounding their education.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine how the creation of the public school child, that is, the narratives and stereotypes constructed about public school students, influenced the education policy process in Brazil. By analyzing the literature and empirical evidence, I explored the underlying biases and assumptions that influenced the perception and treatment of these children within education policymaking using the social construction of target populations and the causal stories theories as a framework for analysis. I also examined how two policymakers, Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire, dealt with these stereotypes and narratives and what responses to their policies emerged from other political actors during redemocratization in Brazil.

I designed this research having specific objectives in mind. One of them was to combine policy studies, education, and history. The intersection of these three fields of knowledge provides a comprehensive and holistic perspective for understanding complex education issues. It also recognizes that schooling results from policies and governance structures, which are in turn impacted by historical contexts. This interdisciplinary approach allowed for a more nuanced analysis of education phenomena and consideration of the multifaceted factors that impact education policies. This study reinforces the importance of understanding education policy as a historical phenomenon (Rayner, 2009).

Another objective of this dissertation was to bring the discussions of policy studies to the Brazilian context. As previous research suggests, this field of knowledge needs to be further developed in Brazil to examine existing policies and identify areas for improvement in theory

and practice (Lima et al., 2021). By incorporating policy studies into the analysis, I also aimed to offer policymakers and practitioners insights into the historical context that shaped policy decisions within public schools. This knowledge can support the development of more effective and informed educational policies that address the needs of diverse students and promote more equitable outcomes in Brazilian public schools.

A third objective of this study was to connect the works of renowned Brazilian educators Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire, who significantly contributed to education theory and practice in Brazil and beyond. Although Ribeiro and Freire are highly revered figures in education and other fields of knowledge, recognized for their significant contributions to educational theory and practice, their works are often approached separately in the field of education, leading to a disconnect between their ideas and policies. By examining their writings, speeches, and education philosophies, policies and program implementation, the research aimed to understand their views on stereotypes and narratives about the public school child and how they addressed them in the context of public education policy design and implementation. My interviews with education scholars and people who had worked in designing and implementing Freire's and Ribeiro's policies were intended to highlight their significance and impact on the broader Brazilian educational landscape. Efforts to bridge the gap and foster dialogue between the works of the two educators, such as this dissertation, can contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of critical pedagogy, social justice, and strategies of educational transformation that can be implemented within the Brazilian public education system to challenge and overcome stereotypes.

By accomplishing these objectives, this study intends to contribute to the body of knowledge on the impact of stereotypes on public school students in Brazil. The findings of this research can serve as a basis for educational stakeholders, policymakers, and practitioners to develop informed strategies that promote a more inclusive and transformative educational system in Brazil, ultimately benefiting all students regardless of their background or identity.

1.4 Relevance of the Study

This study is relevant in both academic and practical terms by bringing together discussions on policy, history, and education. First and foremost, the research aims to contribute to the discussions on education and racial and social justice in Brazil from theoretical and practical standpoints. The study is relevant for understanding how the images and stereotypes about public school children impacted policymaking–a crucial but disregarded topic in the literature. Addressing the topic also clarifies how education policies and debates surrounding public schooling have historically failed impoverished urban children of African descent, even when political actors have a window of opportunity to promote change.

The dissertation offers a novel perspective on public school students. Research in education policy in Brazil has traditionally focused on students' demographics, paying little to no attention to how the ideas and notions about them have been created and how policymakers use them in the policy process. Although it is important to use quantitative data to assess public school children, focusing on the stereotypes and narratives around them is also relevant to question preconceived notions, actively seek diverse perspectives, and base policy decisions on research that includes alternative ways of seeing public schools and the actors involved in education policy. More inclusive approaches that engage stakeholders from diverse backgrounds

and consider students' needs and experiences can help mitigate the negative impact of stereotypes and promote more equitable and effective policies.

Based on this perspective, the study reminds policymakers to question their views and conceptions when elaborating on policies geared toward public schools and their target populations. Because stereotypes and narratives about students may rely on inaccurate assumptions or outdated information, policy decisions need to be more informed and effective in addressing public students' real challenges and needs. The case studies also highlight that even prominent political actors who could be up to the challenge of promoting more equitable education policies fail when confronted with long-standing stereotypes and narratives about impoverished and racialized groups. Learning from their experience can offer powerful tools to make more informed choices and avoid repeating the same errors.

From a theoretical standpoint, the dissertation aims to contribute to broader debates in policy studies by highlighting that social constructions depend on the historical context and how actors frame political discourse. The social constructionist literature emphasizes political processes in the United States and, for this reason, is based on similar premises regarding democracy; justice; citizenship; and democratic institutions, where I include schooling. This study advances the perspective that social constructions are influenced by the historical context in which political processes combine with history and politics to shape policies that affect notions of justice, citizenship, equity, and the role played by public schooling in democracies. Moreover, it seeks to show that when other elements, namely, race and socioeconomic status, emerge in the analysis, the social images of a group may change, impacting policy design and implementation over time. By addressing these gaps in the literature and proposing new

perspectives on the public school child, the research aims to have relevant applications in policy theory and practice, contributing to strengthening racial and social justice in education policies in Brazil and beyond.

1.5 Positionality Statement

While the literature has examined public schools from diverse angles, focusing on policies, educators, families, and communities, it frequently overlooks the central figures of these institutions: the Brazilian children attending them. As I considered a subject for my dissertation, I discussed with a friend the prospect of centering my analysis on public school children. Upon hearing my ideas, she posed the following question: "You are not a public school child. What perspective can you offer on this topic?" While I do not subscribe to the notion that a researcher must always embody the subject they analyze, or have directly experienced the reality they seek to understand, this question troubled me. Admittedly, my friend had a point. I never attended a public school. It never occurred to me, in my school years, that I might study anywhere other than a private institution. My social circle did not include public school children. However, I then came to realize that a public school child was closer to me than I had initially recalled: my mom. I inquired why, despite her education at a state-owned school, neither she nor my father chose a public institution for my schooling. I questioned whether she had ever considered that a public school might have been a suitable choice for me. Her response was: "You were an intelligent and curious child. We believed it was wiser to invest our limited resources in your future, and a private school was the best option. And we had concerns about the safety in public schools."

My parents strongly believed that quality education in Brazil was exclusively associated with private schools. This belief probably stemmed from their working-class backgrounds in which attending a private institution was a point of social status. Both my grandmothers, responsible for overseeing their children's education, took great pride in having all their kids educated under scholarships at prestigious private Catholic schools in the city. However, an exception arose in the stories shared by my maternal grandmother about her youngest child, my mother. Per my grandmother, my mom's academic performance was not stellar, leading to the decision against pursuing a scholarship for private schooling. Instead, my grandmother chose to enroll my mom in the city's state-owned school as a form of disciplinary action—"if you do not like studying, this is the place where you should go."

Conversations with my mom about this family story prompted me to consider the implicit ideas conveyed in these discussions. It became clear that according to these deeply held beliefs, intelligent and inquisitive children should be discouraged from attending public schools. Public institutions, in their view, were reserved for students deemed to be underperforming and were considered potentially unsafe. Upon further reflection, I began to question the origins of the ideas surrounding public education and its students. It became apparent that these discussions were predominantly shaped by prevailing stereotypes. This realization led me to consider whether this mindset was part of a larger framework and how it could impact policy formation for a significant portion of the population. Certainly, I, like most Brazilians, am a product of the construction of these ideas. However, understanding the non natural development of these notions may assist in contemplating alternatives that not only influence our social relations but

also shape the formulation of policies and impact the future trajectory of Brazil's education and public school students.

1.6 Dissertation Outline

The dissertation is composed of the eight chapters described below.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduced the research problem, discussed its relevance and purpose, and presented my motivations for delving into policies regarding Brazilian public schools and their students. It also provided an overview of the research undertaken, briefly describing the literature review, the methods, and the study's objectives. In this chapter, I also examined the potential contributions of this research for the fields of policy studies and education and presented the research questions and case studies featured in the analysis. To provide context, this chapter identified the key political actors involved in designing public policies in Brazil and how their perceptions impacted the creation of public schools. Lastly, the introduction offered an outline of the remaining chapters.

Chapter 2: Inclusion and Exclusion in Brazilian Public Schools

In this chapter, I delve into the history of Brazilian public education. The discussion explores how political actors shaped the vision of public schooling since its inception in the country, often promoting the exclusion of specific children from education. The variety of data sources, including legislation, official documents, policymakers' discourse, newspaper articles, and scholarly works developed by historians of education, are described. These sources are crucial for understanding the underlying ideas that informed the establishment of Brazilian public schooling and the delineation of its target populations.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The literature review provides an overview of previous research, examining its strengths and weaknesses, and delineates how the findings can contribute as theoretical and conceptual foundations for my study. Additionally, I sought to underscore the significance of my dissertation within broader discussions in education. Consequently, Chapter 3 delves into the pertinent literature related to the research problem, encompassing the concepts and theories that informed the analysis. The literature review commences with an outline of the topics addressed in the discussion, elucidating how I selected the scholarly works for analysis. Through this process, I aimed to explore the origins of each theory and their practical applications, analyzing and synthesizing them to derive insights applicable to my research. The theories and concepts explored in Chapter 3 include the framework of the SCTP and of causal stories.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methods

In Chapter 4, I examine the research methods employed for the dissertation. The discussion encompasses the research setting, sample selection, data collection instruments and techniques, data analysis methods, and my approach to managing and interpreting the collected data. Additionally, this chapter addresses ethical considerations, including personal biases that may have influenced the research, strategies implemented to mitigate their impact, and measures taken to ensure the study's credibility and dependability.

Chapter 5: Constructing the Brazilian Public School Child

This chapter aims to answer the first research question and its related subquestion: How have Brazilian political actors historically used narratives and stereotypes to design, implement, and legitimize education policy according to their interpretations of public schools' target

population? How do the social constructions and causal stories about Brazilian public school students relate to their socioeconomic status and race? The primary data utilized in the analysis were derived from archival sources, shedding light on the contributions of various political actors to the construction of stereotypes surrounding the public school child. In the latter part of the chapter, the interviews conducted with diverse actors involved in education policymaking are described. In this study, I aimed to comprehend the lasting impact of stereotypes, their historical manifestations, and the prevailing ideas that continue to influence Brazilian public schools. Interviewees' perspectives are crucial for illustrating the deeply ingrained nature of social constructions and causal stories about public students. Moreover, the interviews provided insights into ongoing efforts within and outside the educational system to reshape the narratives associated with poor and Afrodescendant students in the country. These discussions lay the groundwork for Research Questions 2 and 3.

Chapter 6: From Ideals to Action: Darcy Ribeiro's and Paulo Freire's Impact on Rethinking Brazilian Education

This chapter deals with Research Question 2: How did Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire reinterpret the public school child during the redemocratization process in Brazil (1983-1991)? It also addresses the subquestions: How did Freire and Ribeiro view the causal stories of school failure and their connection to the target population of Brazilian public education? How did they address the negative stereotypes surrounding public school students in their intellectual work? The primary aim of this chapter is to introduce the central figures pivotal to the case studies explored in this dissertation, namely, Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire. This serves as a foundational step in comprehending how their lives and work shaped specific educational

contexts examined in this research. The analysis then delves into how Ribeiro and Freire perceived the public school student and the causes of school failure and their perspectives on reframing the target population of Brazilian public schools. Furthermore, the chapter assesses whether the causal stories and social constructions Freire and Ribeiro employed deviated from traditional approaches in education policymaking, as elucidated in Chapter 5. The analysis draws on archival data, with a focus on publications related to their administrative tenures and the literary contributions they made before, during, and after their time in office.

Chapter 7: From Design to Implementation: The Integrated Centers of Public Education (1983-1987) and the Democratic Administration of Public Popular Education (1989-1991)

Research Question 3 guides the analysis presented in Chapter 7: What happened when Paulo Freire and Darcy Ribeiro designed and implemented policies based on their perspectives about public schools' target population? This last chapter of the analysis also addresses the following subquestions: What obstacles were found? To what extent were those obstacles related to the causal stories and the social constructions they aimed to challenge? Ribeiro and Freire proposed new ways of thinking about and designing policies for public schools and education and encountered challenges when trying to put their plans into practice. The main objective of this chapter is to understand which elements and political actors played a role in challenging their education reforms. Guided by the theoretical framework, I aimed to assess how political opposition, the media, public opinion, and other political actors involved in the social construction of the public school child reacted to the innovations proposed by Freire and Ribeiro in two stages of the policy process: design and implementation.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

Chapter 8 serves as the concluding chapter of this dissertation. First, I provide a summary of the key findings. Then, I delve into an examination of the contributions that this research offers to policy, education, and history. Finally, I conclude by offering recommendations for future research that can expand the knowledge on the topic and the theories used in the study.

Chapter 2: Inclusion and Exclusion in Brazilian Public Schools

Following Brazil's redemocratization in 1985, the 1988 constitution highlighted schooling as a primary concern among the objectives of the newly minted republic. Supporting that education is the right of all and the duty of the state and family, the constitutional text expresses that schools must fully enable students to participate in personal, professional, and civic engagements. The prospect of building a democratic country set the tone for the education agenda in the 1990s, which focused on addressing well-known challenges, such as eradicating illiteracy, universalizing school care, and improving the quality of education (*Ministério da Educação e Cultura* [MEC; Ministry of Education and Culture], 1990). The policies created at the national and local levels had a significant impact on children access to schooling. In 1990, citizens over the age of 15 had, on average, only 4 years of schooling. By 2002, almost all Brazilian children aged 7 to 14 were attending school (Arends-Kuenning, 2009; World Bank, 2022). While progress has been made in the last decades, other historical and multidimensional issues persist, limiting children access to quality education.

In a highly decentralized system in which many education responsibilities fall under the jurisdiction of states and municipalities, disparities are blatant in terms of quality. Although student learning has shown improvement in the last decades, Brazil still lags far behind in international large-scale assessments. The country’s results in the last edition of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) show significant ranking variations connected to students’ socioeconomic conditions. The 2022 PISA scores also evince different learning outcomes compared to the overall performance of students in countries at similar levels of

economic development (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2023). Even having met the 2019 national quality goals and being very close to reaching the 2021 national goals, Brazil still experiences educational differences when analyzing regional, state, and municipal data. While in the North, only 36.4% of the municipalities reached the quality target for public education, in the Southeast region, 73.9% of schools met the same goals (Tokarnia, 2020). Considering dropout rates, almost 20% of students in secondary education, or approximately half a million children, leave school before graduation (Barros et al., 2021). Multiple layers of complexity are added to this picture when other gaps that also impact student performance, such as urban vs. rural and public vs. private, and the issues faced by marginalized groups, such as Indigenous peoples and lower income populations, are considered. Differences in schooling outcomes between girls and boys also create challenges that continue in the labor market and are even more evident for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (OECD, 2023).

The decentralization of policy design and implementation seems even more problematic when one considers that most Brazilian students depend on the provision of public education to receive formal instruction. Brazil had 47.4 million children enrolled in basic education[1] in 2022, 81.2% of who attended public schools (*Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira/Ministério da Educação* [Inep/MEC; National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira/Ministry of Education], 2023). Moreover, the fact that public schools serve sizable populations of low-income students and students of African descent adds to

[1] Brazil's National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação* [LDB]) defines two main levels of education: basic education (*educação básic*a), subdivided into early childhood education (*Educação Infantil*), elementary education (*Ensino Fundamental*) and secondary education (*Ensino Médio*) and higher education (*educação superior*) (LDB, 1996).

education inequities. The average monthly cost of tuition for private school ranges from 25% to 100% of the average Brazilian's monthly salary (*Melhor Escola* [Best School], 2022), so private schools are reserved for the middle and upper-middle class. Data presented by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* [IBGE]) corroborate this. According to research conducted by IBGE, roughly 40% of students in public schools are in the lowest quintile of income. In comparison, roughly 40% of pupils in private schools represent the highest quintile of per capita income (IBGE, 2021).

According to the last school census, Black and Brown[2] students comprised just over half (52.5%) of public preschool students, public elementary students (54.8%) and public high school students (54%).[3] A high percentage of Black and Brown students compose the classes aimed at youth and adult education, corresponding to 74.2% of the pupils in public institutions (Inep/MEC, 2023). In private schools, Black and Brown children represent a small minority of the students. In high-performance private institutions across the country, these students are less than 10% of schoolchildren, and non-White students are nonexistent in one in every 10 private schools in São Paulo, the country's largest and wealthiest city. Black and Brown students are

[2] The official racial classification in Brazil encompasses five main categories: Black (*preto*), Brown (*pardo*), Yellow (*amarelo*), White (*branco*), and Indigenous (*indígena*). While I refer to "Black and Brown" in this section, aligning with IBGE's translation for "*preto e pardo*," throughout the rest of the dissertation, I employ alternative categories. My choice follows the interpretation of racial classification in Brazil by Nascimento and Nascimento (2001), who suggest,

> Official Brazilian census data use two color categories for African descendants: *preto* literally black for the dark skinned and *pardo* (roughly, mulatto and mestizo) for others. This distinction has proven so arbitrary and subjective as to be essentially useless, yet it leads those unfamiliar with the Brazilian demographic context to mistake the smaller *preto* group for black. It is now accepted convention to identify the Black population as the sum of the *preto* and *pardo* categories, referred to as *negro*, *afro-brasileiro* or *afro-descendent*. In English, 'Black,' 'African Brazilian,' and 'people of African descent' refer to the same sum of the two groups" (p. 138).

[3] These statistics might understate the actual situation, as no information is provided for nearly 30% of schools across all stages of basic education (Inep/MEC, 2023).

more likely to drop out of public schools: They compose 71.7% of out-of-school children. Having to work is the main reason for their permanent absence from the classroom (IBGE, 2021), revealing that family income also influences what kind of student goes to public school and their motivation for dropping out.

This chapter aims to provide a historical foundation for comprehending the transformation of public schools into institutions associated with impoverished and Black students, referred to in this study as the *public school child*. Building on the context outlined in Chapter 1, this chapter delves into the legislative and policy milestones that shaped the demographic profile of public schools. To clarify who benefited and who was left out in public education policies, the discussion explores various perspectives using legislative decrees, historical documents, and history of Brazilian education literature. The chapter unfolds in four main sections. The first explores the perspectives of Brazilian elites in establishing the initial public schools. The subsequent section examines the public school clientele during the empire (1822-1889) and the first republic (1889-1930) in light of legislation and educational reforms. The third section navigates through key educational events in the Vargas Era (1930-1945), the Republic of 1946 (1946-1964), and the Civil-Military Dictatorship (1964-1985). The last section addresses education in the early years of the New Republic (1985-present). Chapter 2 provides a framework to comprehend the educational landscape encountered by Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire during the formulation and implementation of their policies, the focal points of analysis in this dissertation.

2.1 Education for Whom?

In the contemporary context, images of children and students seem inseparable. However,

historical perspectives reveal a contrasting narrative. The notion of childhood exhibited significant variations across societies, often with formal education remaining confined to specific social classes or entirely absent for the broader population. As industrialization and urbanization surged, a pressing need for a literate and skilled workforce arose in different parts of the world. In response, formal education gained paramount importance within emerging industrial and bureaucratic societies. However, it was not until the 19th century that nation-states in Europe began to recognize the critical need for developing more centralized and sustained public education policies (Ramirez & Boli, 1987). In the transformations of daily life associated with the new social order, distinct spaces for children and adults emerged. In this context, while the child became the central focus of schooling, schools came to be seen as the natural place for childhood development (Gouvêa, 2007; Veiga, 2008).

Inspired by the evolving trends abroad, Brazilian elites shared a common belief: A modern and civilized society should prioritize education. However, Brazil's context differed significantly from its European counterparts. The nation was undergoing the establishment of a centralized government and defining provincial roles while also experiencing significant transformations in a socially and racially diverse territory marked by the presence of the slave system (Gouvêa, 2007; Veiga, 2008). José Bonifácio Andrada e Silva, celebrated as one of the country's founding fathers, observed that amalgamating such diverse elements as Whites, Mulattos, free Blacks, slaves, Indigenous people, and more into a cohesive political entity would be an exceedingly formidable task (Dolhnikoff, 1996). He highlighted the complex societal composition and unity challenges faced during the early days of Brazil's nation-building, and deemed the establishment of a public schooling system the most effective means of fostering a

cohesive national identity and unity.

Education assumed a critical role in inculcating common values, language, and culture among the varied regional populations within Brazil. When analyzing the process of nation building through education, Beserra and Lavergne (2018) argue that the public school arose "as the social institution that most systematically contributed to the shaping of the Brazilian and Brazilianness" (p. 30). The idea of educating the general population was presented as a tool for cultural homogenization and the civilizing those considered disadvantaged. This target group primarily consisted of individuals from the impoverished class, representing various ethnic backgrounds, including Whites, Blacks, and mixed-race individuals (Veiga, 2008). Still, not all children were deemed as entitled to public schooling. In this period, the deservingness of education and type of schooling were determined by age-related factors and also intricately linked to a child's socioeconomic background and their belonging to a specific racial group. This perspective, as manifested during the Brazilian empire and the first republic, will be further explored in the following discussion.

2.2 Perspectives From the Empire (1822-1889) and the First Republic (1889-1930)

Following Brazil's declaration of independence in 1822, the nation's elites turned to Europe for inspiration in various aspects of governance, including education policies. One of the key initiatives introduced during this time was compulsory and universal education. Within this context, where the significance of formal education was predominantly perceived and promoted by the ruling elite, the central government employed legislative measures to underscore the importance of education. However, these policies were often crafted from the perspective of the dominant classes, emphasizing how schools could serve the nation while neglecting the broader

population's educational needs. Moreover, the first education law, established in 1827, excluded non-citizens, who could be neither students, per the constitution, nor teachers in these newly established public schools (Lei de Outubro de 1827). Due to their non-recognition as citizens, enslaved individuals of African descent were denied access to schooling. For those born free, education was a potential opportunity, albeit marked by significant discrimination. In a moment when nation-building was a central concern, these exceptions reveal that being part of the school community was closely related to an individual's identification as a citizen. Consequently, in newly independent Brazil, the term "universal education" took on a limited definition.

The concept of "compulsory schooling" was also not entirely accurate. While the 1824 constitution mandated education for all free Brazilian children, it was not until 1850 that serious efforts and measures to establish a public education system gained momentum. Despite the decentralization introduced by the Additional Act of 1834, which delegated responsibility for primary and secondary education to municipalities and provinces, the policies and laws enacted in Rio de Janeiro, the capital, served as a blueprint for the entire nation. In these policy initiatives, one of the key concerns was to define the target audience for primary and secondary education. This goal was accomplished through the Couto Ferraz Law of 1854, which proposed compulsory education free of charge for *most* Brazilian children.

The law granted access to schools established by the Ministry of the Empire exclusively to the free and vaccinated population, provided they were not carriers of contagious diseases.[4] In

[4] Examining the Couto Ferraz Reform, Silva and Araújo (2005) highlight that enslaved children faced a double exclusion since Brazilian society in the 1800s used to associate them with contagious diseases prevalent at that time, such as smallpox and tuberculosis.

terms of age, the regulation rigidly stipulated that students attending public schools should fall within specific educational levels as follows: Primary school students were required to be between 5 and 14 years of age, while secondary education students had to be between 14 and 21 years of age. Primary education would become mandatory for children at the age of 7 years. Parents or guardians could face fines ranging from 20 to 100 réis if children of primary school age did not attend school. For individuals outside of these specific age ranges, admission to primary or secondary public school was not allowed (Decree 1.331-A/1854).

The age boundaries set during the 19th century revealed that, in practice, conception about childhood related to a child's socioeconomic status. Looking at poverty in Salvador, Bahia, Fraga Filho (1996) argued that children from poor, free families began working as early as 7. At this young age, they would start learning trades or engage in street vending. So, in the 19th century, the main option for these underprivileged children was not education but rather to become workers. In other words, young children from poorer backgrounds were expected to contribute to the family income (Gouvêa, 2007; Schueler, 2001). To address this situation, the 1854 legislation stated that after completing primary education, these boys would be sent to the Naval and War Arsenals or private workshops under state supervision. There, they would learn trades that could secure their livelihood and employment. As Schueler (1999) pointed out, in most cases, these boys would end up being apprenticed in trades that would integrate them into the category of free laborers. Examining the education available to impoverished classes in the 19th century, Del Priore (2010) reinforced that these children did not have access to the kind of education provided for the elites. Instead, their schooling aimed at molding them into functional and productive citizens. This view was widely held among families and parents in lower social

strata, who saw child labor as "the best school" (Del Priore, 2010).

The transition from the empire to the republic could have heralded a fresh perspective on education, given the new constitution of 1891 and the seeming democratic ideals inspiring the new government. However, the general conceptions on education remained largely unchanged (Nagle, 2006; Schueler & Magaldi, 2008). The new constitution did not introduce any groundbreaking ideas about which children should receive public instruction. It essentially reaffirmed the notions established in the Additional Act of 1834: Primary education was the responsibility of states and municipalities. Key politicians of the era called on the central government to prioritize primary education and the instruction of Brazilians. For example, prominent politician Miguel Couto titled his 1927 book about establishing the country's primary education system *The Sole National Problem*. Yet, as the regime progressed, enthusiasm for educational matters on the federal level waned, and discussions about the topic, along with innovative plans, decreased. This scenario was particularly alarming in a nation where 60% of the population resided in rural areas, grappling with severe resource limitations and planning deficiencies. Notably, illiteracy affected about 75% of the populace, prevailing uniformly across the country, except for Rio de Janeiro, where the rate stood at approximately 45% (Bomeny, n.d.). The central government’s lack of interest in the topic led to the emergence of regional movements advocating for primary schooling, which was seen as the genuine form of popular education (Nagle, 2006).

Debates on educational reforms, traditionally confined to the National Congress, now became localized within states. Regional laws supporting public education were reinforced, and civil political organizations were formed to promote the schooling of underprivileged children.

Here, intellectuals and other political actors spearheaded initiatives aimed at advancing primary education. One notable organization was the Nationalist League of São Paulo, established in 1917, which championed the fight against the "aristocracy of those who can read and write" (Nagle, 2006, p. 285). According to the League, in a country where illiterates could not vote, the national voice would be reduced to the opinions of a negligible minority of voters (Nagle, 2006). Other initiatives ensued, spearheaded by the state governors, such as the reorganization of the schools' administration and the use of new strategies to approach the reality of education institutions, including school censuses. Analyzing the reforms promoted by Brazilian states in the 1920s, Nagle (2006) suggested that policymakers in the early 20th century believed that the need was not just to broaden educational access, but to construct a novel educational model specifically tailored for the underprivileged segments of society. Following this rationale, several Brazilian states[5] aimed to establish primary school reforms during the early decades of the republic. The reforms, however, gained little traction, especially in a moment of political instability, which made implementing changes more difficult. In the 1930s, new perspectives on the target audience of public schools emerged in policymaking.

2.3 Brazilian Public School Target Populations: 1930s to Early 1980s

Since the beginning of the Vargas era, the concept of education as a national issue served to justify an increasing intervention by the federal government in various levels of schooling, gradually accentuating the centralization of educational policies. The first Vargas government

[5] Some examples are the reforms enacted in Rio de Janeiro in 1897; Maranhão and Paraná in 1903; Minas Gerais in 1906; Bahia, Rio Grande do Norte, Espírito Santo, and Santa Catarina in 1908; Mato Grosso in 1910; Sergipe in 1911; Paraíba in 1916; Goiás in 1921, and Piauí in 1922.

emphasized the need to shape the character of new generations and disseminate uniform principles and moral and civic discipline to transform schools into a means of spreading nationalism (Xavier, 2005). These changes were underpinned by a national discussion about the importance of education and what the instruction offered in public primary schools should mean. Educators like Fernando Azevedo and Anísio Teixeira, leaders in the New School Movement, believed the state should coordinate the various regional initiatives and subject them to the desired technical, moral, and political standards across the entire national territory. Therefore, public primary education should signify the universalization of access to school (Xavier, 2005). Public school should be the same for everyone, regardless of their social status, gender, race, or religion, unlike what traditionally occurred in Brazil. On the contrary, public education should be free, compulsory, secular, and universal (Azevedo, 1958). The 1934 constitution reflected some of the suggestions of the New School movement and established the guarantee of primary education and its free provision throughout the country.

While it ensured education for all Brazilian children, the 1934 Constitution also promoted "eugenic education." Renato Kehl (1929), editor and owner of the *Eugenics Bulletin* magazine, explained in the first issue of the publication that the eugenic conception had been around for a long time and aimed to "improve humanity by favoring the birth of robust and beautiful beings" (p. 1). For eugenicists, the ideal of education was associated with the formation of eugenic consciousness, with the aim that young people would not marry those of different races and social classes. The main goal was to contribute to the so-called "race improvement," through policies that aimed at population's *embranquecimento*, or Whitening (Rocha, 2018). Deputies participating in the 1933 Constituent Assembly advocated for the adoption of eugenic measures

based on the influence of racist policies from Nazi Germany in national policies, including public schooling (Kern, 2017). Although eugenic education did not gain momentum in educational policies, the inclusion of this theme in Article 138 of the constitution exemplifies the influence of eugenicists on Brazilian policymaking at the time and how these ideas were present in discussions about formal instruction. The exclusionary and racist ideas of eugenicists remained influential in early republic educational discussions, as evidenced in the thinking and reforms of the Minister of Education, Gustavo Capanema (1934-1945).

During his tenure, Capanema played a pivotal role in modernizing and reforming the Brazilian education system. His policies were designed to expand the offer of education in Brazil but also to promote his vision of the "Brazilian man," an individual who, in addition to being well-educated, felt a deep connection to their Brazilian heritage (Bomeny, 2001; Schwartzman et al., 2000). Because Capanema's policies bore traces of the eugenics movement, his education policies were formulated on the premise that educational strategies should be differentiated according to the social group they were intended to serve. The minister’s vision for the impoverished classes emphasized the importance of professional education as the norm (Vieira, 2007). This perspective was incorporated into the new constitution established in 1937.

Article 129 of the 1937 constitution exemplified this approach, asserting that vocational and professional education was the primary responsibility of the state concerning the less privileged classes. Article 130 stipulated that primary education was both mandatory and free. However, upon enrollment, individuals who did not demonstrate financial need could be asked to make a small monthly contribution to the school fund. By emphasizing professional education as the option for disadvantaged groups and asking donations from middle-class families, the state

officially endorsed the idea that primary public schools were intended for the underprivileged (Vieira, 2007). Government support and funding consistently flowed into secondary education, seen as the crucial stage for educating the elites before they advanced to higher education (Bomeny, 1999). The country witnessed the consolidation of efforts to expand access, improve infrastructure, and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Between 1933 and 1941, there was a recorded increase of 48.7% in the total number of educational units across all levels and types. The quantity of schools exclusively offering primary education far exceeded those providing other levels of education. In 1933, there were 20,9553 primary schools, while in 1941, this number increased to 43,134 (Algebaile, 2009). In the following decades, policies aimed at creating national guidelines and a plan of action for public schooling in all states matured.

The following president, Eurico Gaspar Dutra (1946-1951), selected education as one of his term priorities, and the need to prioritize education was included in the federal constitution launched in 1946. In his address to the Congress, Dutra (1947) declared that it was "necessary to provide every Brazilian with equal opportunities, starting with primary education" (p. 18). Furthermore, Dutra selected advisors representative of the educational reform movement, such as Lourenço Filho and Anísio Teixeira, and fostered an increase in educational spending (Kang, 2017). Following Dutra's emphasis on education, the 1950s witnessed a decline in attention to primary education as it did not feature among the subsequent government's top priorities. The second Vargas administration (1951–1954) did very little for education and public schools' students, mainly limiting its efforts to the creation of administrative bodies and schools for professional education (Palma Filho, 2010).

During Juscelino Kubitschek's presidency (1956-1961), there was a strong focus on

education for national development, with a particular emphasis on technical and vocational training. Kubitschek emphasized the significance of education in the country's industrialization, contending that not only should secondary education prioritize vocational skills, but primary education should also equip students for the workforce (Cunha, 2002; Pasinato, 2013). This emphasis on practical skills meant that the education system became closely linked to the labor market, serving economic goals. Schooling was tightly interwoven with development, as if it were a tool dedicated to its service. The reforms during this period not only maintained but also accentuated the division between schools for the elite and those accessible to the working classes (Vieira, 2007). In 1960, Kubitschek handed over to his successor an education system as elitist and undemocratic as it had been during the Dutra and Vargas administrations: Only 23% of the students who started primary school reached the fourth year (Ghiraldelli Jr., 1991).

The last president before the civil-military dictatorship, João Goulart, championed education as a key aspect of the Three-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development. In the midst of a nuanced legislative landscape, Goulart aimed to drive progressive educational measures. Notably, Minister of Education Darcy Ribeiro introduced substantial reforms, including the creation of the National Education Fund. This initiative directed 12% of the Union's revenue toward the improvement and enhancement of public education (Xavier, 2017). Moreover, in 1964, under Minister Paulo de Tarso's guidance, influential educator Paulo Freire was tasked with leading the National Literacy Plan. This program was specifically designed to combat illiteracy within marginalized communities, utilizing teaching materials that addressed the practical concerns of the learners (Gadotti, 2014).

In a 1962 address to Congress, Goulart emphasized that only half of 7-11-year-olds were

attending primary school due to insufficient infrastructure. The number of buildings was insufficient compared to the number of families who wanted their children to enroll in schools. His plan prioritized educational reforms, focusing on expanding primary education, advancing scientific research, and training technical staff for public schools. The primary goal aimed to significantly increase primary education enrollment, from 600,000 to 2,000,000 nationwide, with a minimum attendance of 6 years in urban schools and 4 years in rural schools (Ghiraldelli Jr., 1991; Presidência da República, 1962). While many educators, such as Anísio Teixeira (1962), praised this education-centered strategy as an effort to establish an emancipatory education, some saw it as clashing with the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law. Approved a year prior, the LDB sought to democratize education and provided specific guidelines for the educational structure, student and educator rights, and educational standards. However, the law suggested certain conditions under which the mandatory nature of education could be waived. Article 30 outlined these conditions: "a) proven poverty of the father or guardian; b) insufficient schools; c) closed enrollment; d) serious illness or anomaly of the child" (Law 4024, 1961, p. 51). The provision allowing the waiver of school enrollment could be particularly detrimental for children in impoverished families and from marginalized communities. The educational initiatives promoted by the Goulart government were terminated when the president was ousted by a civil-military coup, in 1964.

Throughout the 20-year era of military rule, which saw the succession of five generals in the presidency (1964-1985), the education policies primarily served the current regime's political agenda rather than addressing the diverse educational needs of the Brazilian population. The dictatorship's educational strategies did not actively advocate for universal schooling. Access to

education was neither universal nor evenly accessible (Ferreira & Bittar, 2008). The educational climate was marked by the privatization of education and the exclusion of a significant segment of economically disadvantaged groups from receiving quality primary education. Vocational education was integrated into the public schooling system without adequate planning or structural arrangements (Ghiraldelli Jr, 1991). Schools became spaces for ideological indoctrination, often silencing opposing political views and dissent. The curriculum was heavily censored, limiting discussions on democracy, human rights, and social justice. Additionally, the educational approach leaned more toward specific techniques rather than having clear educational objectives. Disparities in both quality and accessibility were particularly noticeable in rural areas and among lower income communities. Significant changes in terms of the purpose and target audience of public schools only came about during the New Republic.

2.4 Education in the First Years of the New Republic (1985-1991)

Post the 1964 coup, Brazilian educational strategies were shaped by agreements between the Brazilian MEC and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). These agreements aimed at expanding technical training to align with the demands of the international division of labor (Agapito, 2016). Supporters of the military regime viewed educational policies as effective tools for propagating the ideology that underpinned the dictatorship (Ferreira & Bittar, 2006). However, the neglect of public schooling was not exclusive to military governments. Previous administrations also failed to prioritize education, often opting for different agendas related to the economy and the pursuit of so-called "development" (Saviani, 2019, p. 365). The numbers paint a stark picture of the consequences of decades of neglect (see Table 1).

Table 1: Percentage of Brazilians with Formal Education (1960s-1980s)

Education level	1960s (%)	1970s (%)	1980s (%)
Illiterate	46	43	33
Elementary school	41	40	40
Middle school	10	12	14
High school	2	4	7
Higher education	1	2	5

Adapted from INEP, 1996

Despite being part of an expanding system in quantitative terms, Brazilian public schools were far from where people needed them the most (i.e., marginalized and underprivileged areas). Moreover, the system's expansion was merely quantitative (Ribeiro, 1986). During the 1970s and 1980s, the nation witnessed the "production" of 500,000 illiterate adults annually. This disturbing phenomenon indicated that despite traversing the public school system, students emerged from the educational process still grappling with illiteracy. The state of Rio de Janeiro was responsible for 10% of these numbers in the same decades (Ribeiro, 1986). The uneducated and illiterate population could not participate in political life since only literate individuals could be voters. Even the literate were subjected to social inequalities based on racism and other forms of discrimination that prevented them from becoming full citizens (Ribeiro, 2014). In Brazil, these marginalized individuals were–and continue to be–mainly of African descent (Paixão et al., 2010).

The period of redemocratization in Brazil, which began in the mid-1980s, instigated significant changes within the education sector. This era signaled a departure from the authoritarian control over education imposed by the military dictatorship, emphasizing the restoration of democratic principles, intellectual freedom, and social justice. Redemocratization

spurred educational reforms aimed at decentralizing and democratizing the education system. It prioritized inclusive policies, providing access to education for marginalized groups, and revised the curriculum to promote critical thinking, civic engagement, and human rights education. Additionally, amidst the pursuit of greater democracy, the nation grappled with a history of excluding a significant portion of its children from formal education.

Following the country's redemocratization, Brazilian education experienced a fundamental transformation. Primary schooling was no longer merely viewed as a means to prepare workers for the labor market but adopted a more comprehensive perspective, in line with the principles outlined in the 1988 constitution, which defined education as a right of all and duty of the state and the family. However, prior to this, a clear trend emerged from the laws, constitution, governmental actions, and political rhetoric: Primary public education was primarily geared toward creating a workforce. Little attention was paid to fostering critical thinking or preparing individuals for leadership roles within the country. Furthermore, across history, the attitudes of the elite regarding public schools were closely interwoven with the creation of stereotypes associated with the student in these institutions–the public school child.

In the process that led to the end of the dictatorship, some prominent figures in Brazilian education played a central role in proposing changes, not only within public education but also in how their students were regarded. Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire were among these figures. Their impactful work aimed at reforming public education and challenging stereotypes associated with students in these institutions will be discussed in Chapter 6.

2.5 Conclusion

This background chapter aimed to provide an overview of Brazilian education, delving into the main perspectives, policies, and key actors that have shaped the conception of the Brazilian public school student and the role of public education. The first section traced the concise historical narrative from the empire to the republic, highlighting how the elites' influence on education policymaking reflected their views on national development and progress, often sidelining the needs of children from marginalized backgrounds. The discussion on this disparity will continue in Chapter 5.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed that, from the initial efforts to establish a national school system, financial constraints and a lack of pedagogical direction led to decentralization, bringing both benefits and challenges. While catering to the diverse cultures and people across Brazil, decentralization also resulted in regional disparities and varied priorities in funding, teacher training, and educational quality. This pattern persisted through the republic, with limited discussions on the essence of primary education. The chapter also demonstrated a worsening scenario during the dictatorship, when education took a backseat to issues related to national security and economic development.

In Chapter 3, I will delve into the relevant literature addressing the research problem and the essential concepts and theories that will form the analytical foundation for Chapters 5-7 of this dissertation. The frameworks employed in this study and presented in the upcoming chapter encompass the social construction of the target populations and the theory of causal stories. These theoretical underpinnings will serve as the primary pillars for interpreting the data collected to answer the research questions of this research.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

In this dissertation, I draw from different concepts in policy studies to analyze how policymakers identified issues, established causal relations, and decided whose values the policy process would sanction. In this study, the social construction of target populations (SCTP) approach will help highlight how groups were framed and considered or neglected in the policy process and the impacts of these decisions on the democratic process. The causal stories framework will be relevant to understanding whose social conditions were transformed into problems and deemed worthy of attention in the policy agenda. The concepts offered by the framework will also address how causal stories of responsibility and blame influenced the social construction of target populations and the stereotypes attached to historically marginalized groups. The chapter also introduces the school failure literature, which connects the ideas offered by causal stories and the social construction of target populations frameworks. The following sections in this chapter address the tenets of both approaches and describes the empirical work in the field, highlighting how these perspectives will be used in understanding the formation of stereotypes about the public school child in Brazil.

3.1 Social Constructionism and Policymaking

When recognizing an issue as a public concern, policymakers usually confront the dilemma of what road to take. The course of action chosen from competing solutions is usually based on the different perspectives and values supported by various stakeholders. To understand how governments address the question of how to deal with contrasting perspectives when solving social issues, policy analysis scholars have developed several frameworks, primarily based on the rationalist and the post-positivist approaches. Using an instrumental view of public policy, rationalists suggest that identifying the means to solve social issues is mainly a

technocratic endeavor based on a generic process for generating knowledge and an objective ranking of alternatives to policymakers. Such rationalists connect policymaking to an objective assessment of problems' attributes and treat politics as a tool to establish policy goals (Smith & Larimer, 2016). In these formulations, researchers have frequently downplayed the importance of policy content. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, public policy analysis adopted new perspectives that recognized that policies incorporate sets of fundamental elements or designs that can be empirically observed (Schneider & Sidney, 2009; Schneider et al., 2014). Hence, the content of policies and why they were structured in a certain way became central in policy studies through the work of post-positivists.

While acknowledging the relevance of material and empirical data to assess reality, another group of authors considers the symbolic, interpretative, and multiple understandings found in political discourse and policy arguments (Schneider & Ingram, 2008). According to this approach, the answer to the question "what should we do?" relates to the premise that the political world is socially constructed and connected to the power of individuals and groups successfully imposing their agenda and interests. Among the scholars who consider the impact of public policy on democracy and citizenship through the post-positivist prism, Helen Schneider and Anne Ingram are prominent. Their work contributes to the policy process literature by highlighting that decision-making processes are more based on emotional and value-laden images and symbols than on objective representations of reality (Schneider et al., 2014). Through a constructionist framework, they emphasize the importance of social construction in understanding how power operates in policymaking while also bringing the design and content of public policy into the discussion of symbols and values that affect citizenship and participation in democratic societies (Schneider & Ingram, 2008).

3.2 The Social Construction of Target Populations

Expanding the discussion on who benefits or loses from policy, Schneider and Ingram (1993) proposed the social construction of target populations framework as a tool for comprehending policy design, emphasizing the groups whose behavior and well-being a policy intends to affect. Based on the social constructionist perspective, the SCTP theory assumes that people's interpretations of the world produce their social reality and that shared understandings among people give rise to rules, norms, identities, concepts, and institutions. Politics, culture, socialization, the media, and literature, to name a few, create narratives, images, and stereotypes that portray social groups in favorable or unfavorable ways and influence how a policy will be aimed at them. Thus, the social construction of individuals and groups refers to an underlying understanding of the social world that centers on meaning-making or the varying ways political actors shape reality. Understanding how these stereotypes materialize helps explain why policies fail to solve critical social issues and move away from the ideals of justice, democracy, and equality (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, 1997, 2008; Schneider & Sidney, 2009; Schneider et al., 2014).

Social constructions of target populations are central in comprehending a group's importance in building support for or opposition to policy selection and implementation. While policymakers will provide beneficial policies to those groups positively constructed, negatively constructed target populations will be neglected or punished in the policy process. According to this dynamic, policy designs shape the experience of target groups and send implicit messages about what problems are most relevant to the government and what groups will effectively participate in the democratic process (Schneider et al., 2014). To demonstrate how the construction of target populations connects to political phenomena, Schneider and Ingram (1993)

suggested that the convergence of power and social constructions creates four types of target populations (see Table 2).

Table 2: Social Construction of Target Populations

Group Type	Members	Resources	Social Image	Power	Constructions
Advantaged	The elderly, veterans, scientists	Extensive: size, wealth, mobilization potential, positions of authority.	Deserving of benefits received from policy. Contribute significantly to the public good.	Strong	Positive
Contenders	The rich, big unions, minorities, cultural elites		Not deserving of all the benefits they receive. Contribute to negative social outcomes.		Negative
Dependants	Children, mothers, disabled	Meager resources.	Loving, sweet, helpless, "good people."	Weak	Positive
Deviants	Criminals, drug addicts, communists		Lazy and irresponsible, dangerous. Contribute to negative social outcomes. Must receive public policy's burdens.		Negative

Note. Designed by the author, adapted from Schneider & Ingram, 1993, 2009; Schneider et al., 2014

These categorizations consider that the political power of a target group is closely connected to the extent of its political resources, defined by its size, capacity for mobilization, skills, relationship with public officials, and other elements that can place them as well positioned in the policy process. Associated with political power, the social image and stereotypes of each target group impact its positive or negative social construction and whether it is deemed worthy and deserving and as contributing to the general welfare of society. Taken together, political power and social constructions define who influences the policymaking dynamic and how policy design will define the allocation of burdens and benefits (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, 1997, 2008; Schneider & Sidney, 2009; Schneider et al., 2014). Still, Schneider and colleagues acknowledged that the typology of social constructions does not necessarily

produce sharp lines between the groups. Instead, the four types translate into a policy space in which groups or subgroups should be slotted appropriately, based on the empirical evidence for each case study (Schneider et al., 2014). Hence, overlaps between groups could be admitted. Based on this perspective, Schneider and Sidney (2009) suggested a more flexible visualization of target groups, as seen in Figure 1.

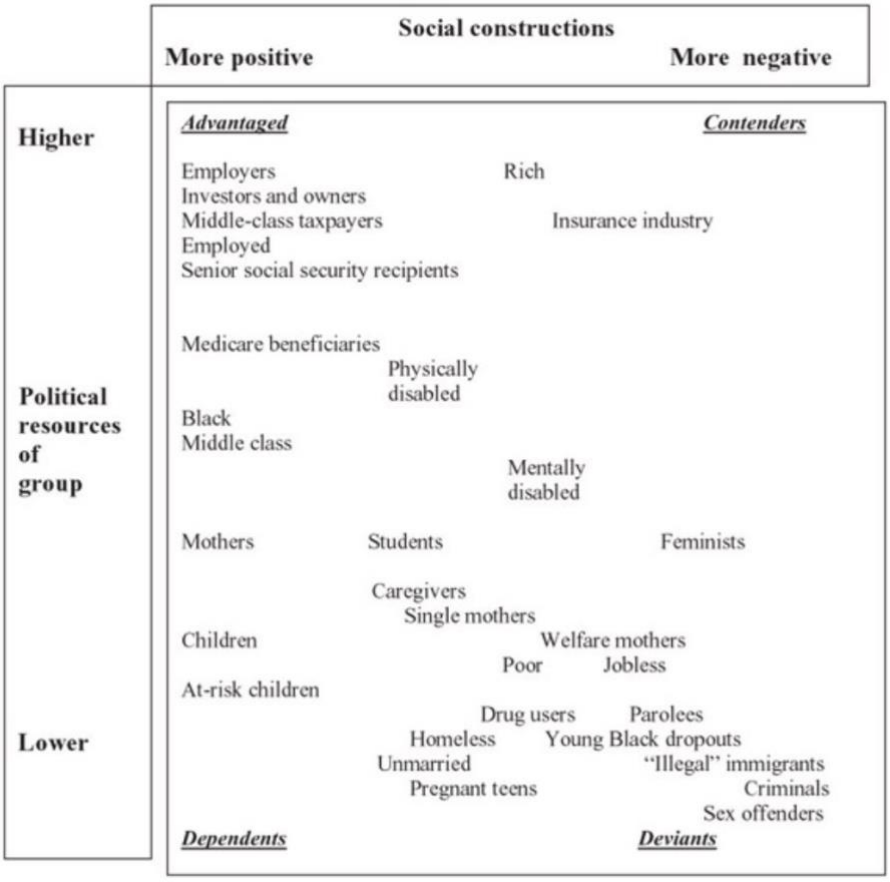

Figure 1: Power and Social Construction of Target Populations

Note. From "What Is Next for Policy Design and Social Construction Theory?," by A. Schneider and M. Sidney, 2009, *Policy Studies Journal, 37*(1), p. 107 (https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2008.00298.x). Copyright 2009 by Policy Studies Organization.

Inspired by the model proposed by Schneider, Ingram, and colleagues (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, 1997; Schneider & Sidney, 2009; Schneider et al., 2014), the study of policy

design has led scholars to better understand why the political system supports specific kinds of designs rather than others and how these designs impact democracy. The approach reinforces the notion that policy studies must go beyond the traditional rational and instrumental elements of policy design by considering value-laden components, such as social constructions, their rationales, and practical consequences.

Although the SCTP theory remains influential in policy studies, criticism of different elements in the approach has emerged. While Lieberman (1995) criticized the disregard for history and the reasons social constructions become politically relevant at particular historical junctures, deLeon (2005) emphasized the theory's lack of a clear causal driver guiding the construction of target groups. Sabatier (1999) contended that social constructions could not be assessed empirically and explicitly omitted constructionists from the edited volume *Theories of the Policy Process* for their nonfalsifiable methods and "free-floating" ideas (p. 11).[6] Ingram and Schneider have directly responded to these criticisms (Ingram & Schneider, 1995; Schneider & Ingram, 2005), and a body of literature emerged in the last decades proving that a critical element of policy design theory is the integration of normative and empirical analysis (Schneider & Sidney, 2009).

Empirical research on social constructions and public policy develops across many policy areas, involving a variety of methodological traditions. To better understand SCTP breadth, depth, and general utility, Pierce et al. (2014) reviewed works that used the theory, focusing on the empirical applications of literature published from 1993 to 2013. Their study found that the theory's applications relate to numerous policy domains, conducted chiefly by scholars from the

[6] For the book's second edition, Sabatier (2007) invited Ingram, Schneider, and deLeon to write a chapter on SCTP and praised their work, remarking that "their particular constructionist framework rose to the standard of science through clarity, hypothesis-testing, and the acknowledgment of uncertainty" (p. 11).

United States who delved into the country's political context. Moreover, the authors emphasized that the main objective of these works was to understand the causal mechanisms leading to changes in the positioning of target groups among advantaged, contender, dependent, and deviant populations (Pierce et al., 2014). Also offering a theoretical contribution to the SCTP framework, Kreitzer and Smith (2018) showed that, although the theory implies that consensus around the social construction of many target populations exists, there has not been an empirical assessment of this basilar assumption. They revisited the theory to appraise the social construction of 73 groups, suggesting that research should consider target groups in terms of the two dimensions posed by the theory−power and construction−and adding a third dimension to the analysis: the degree of consensus. Considering how different social groups interpret social constructions is essential to understanding how these constructions change or maintain according to consensus (Kreitzer & Smith, 2018).

Empirical studies have also supported that social constructions of target populations influence how society will receive a policy and what policies will most likely be a priority in the political agenda. Analyzing the diffusion of criminal justice policy in the U.S., Boushey (2016) concluded that governments are more prone to adopt innovations that extend benefits to strong, popular, and powerful target populations or impose burdens on weak and marginalized groups. According to newspaper coverage of 44 criminal justice policies adopted from 1960–2008, the study found that pressure for responsive policymaking explained the congruence between the target population and the type of policy (Boushey, 2016). The type of target group also impacts policy diffusion. As shown by Blanton and Jones (2021), antitrafficking prosecution-related laws, which translate into a burden for deviant groups, diffuse more rapidly when compared to protection and prevention policies that could benefit criminals. Their study showed that policies

reproduce faster if they benefit positively constructed groups rather than negatively constructed groups and also emphasized that the influence of social constructions goes beyond the policy design phase.

Considering inmate health as a public health issue, Nicholson-Crotty and Nicholson-Crotty (2004) reached a similar conclusion. Their study assessed the impact of social constructions on programs designed to benefit negatively constructed groups. The researchers emphasized that, frequently, negative constructions led to policy choices that created problems in the implementation phase. For this reason, they call attention to the fact that the SCTP framework must also consider how policies are implemented and the role of social constructions in their success or failure (Nicholson-Crotty & Nicholson-Crotty, 2004). Another implication of their work is that social constructions can have significant geographic variability. The authors argue that although Schneider and Ingram (1993) and subsequent studies that tested their theory identified monolithic entities that varied across groups, Nicholson-Crotty and Nicholson-Crotty's analysis of state-level policies highlighted how the construction of the same group can vary significantly across jurisdictions. Such variation impacts policy implementation and, thus, its chances of success or failure (Nicholson-Crotty & Nicholson-Crotty, 2004).

Addressing the Chinese context, Huang and Han (2022) reinforced the notion that even when governments attempt to change social images related to a negatively stereotyped group, the resistance in society and in the group itself is so ingrained that beneficial policies are likely to fail. Like Nicholson-Crotty and Nicholson-Crotty (2004), Huang and Han also considered the implementation phase. They found that although policymakers in a Chinese province changed their stereotypes and negative attitudes toward construction workers to achieve equity in social insurance policy design and implementation, the target population believed in the unlikelihood of

benefiting from the policy and showed resistance to participating in the reforms (Huang & Han, 2022). This finding connects to what Schneider et al. (2014) defined as "feed forward" (p. 116), the idea that policy designs have both material and symbolic effects on target populations, impacting their attitudes and political participation. As Moon (2021) argued when analyzing the social construction of Asian migrant women in the US, policy designs based on stereotypes reinforce negative images, impacting the target population's self-esteem and mental health.

These studies highlight that, even when beneficial policies for negatively constructed groups commonly emphasize justice-oriented goals or are associated with critical national interests, hegemonic social constructions hinder the possibility of change. Since both the target population and others are more likely to approve policies aimed at powerful and positively constructed groups, public officials tend to pass laws intended to benefit individuals seen as "deserving" and downplay policy agendas related to populations deemed "undeserving." Moreover, as suggested by Schneider and Ingram (1993, 1997), while deviants have almost no control over policy design and construction of their image, influential segments find it easier to get their issues on legislative agendas and hinder images that portray them negatively. Thus, empirical research has shown the importance of social constructions of target populations in policy analysis and how political actors manipulate, reproduce, and change social images and stereotypes in different phases of the policymaking process. Schneider et al. (2014) noted that:

> Although much empirical work remains to be done, the allocation of benefits to the advantaged, burdens to deviants, hidden benefits and empty burdens to contenders, and inadequate and demeaning help to dependents is a pattern found across many policy arenas. (p. 116)

Education research using the SCTP framework corroborates this pattern, especially when policies aimed at deviant and dependent populations are considered.

The empirical application of the social construction of target populations framework to education remains scarce.[7] Still, analyses on the influence of social constructions on schooling predate Schneider and Ingram's (1993) foundational article, as shown in the work of Lubeck and Garrett (1990). The authors explored how the "at-risk child" had become pervasive in narratives related to public education in the US to explain children's low academic achievement. Using data from a statewide survey of school administrators regarding their preferences for pre-kindergarten reforms, the authors emphasized that the reform debates were commonly linked to a historical tension between two primary explanations for social problems: individual and structural. Based on the first explanation, arguments about academic failure relate to children, their families, and their cultural and ethnic background. The second type of explanation focused on broader social, political, and economic practices. Lubeck and Garrett (1990) also made clear that the at-risk ideology discourages critical reflections on schooling. Although the study focused on the U.S. schooling system, the processes they analyzed were likely to be found in any society with ethnically diverse populations. While the authors did not use the term "target population," their work contributes to understanding policy practices that encourage negative stereotypes of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Bell (2020) examined how social constructions influenced policy support in the tuition-free college debate by focusing more specifically on the SCTP framework. The study found that support for tuition-free college was significantly impacted by variation in policy design and the

[7] Considering the use of the social construction of target populations approach across different policy domains, Pierce et al. (2014) found that only 7% of the identified 111 peer-reviewed publications shed light on the topic of education.

target population. Bell found that the public was less likely to accept a policy design that limited the allocation of benefits to low-income families with lower levels of political power. On the contrary, when policymakers presented tuition-free college policies universally so that all students were eligible, the public viewed this more favorably. These findings support the notion that target groups' perceived deservingness and political power meaningfully shape the level of public support for an education policy. However, research in this area reports inconsistent findings when the respondents are of different ages and from different geographical locations. One possible explanation for this variability is that, compared to the opinions on "racial/ethnic minority students," tuition-free college has a less stark ideological divide and involves a more heterogeneous target population, college students, with less salient construction (Bell, 2020).

Bell (2021) also analyzed how social constructions intersected with public opinion in the context of affirmative action policy. Assuming that previous studies focused almost exclusively on the elite level and missed the potential heterogeneity in preferences among the public, Bell highlights the factors that may influence whether targeting affects the formation of policy preferences among specific subgroups. The researcher concluded that public and political elites align in their reliance on the perceived deservingness of target groups in formulating policy and supporting the allocation of policy benefits and burdens. Yet, the author noted ideological heterogeneity in the results: While conservatives were significantly more prone to support affirmative action when the group benefited was "high-achieving," liberals were neutral. Another finding was that the type of target population impacted respondents depending on their racial/ethnic group identity. While White respondents were influenced by race-based targeting and high-achieving framing, Black respondents seemed indifferent (Bell, 2021). These conclusions suggest that the impact of social constructions on public opinion is multilayered, and

political ideology and group identification play significant roles in understanding the public's stance on policies that benefit vulnerable populations.

Race and ethnicity are elements emphasized in the studies that connect the social construction of target populations and education. Highlighting how social constructions impact schooling policies aimed at Native Americans, Hirshberg (2002) analyzed the opinion of different groups about the causes of Alaska Native student underachievement. The study found a stark difference between the responses offered by non-Native and Native parents, teachers, and local policymakers. While the first group considered underachievement a trait of "minority" students, the second emphasized the legacy of racism and exclusion in Alaska's schools (Hirshberg, 2002). Policymakers also held different notions of Native students, depending on their political ideology: Liberal legislators were prone to include Native culture, language, and culture in schools and identify problems in institutions as the leading causes of underachievement, while conservative politicians displayed hostile attitudes toward Natives and blamed students and their culture for school failure. The study concludes that stereotypes and social images about Alaska Native children, their families, and their culture influence how policymakers draw interpretations about and design policies that will impact that target population. The findings also suggest that political ideology is closely linked with racial attitudes and beliefs about equity in the US. For this reason, Hirshberg (2002) argues that "it is not possible to understand education policymaking without looking at racial constructs'" (p. 27).

Gándara (2020) examined how policymakers made decisions regarding funding allocations to higher education institutions in Colorado, considering how the policy process addressed race. Based on interviews, observations, and documentary analysis, the study findings revealed that institutions with greater political power received benefits and avoided burdens

through the funding-model design process. Moreover, the social construction of racial/ethnic minority students may have influenced policymakers' denial of direct benefits to this target population (Gándara, 2020). This analysis also considered that the social construction of target populations translated into the social construction of institutions: the ways the public and policymakers interpreted higher education schools depended on each institution's student demographics and the social images and stereotypes attached to them.

The empirical exploration guided by the social construction of target populations perspective offers an insightful understanding of how societal perceptions and constructed narratives impact policy formulation and implementation. This theoretical framework provides a nuanced analytical lens for dissecting the intricate interplay between social constructions and public policies, unveiling how specific populations are conceptualized, categorized, and subsequently addressed by governmental initiatives. Integrating SCTP with the causal stories framework enhances the depth of policy analysis, facilitating a comprehensive examination of the narratives that underlie policies. The following section delves into the intricacies of the causal stories framework.

3.3 The Causal Stories Framework

In her preface to Schneider and Ingram's (2005) *Deserving and Entitled: Social Constructions and Public Policy*, Deborah Stone (2005) contended that "target-group thinking generates causal stories that blame people for problems. Politics and policy shift their focus from reforming infrastructures and institutions to reforming people and their behavior" (p. xii). In this excerpt, the author connects the social construction of target populations framework to the causal stories theory, originally presented through her work in the late 1980s. By departing from a social constructionist perspective, the framework attempts to understand how social problems

become a public issue and how policy agendas develop around them. Rather than accepting causal models from science or popular culture, the causal stories framework approach claims that political actors compose stories, frame problems, attribute them to individuals' actions, and define the tools to stop the harm (Stone, 1989).

Analyzing the formation of policy agendas, Stone (1989, 2012) argued that challenging conditions become problems only when people interpret them as amenable to human action. Before that, difficulties remain in the realm of nature, accident, and fate, meaning that there is nothing individuals can do about what happens to them. The conversion of difficulties into problems is at the heart of agenda setting and, therefore, in defining which topics deserve the government's attention. In this process, political actors promote the transformation of difficulties into social problems through causal ideas, constructing realities to legitimize their beliefs and the public policies they propose, minimize political costs, and maximize political gains. They deliberately portray public issues in a way that will translate into gains for their side. These narratives contribute significantly to problem definition, a process of image-making in which the images serve to attribute cause, blame, and responsibility (Stone, 1989).

Causal stories become a powerful asset to control narratives and assign responsibility for social issues. The process of "reality making" is done through different approaches, including using symbols and language to manipulate interpretations of a social issue; however, political actors make it seem like they are describing objective facts. The storylines are relevant in formulating and selecting policy responses and locating the burdens of reform, evincing the mechanism that causes harm to a specific part of the population and blaming a set of people for causing that harm. When identifying causal agents, the stories can assign responsibility to political actors who will have to stop the damage, legitimating and empowering specific actors as

"fixers" of the problem. As Stone (1989) noted, political conflicts over causal stories are more than empirical claims about events; they are an attempt to control and assign responsibilities.

The causal stories used in politics follow the distinction between action and consequences and between purpose and lack of purpose. Based on that, Stone (1989, 2012) suggested a typology explaining different stories about causality, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Types of Causal Theories

Actions	***Consequences***	
	Intended	**Unintended**
	Mechanical cause	*Accidental cause*
Unguided	Machines Trained animals Brainwashed people	Nature Weather Machines that run amok
	Intentional cause	*Inadvertent cause*
Purposeful	Oppression Conspiracies that work Programs that work	Neglect Carelessness Omission

Note. Designed by the author, adapted from Stone, 1989, 2012.

Causal theories can assume different forms according to the typology. Among these different forms, stories of inadvertence are prominent in social policy. According to this kind of causal theory, people do not adequately assess the harmful consequences of their actions. This inadvertence may relate to ignorance or recklessness. In the first case, the outcomes are predictable for those who know the matter. One of the examples presented by Stone (1989) for this type of causal theory is that "the poor do not understand how important it is to get education or save money" (p. 286). Narratives of this kind are soft versions of blaming the victim. In the second case, people understand the dangers of taking a specific action but still choose to act with carelessness. For example, construction workers understand the dangers of machines and must use protective gear, but they refuse to do it if they think a specific task is easy (Stone, 1989, 2012). Policymakers who possess awareness of the detrimental consequences that a flawed

education policy may entail in the future, yet opt for inadequate solutions to address educational challenges, can be considered on the reckless side.

Although stories of inadvertence help us understand social issues, many policy problems require a more complex model to offer satisfying explanations and resolutions. Acknowledging the existence of a variety of models, Stone (1989, 2012) pointed out three broad types: "complex systems," "institutional," and "historical or structural." The first model, complex systems, holds that social systems are inherently complex, making it impossible to anticipate all possible events and effects. According to this perspective, failure or accident will be inevitable, and attributing responsibility for them is feeble. The second type of complex cause envisions social problems resulting from a "web of large, long-standing organizations with ingrained patterns of behavior" (Stone, 1989, p. 288). The "historical or structural" complex model holds that social patterns tend to reproduce themselves. According to this model, analysts can identify two kinds of people. Those with the power and resources to stop a problem but who benefit from the status quo and work to maintain the conventional social structure compose the first kind. Populations victimized by a problem are part of the second type. Because victims do not see how to overcome that problem or believe there is a solution, they rarely seek political change (Stone, 1989). This argument implies that not all groups or individuals have the power to tell a story and identify the perpetrators and the repairers. As the model denotes, identifying problems and proposing solutions is closely related to the hierarchies of power presented in society. The political success of causal stories depends on how much visibility their proponents have and if they somehow capture widespread and deeply held cultural values.

Empirical research has explored the different applications of the causal theories framework and the application of concepts offered in Stone's (1989, 2012) work to different

research agendas. These empirical studies range from racial disparities and redistributive justice (Stone, 2006) to environmental issues (Tesh, 1994), public concerns about radon and asbestos in the U.S. congressional agenda (Scheberle, 1994), and discrimination and violence against those suffering from health-related stigma in Papua New Guinea (Forsyth & Gibbs, 2022). Scholarly work has also focused on discussions that connect causal stories and education, especially concerning school reform.

Focusing on the arguments for and against teacher performance pay and tenure, Harrison and Cohen-Vogel (2012) explored how policymakers and advocates used language to influence the Florida state policy debate on education reforms. Their findings suggest that actors on both sides of the debate used causal stories to frame the narrative, identify issues, and offer solutions. Using stories of inadvertence, reform supporters conveyed the argument that student achievement was a direct result of access to a "quality" teacher. Within this frame, poor student achievement emerged in the discourse as the unintentional product of negligent or potentially ignorant teachers. The logical solution would be to foster performance evaluation and performance pay to value good teachers and eliminate tenure to remove inefficient teachers. Opponents of the reforms conceived education as a multifaceted process, dependent upon the actions and choices of many actors, not only teachers. From their perspective, student achievement resulted from the guided actions of a diverse set of actors. Promoting reforms based on performance pay and eliminating tenure would only punish teachers, who were also victims of the same flawed system (Harrison & Cohen-Vogel, 2012).

The correlation between teacher tenure and student achievement is also at the center of the research Gottlieb et al. (2020) conducted on the Vergara v. California (2014) lawsuit. In 2012, families in California filed a lawsuit sustaining that five statutes concerning teacher tenure,

dismissal, and seniority would infringe upon the state constitutional requirements for equal protection. These families believed that these laws promoted a vicious cycle since ineffective teachers remained protected by tenure and seniority, systematically burdening poor and minority students with their poor teaching. Based on the trial court transcripts and judicial opinions, the study highlights how competing causal stories connected these statutes, teachers' work, and student achievement. The plaintiffs constructed a narrative about the "grossly ineffective teacher" and their lasting effects on student learning. The defendants, by contrast, emphasized that the real issue was not California's statutes but those administrators who had ignored the obvious signs of good and bad teaching. The findings suggest that the causal stories used in the case emphasized individual agency and dismissed or deemphasized the importance of the social and political context of schooling. Both sides engaged in storytelling that focused on individuals and their agency, minimizing the extent to which broader structural issues in education impacted poor student achievement and ineffective teaching.

The causal stories framework has also been used by scholars in the field of comparative education, as shown in the studies conducted by Verger (2012) and Auld and Morris (2014). Verger (2012) analyzed the emergence, dissemination, and framing of the idea of a public-private partnership in education (ePPP), highlighting the reasons, agents, and processes through which the global education agenda incorporates these partnerships. Drawing on programmatic ideas, that is, "technical ideas that provide the interpretation of a policy problem and its causes and prescribe a precise course of policy action to solve the problem," Verger (2012, p. 111) explored how the discourse about ePPP was framed and disseminated among practice communities, particularly in low-income contexts. The article shows that the ePPP storyline has been formulated and disseminated by a transnational policy network of education experts

strategically placed in influential international organizations. These political actors used causal stories through a scientific and technical style to support how bringing the private sector into education is necessary and desirable. Through a narrative that identifies problems and offers seemingly simple solutions, ePPP is promoted as a cost-effective and fast solution to bring education to developing contexts (Verger, 2012).

Political actors have supported education reform in England under the "new paradigm" perspective, according to which the transfer of features of "high-performing" school systems in other parts of the world will help the country create "world-class" schools (Auld & Morris, 2014, p. 129). Auld and Morris (2014) explored how this paradigm operated, identifying its features and the narrative strategies used to promote a reform based on the need to move English schools up in large-scale international assessment rankings, such as OECD's PISA. The authors used the causal theories framework to highlight that education policy documents in the country justified the reforms by evoking a set of conditions that defined current schooling strategies as a problem that required a solution based on policies implemented elsewhere (Auld & Morris, 2014). Through causal stories, political actors offered recommendations for policymaking by identifying so-called best practices. In these discourses, "conceptions of 'knowledge' are selected according to their utility and are purposefully managed and promoted by those with access to channels of communication" (Auld & Morris, 2014, p. 131). Their case supports Stone's argument that causal theories are more likely to be successful if, among other factors, proponents have visibility and access to media.

The causal argument is central to political problem definition since it attributes social issues to human behavior, decision, and intention, rather than just considering them the product

of accident, fate, or nature. Problems exist because someone acted in a way to cause them or was too reckless to propose an efficient solution to issues that affect specific groups. Moreover, governments will give more attention to specific problems, neglecting issues that affect other groups. The manipulation of images by political actors is also central to problem definition since it will help determine the source of harm and the people responsible for the reform (Stone, 1989, 2012). Applying the causal stories framework to education policymaking provides a thorough examination of the narratives and beliefs influencing policies. This sheds light on how policymakers' decisions may either contribute to or exacerbate the discourse surrounding school failure, a topic explored in the following section.

3.4 The Notion of Failure in Brazilian Public Schools

Social constructions of target populations and theories of causal stories are unconventional frameworks in scholarly works addressing Brazil's social issues. While recent literature has emerged, delving into topics like disadvantaged women's professional qualifications, public policy implementation, and public security (Corcetti & Loreto, 2017; Lotta & Pires, 2020; Souza, 2019) using SCTP, the field of policy design perspectives is a novel addition to the academic landscape, as highlighted by Lima and colleagues (Lima et al., 2021). Public schools and their students have traditionally been examined through the lenses of other disciplines, including anthropology, education, and psychology, often centered around the concept of school failure.

From a social constructionist perspective, Wortham and Jackson (2008) highlight that the notion of failure is an element in the construction of marginality in education. They consider different academic works on schools and students to highlight the various realms that influence “at-risk” students’ school success and failure. In the study, the authors suggest that schools laud

students for meeting academic and behavioral standards, marginalizing the “failing” groups. Research that explores how marginality is constructed in education institutions and interactions has shown that such marginalities do not generally result from inherent characteristics of individuals or groups. On the contrary, what “school failure” typically entails connects to broader societal elements, such as racism, social stratification, and marginalization of vulnerable groups (Wortham & Jackson, 2008).

The common view of school failure in Brazil often places responsibility on students, families, and schools for challenges in education (Almeida et al., 2008; Angelucci et al., 2004; Carvalho, 2003; Damiani, 2006; Mascia, 2020; Pozzobon et al., 2017). Issues like students' achievement, personal characteristics, and lack of family involvement are considered reasons why public schools struggle to provide quality education to vulnerable children. However, Maria Helena Patto's perspective challenges this, arguing for a deeper understanding of factors like poverty, inequality, and flawed teaching methods in shaping academic success and failure in Brazilian public schools.

Patto (1991) criticized the longstanding idea that school failure is solely due to individual student problems. Her work pointed out how poverty, inequality, limited resources, and teaching methods contribute to academic disparities in Brazilian public schools. In her view, the problem with schools is not just about poor quality but also the wrong assumption that poor students lack skills, which is often not true. The expectation that these students will not learn or will do so in challenging conditions comes from undervaluing the most impoverished users of public schools. These biases, along with prejudice, are deeply ingrained in education. They gain strength when accepted as scientific truths, influencing decisions on educational policy and daily teacher-student interactions. Academic failure is driven by an institutionalized school process

disproportionately affecting economically disadvantaged students. There is a need to address the complex relationship between class, race, and educational outcomes, through policies that actively recognize and work to eliminate systemic inequalities, promoting fair learning environments for all students (Patto, 1991).

3.5 Conclusion

In the literature review, my objective was to introduce the theoretical frameworks that underlie this dissertation: social construction of target populations and causal theories. These frameworks guide the empirical investigation carried out in this study.

The SCTP plays an essential role in explaining how policymakers define social issues, who benefits from the policy process, who participates in democratic processes, and how hierarchies of power are established within societies. The concepts offered by the framework will help me assess how policymakers and other political elites have socially constructed Brazilian public schools' target population and what groups have been most influential in creating the stereotypes surrounding impoverished children of African descent. Moreover, this study assesses how different groups sought to form a consensus about schooling policies in Brazil after the redemocratization and how their ideas connected to elements emphasized in scholarly work that applied the SCTP empirically. The dissertation will focus on the social construction of public schools' target populations in different Brazilian jurisdictions–Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo–and its impact on policy design and implementation. Moreover, the analysis sheds light on public opinion on policies that allocated benefits to low-income families with low levels of political power and the ways public schools may have "inherited" their target populations' social images and stereotypes. Finally, I seek to understand how race and political ideology played a role in policy design and implementation in each case study.

The dissertation also aims to contribute to the literature on SCTP by highlighting that social constructions depend on the context and how actors frame political discourse. The literature that uses the framework emphasizes political processes in the US and, for this reason, is based on similar premises regarding democracy, justice, citizenship, and democratic institutions, where I include schooling. This study aims to advance the perspective that social constructions are influenced by context and geography, in which political processes combine with history and politics to shape designs that affect notions of justice, citizenship, equity, and the role played by public schooling in democracies. For instance, my preliminary findings on how policymakers have depicted public school students since the first attempts to create a national schooling system show that Black and poor children were categorized as deviants, contrary to the traditional SCTP typology. Although Schneider et al. (2014) assume that "the fourfold typology of social constructions is not intended to produce sharp lines between these groups" (p. 112) it has promoted a narrow perspective of what groups compose each type, as suggested by Nicholson-Crotty and Nicholson-Crotty (2004). When other elements, namely, race, emerge in the analysis, the social images of a group may change, blurring the lines between each target population in the typology. In that case, the discussion may expand the knowledge of the SCTP typology, showing that the context generates different social constructions: school children can be in a politically weak and negatively constructed population. Another objective of the study is to contribute to more nuanced perspectives on the policy process by bringing together SCTP and the causal stories framework, which I present next.

Taken together with the SCTP framework, the causal stories approach will help me analyze which storylines have been used in constructing stereotypes of Brazilian public school target populations. Whom did these stories consider responsible for schooling problems and their

fixes? Who were the leading proponents of the storylines? What were the main instruments they had to make the stories successful? The framework will also assist in understanding how the educators who challenged stereotypes, Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire, considered the causal stories of Brazilian public schools' issues. Did they abide by the narratives or question those storylines? How did their stance on the causal stories impact the success of their schooling policies? These are some points the causal stories framework can help clarify.

Aligned with Patto's (1991) perspective, this research takes a nuanced approach by reframing school failure not as a set of causes but as adverse outcomes embedded in the policy process. Instead of solely considering internal school dynamics, the focus is on how policies contribute to perpetuating injustices and social challenges faced by public school students and their communities. The central argument posits that policies shaping public education in Brazil are intricately linked to the shared perceptions of political actors regarding public education and the public school child. Consequently, school failure might be a consequence of policy processes influenced by stereotypes of vulnerable populations, constructed by politically powerful groups, and widely accepted in Brazilian society.

In Chapter 4, I delve into the research methods employed for this dissertation. The discussion comprehensively covers various aspects, including the research setting, sample selection, utilized data collection instruments and techniques, methods employed for data analysis, and my approach to managing and interpreting the collected data. Furthermore, the following chapter delves into ethical considerations, encompassing an exploration of potential personal biases that might have influenced the research, the strategies implemented to mitigate their impact, and the measures taken to uphold the study's credibility and dependability.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methods

Education research planning is not a random enterprise. Instead, it is a deliberative and reflexive exercise concerned with the research design, that is, the overall architecture of how to approach a research problem (Cohen et al., 2018; White, 2013). The design's primary objective is to ensure the connection between evidence and the research questions. Being a logical endeavor, the research design proposes a specific sequence of actions connecting empirical data to the research problem and the evidence required to answer the inquiry's questions (White, 2013; Yin, 2014). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), researchers' philosophical worldview assumptions are central when designing a study. This philosophical orientation informs the nature of the research and how the specific research methods or procedures translates the design into practice. This study uses a social constructionist perspective.

Social constructionists seek to understand the world, considering that individuals construct meanings as they engage with other individuals and the social structures in which they live. The generation of meaning is contingent upon human practices–arises from interactions between human beings and their world–and develops within a social context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Crotty, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Because it sheds light on to how people make meaning of their lives, social constructionist research must "examine the situation in question through the multiple lenses of the individuals involved, to obtain their definition of the situation, to see how they make sense of their situation and to focus on interactions, contexts, environments and biographies" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 23). Through this approach, the dissertation proposes a qualitative case study research design to understand how the construction of the public school child, that is, impoverished students of African descent, has developed in Brazil and what ensued when reformers challenged the traditional assumptions about these

students and their education after the country's redemocratization. This chapter presents the dissertation's research questions and the methodological journey that supported data collection and analysis.

4.1 Research Questions

To address the research problem and contribute to the discussions on education policy making in Brazil, the dissertation explores the following research questions:

1. How have Brazilian political actors historically used narratives and stereotypes to design, implement, and legitimize education policy according to their interpretations of public schools' target population?
    a. How do the social constructions and causal stories about Brazilian public school students relate to their socioeconomic status and race?
2. How did Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire reinterpret the public school child during the redemocratization process in Brazil (1983-1991)?
    a. How did Ribeiro and Freire view the causal stories of school failure and their connection to the target population of Brazilian public education?
    b. How did they address the negative stereotypes surrounding public school students in their intellectual work?
3. What happened when Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire designed and implemented policies based on their perspectives about public schools' target population?
    a. What were the obstacles found?
    b. To what extent were those obstacles related to the causal stories and the social constructions they aimed to challenge?

By addressing these inquiries, the dissertation aimed to expand the knowledge about policy practices related to Brazilian public schools, highlighting how education policies are failing impoverished children of African descent. By adopting a flexible research design, the proposal abstains from establishing hypotheses a priori, recognizing that the critical idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the research problem from participants and data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Miles et al., 2014).

4.2 Research Methodology

The dissertation adopts a qualitative approach. Although this form of inquiry has been common in the work of anthropologists and sociologists since the 1920s, qualitative studies only became popular in other fields in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Since then, scholarly work based on qualitative approaches has been prominent in the social sciences, including education. This form of inquiry gained relevance, giving way to new languages, methods, and perspectives that researchers could not assess through traditional paradigms, namely, quantitative approaches (Cooley, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Putney et al., 1999). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative research "includes a vast range of kinds of research, has a wide range of meanings and covers a heterogeneity of fields" (p. 287). Preissle (2006) shares a similar perspective and adds that, although vague, the label has worked because it is inclusive enough to cover various research practices. Other authors, such as Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Flick (2007), define qualitative research as an umbrella term for different approaches and methods for studying social life, exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Despite their nuances, these complementary explanations share a common understanding of what kind of information is central in qualitative studies: The data collected and analyzed is primarily nonquantitative and in the form of text and images (Creswell

& Creswell, 2018; Miles et al., 2014). Considering the possibilities offered by the qualitative approach, it seems most suited to address the research problem and the questions posed in this dissertation.

Analysis that engages with this form of inquiry assesses data through an inductive lens, emphasizing the complexity of a situation and the meanings people bring to that situation. Hence, qualitative research conceives individuals as deliberate, intentional, and creative in their actions. These meaning-making beings actively construct their social worlds through interpretations of their context and interactions with other people. Qualitative research aims to understand how people make meaning and delineate processes according to their interpretations of the world they live in (Cohen et al., 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Because qualitative research is interpretative, the inquiry typically involves participants in a sustained and intensive way through specific data gathering and analysis strategies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Considering that, the dissertation relies on primarily on archival research and interviews to understand the social construction of the public school child in Brazil in the 1980s and early 1990s. The analysis focuses on two case studies: the Darcy Ribeiro education secretariat in Rio de Janeiro (1983-1987) and Paulo Freire's experiences as the secretary of education in São Paulo (1989-1991). The following sections explain the research setting, the methods used in this project, and the data collection and analysis procedures.

4.3 Research Setting

The setting for the archival research conducted in this dissertation were institutions and foundations located in three Brazilian cities: Brasília, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo. In 2021, as part of my pre-dissertation fieldwork, I visited the archives with the most significant documentation related to Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire and the education reform projects they

led in the 1980s and early 1990s. These institutions and organizations include the archives dedicated to their life and work, those that host public documents concerning their administrations as secretaries of education, and newspaper archives. Some data were available online and accessed when in-person visits were unavailable. The interviews for this study happened online through Zoom.

4.4 Methods and Data Collection

This study undertakes a qualitative research design guided by a case study approach. Case studies are relevant in inquiries that seek to explain how a social phenomenon works and when research questions require an extensive and in-depth description of that phenomenon (Yin, 2014). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), a qualitative case study has some defining characteristics shared with other forms of qualitative inquiry, namely, "the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive" (p. 37). However, what makes a case study a distinctive genre of qualitative inquiry?

Yin (2014) supported a twofold definition of "case study" to distinguish it from other forms of qualitative research. The first part emphasizes scope: A case study is an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") within its real-life context. The boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be evident. The second part sheds light on relevant methodological characteristics: It copes "with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points" (Yin, 2014, p. 90). As a result, it relies on multiple sources of evidence and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. The author added that doing case study research would be the preferred method compared to other forms of qualitative inquiry

when the main research questions are “how” or “why” questions, the researcher has little or no control over behavioral events, and the case in question is not entirely historical (Yin, 2014).

Case studies can assume different forms, depending on the number of cases considered in an inquiry. While within-case analyses aim to describe and understand what has happened in a single bounded context, cross-case or multiple-case analyses seek to comprehend how processes and outcomes develop across different contexts and how local conditions influence each bounded context. From the perspective of Miles et al. (2014), cross-case analyses help develop more sophisticated descriptions and powerful explanations, enhancing generalizability or transferability to other contexts. Although this may seem contradictory since case studies stand out for their unique features, which could hinder generalizability, Yin (2014) clarified that they are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. This means that “the case study . . . does not represent a ‘sample,’ and in doing case study research, [the] goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalizations) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalizations)” (Yin, 2014, p. 100). Thus, as Cohen et al. (2018) suggested, “generalizability is interpreted as generalizability to identifiable, specific settings and subjects rather than universally” (p. 289). While the cases examined in the dissertation are circumscribed to specific social and historical contexts, the elements analyzed in the study, such as how causal stories and policy recipients’ power and deservingness influence the policy process, can make the cases generalizable beyond the Brazilian context.

Data collection is also a distinctive feature in case study analysis. Creswell and Creswell (2018) argued that using this approach, the researcher explores one or multiple bounded systems over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. Qualitative data collection for this study relied primarily on archival research and interviews.

Other data collection strategies for case studies, such as observation, were not used in the dissertation. Since the main characters in the research are deceased and the educational projects developed by them no longer exist, it would be impossible to observe interactions like qualitative researchers traditionally do when engaging with case study analysis. This study, then, also adopted a historical perspective. Nevertheless, this is not purely historical research. Yin (2014) suggested that while case studies rely on many of the same techniques as historical research, they add sources of evidence not usually available to historians, such as interviews of the individuals involved in the events. Although overlap between case studies and historical research is possible, the first type of inquiry has a distinctive strength when dealing with various forms of evidence–documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Because many of the actors involved in each project's design and implementation can participate in interviews and offer their first-hand perspectives, this study could not be solely historical. Additionally, the construction of the public school child is an ongoing phenomenon, influenced by events in the past, such as the case studies analyzed in this study, and in the present. Considering these elements, the following section discusses the data in the dissertation.

Archives

Conducting research using archives is a standard data collection strategy pursued by social scientists and a popular method of inquiry in the work of historians of education (Wangard, 2017). Archival research involves different approaches to investigating historical or more contemporary documents and other textual materials, such as letters, personal journals, newspapers, and policy planning papers. These primary sources were produced by individuals and organizations at some point in the relatively distant past and offer insights that the researcher might not have since the organizations, individuals, and events of that earlier time are not

accessible. While analyzing this archived data, the researcher is less interested in causal relationships and more interested in exploration, description, and explanation (Timothy, 2012). Following the typology proposed by Howell and Prevenier (2001), I used three types of archives:

Narrative or Literary

This kind of primary source includes documents written in the narrative form to convey a particular message. The motives for their composition depend on their authors' intentions. For example, a newspaper article might intend to shape an opinion and "ego documents," such as personal journals and biographies, might praise the subject's work and achievements and serve as an example of their author's political intentions, ideology, and perceptions of events (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). This study benefited from the documents available at the archives of institutions devoted to Ribeiro's and Freire's life, work, and legacy. Physical copies of reports, letters, notes, other personal documents, and working papers written by the educators and people who worked with them compose the archives. The documents published in prominent Brazilian newspapers, such as *O Globo*, *Folha de São Paulo*, and *O Estado de São Paulo* were also be significant in collecting and analyzing narrative sources.

Juridical

These documents relate to existing or potential legal situations. Given the focus on analyzing the policymaking process, the juridical documents supporting local legislative changes during the Brizola and Erundina administrations proved pertinent to the study, despite their limited availability.

Social Documents

This source contains information of economic, social, political, or judicial importance, proving, for example, accounts of what happens within bureaucracies. They include municipal

accounts, political actors' reports, policy drafts, and meeting minutes. Oral evidence is also a relevant source of social documents, being found in the form of television and radio interviews. Social documents were central to the research emerged as an abundant primary source, especially when the work of the education secretaries in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro were considered. Moreover, because Ribeiro and Freire were prominent figures in Brazilian politics and culture, there is a considerable amount of audiovisual data concerning their life and work.

Interviews

As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested, "In education, if not in most applied fields, interviewing is probably the most common form of data collection in qualitative studies" (p. 106). Beyond a mere data-collection exercise, the interview is a social, interpersonal encounter through which the researcher can observe the behavior and feelings of interviewees and how they interpret the world around them (Cohen et al., 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Regarding qualitative methods, Kvale (1996) argued that an interview is an "inter-view," an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest (p. 2). Thus, human interaction becomes central to knowledge production, especially when the research concerns past events that are impossible to replicate (Cohen et al., 2018; Kvale, 1996; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Interviews are central in qualitative studies since, in this research approach, the key concern was understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). They are also beneficial to defining the boundedness of a case study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted the following:

> One technique for assessing the boundedness of the topic is to ask how finite the data collection would be; that is, whether there is a limit to the number of people involved who could be interviewed. . . If there is no end, actually or theoretically, to the number

> of people who could be interviewed . . . then the phenomenon is not bounded enough to qualify as a case. (p. 39)

Moreover, interviews help understand how people delineate the process of meaning-making according to how they interpret their experiences. In this sense, the researcher must remember that culture and context influence participants' interpretations of social events, and, often, history and biography intersect (Cohen et al., 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The relevance of these concerns is amplified due to the direct connections some of the interviewed individuals had with the reforms led by Ribeiro and Freire, coupled with their frequent personal involvement with one of the educators.

The interviews conducted for this study were more open-ended and less structured, following the dissertation's philosophical worldview and theoretical framework. According to Koro-Ljungberg (2008), the constructionist perspective regards the interview as more than a set of predetermined research techniques or well-structured methods but as a dialogical performance, a social meaning-making act, which facilitates knowledge exchanges between interviewer and interviewee. Semistructured interviews offered the flexibility needed in social constructionist research while allowing the interviewer to learn specific information from the respondents. In this type of interview, a list of questions or issues to be explored guides the interaction, permitting more flexibility in the questions' order and wording. The researcher can respond to the situation at hand according to the emerging worldview of the respondent and how their responses relate to the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semistructured interviews were the preferred type of interview in this dissertation. See Appendices B, C, and D for the protocols used in this study.

Sampling Strategies

This study used purposeful sampling to access qualitative data. This type of sampling emphasizes participant selection strategically in alignment with the inquiry's purpose and primary questions, offering an in-depth understanding of information-rich cases. As defined by Patton (2015), information-rich cases "are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (p. 53). Purposeful sampling in information-rich cases relies on a central component of data collection: using "key knowledgeables" as sources of information about what the researcher cannot experience or observe. Key knowledgeables or key informants are individuals whose insights can prove especially useful in helping an observer understand what happened and why. These people have actively engaged in events and may have privileged information that could not be accessed otherwise (Cohen et al., 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

Having key informants as one of the principal sources of information in this study supports the idea that in the qualitative research process, the researcher must focus on participants' perceptions, experiences, and meaning-making. For this reason, I recruited different groups of interviewees to help answer the research questions. For addressing research question 1, a diverse group of stakeholders engaged in public education were invited to participate, including secretaries of education, teachers, politicians involved in education policies, workers, and representatives from NGOs, among others. In addressing research question 3, the participant pool consisted of policymakers, scholars, leaders of educational institutions, and teachers who either worked closely with Ribeiro or Freire or possessed substantial knowledge of their perspectives and experiences as policymakers. See Appendix A for the list of participants.

As Patton (2015) argued, the sampling strategy must fit not only the purpose of the study but also the resources available and the constraints the researcher faces, which is also true for the sample size. Regarding determining sample size, Morse (2000) suggests that the quality of interviews and the number of interviewees determine the amount of usable data. The greater the amount of usable data obtained from each interview, the fewer the number of participants; however, she added, the risk of obtaining a small amount of data per interview increases in semistructured interviews. I conducted a total of 22 interviews, each session being held in Portuguese. Prior to the interviews, each participant provided informed consent through a form approved by the Teachers College Institutional Review Board. Interviews were recorded with the participants' explicit permission. Appendix A provides details of the conducted interviews, while Appendixes B, C, and D contain the protocols utilized for each respective interview.

Purposeful sampling also was the strategy when assessing archival data. According to Martin (2018), the collection and presentation of historical material are inevitably selective, relying on the questions asked in the research and the theoretical perspective brought to bear on any particular piece of the analysis. Identifying which institutions I visited also connected to this type of sampling. As the research setting highlighted, the archives were located in Brasília, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo. In March 2022, during my predissertation fieldwork, I could access the repository of some institutions. When permitted by their host institutions, the data collected in the archives were saved as images and coded according to their relevance for the research.

In Brasília, documents and other resources related to Ribeiro are available at the Darcy Ribeiro Foundation (*Fundação Darcy Ribeiro* [FUNDAR]). FUNDAR was created by Ribeiro in 1997 and is dedicated to researching and developing educational, cultural, social, and scientific projects (FUNDAR, 2022). Although FUNDAR has its headquarters in Rio de Janeiro, the

documentary collection and libraries of Darcy and Berta Ribeiro (Berta Ribeiro was a famous anthropologist and Ribeiro's wife) are housed at the Darcy Ribeiro Memorial located on the campus of the University of Brasília (*Universidade de Brasília* [UnB]). The collection at the Memorial includes photos, original documents, newspaper articles, books, videos, and some of Ribeiro's personal objects. His writings about the CIEPs, the need to support public schools for vulnerable children, and the recordings of some of the meetings he held while occupying the position of secretary of education were the most relevant pieces for my research. FUNDAR also manages a collection of audio and video resources; however, the individual overseeing the collection mentioned that the tapes were undergoing restoration. Unfortunately, these materials were not accessible during the period when the study was conducted.

The archives offered by the Paulo Freire Institute (*Instituto Paulo Freire* [IPF]) and the Paulo Freire Collective (*Coletivo Paulo Freire* [CPF]) were the setting for the research in São Paulo. Freire founded the IPF in 1992 to bring together people and institutions that could deepen reflections on education and improve pedagogical practices aimed at humanizing and transforming education and constructing "another possible world" (IPF, 2022). Their archives include Freire's library, files, audiotapes, and other materials produced by Freire and the team working at the Institute after his death in 1997. The CPF was created in 2017 and includes educators identified with Freire's philosophy of education. It has as its objectives the dissemination of the legacy left by Freire and the defense of the secular, compulsory, and free public school (CPF, 2022). Different documents, interviews, and materials produced by the CPF team compose the collective's archives. Among all the documentation offered by CPF, the files related to the time Freire worked as the secretary of education in São Paulo were the most relevant for this study. I also explored CPF's and IPF's digital archives, which contain

documents from the secretary of education during Freire's tenure, newspaper and television interviews, and some of his writings.

In São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, archives hosted by different organizations and institutions helped understand the construction of the public school child and the reforms led by Ribeiro and Freire. As suggested by Schneider and Ingram (1993), the construction of target populations can be verified empirically through "the study of texts, such as legislative histories, statutes, guidelines, speeches, media coverage, and analysis of the symbols contained therein" (p. 335). Thus, newspaper archives were central to the research, namely, those published by news outlets with considerable circulation. Among them, *O Globo*, *O Estado de São Paulo*, *Folha de São Paulo* stand out as the most relevant sources. Some of their archives are also available online, and their online research tools facilitated identification of relevant sources. Recordings housed at the Brazil Communication Company (*Empresa Brasil de Comunicação* [EBC]), which includes audiovisual resources related to the two educators, were also relevant to my research. EBC is a Brazilian public company created in 2007 to manage the federal government's broadcast network, TV Brasil (EBC, 2022). Recordings of the company's radio and TV shows, including interviews with government officials, are available to the public.

4.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis intends to make sense of text and image data collected by the investigator. Qualitative data analysis is typically inductive: The researcher reads, reflects on, infers from, and interprets the raw materials in the form of transcripts, memos, and other outcomes of data collection. From this set of sources, the researcher interprets what was collected to comprehensively explain the data or phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since qualitative analysis is a continuous and iterative enterprise, the preferred way to

analyze data is to do it simultaneously with data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Miles et al., 2014). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argued that "without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed. Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating" (p. 198). Following this perspective, the analysis paralleled the data collection, and each case study were be analyzed separately before cross-case synthesis was performed, as also suggested by Yin (2014).

I used specific strategies to process raw data before they are available for analysis, following the suggestions given by Creswell and Creswell (2018). The first strategy was to transcribe all interviews verbatim, omitting nonverbal aspects and the information disclosed by the participants before or after the interviews. The second strategy was to scan materials; type field notes, analytic memos, and jottings; and catalog the collected visual material to reflect on the data's overall meaning. The third strategy involved generating codes for themes that emerged from interviews and documents collected during archival research. The codes, defined by Saldaña (2016) as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 4), helped in attributing meaning to data for purposes of pattern detection, categorization, assertion or other analytic processes. Codes were attached to data "chunks" and facilitated deep analysis of the data's meaning, setting the stage for the researcher to draw conclusions from interviews and documents (Miles et al., 2014).

During the data analysis phase, two types of codes were be created: deductive and inductive (Miles et al., 2014). The first kind came from a provisional "start list" of codes before the fieldwork connected to critical elements in the research. These were "expected codes" since

they related to the literature and the research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 270). In this study, deductive codes relied on the concepts and analysis offered by Schneider and Ingram (1993) and Stone (1989, 2012) and the research questions. The second type of code emerged progressively during data collection, being grounded empirically in participants' contributions to the study and information revealed by the documents collected in a prior stage (Miles et al., 2014). These were "surprising codes" because they could not be anticipated before data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 270). Following the first cycle of coding, a second cycle was necessary. Second cycle coding allowed for the development of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from the first cycle of codes, helping construct patterns, categories, relationships, assertions, and propositions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldaña, 2016). As Miles et al. (2014) noted, second cycle coding "pulls together a lot of material from first cycle coding into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis" (p. 90). All interviews were coded manually.

4.6 Credibility and Dependability[8]

To ensure the accuracy of the findings, I incorporated strategies to verify the study's credibility and dependability. The best-known strategy to support the credibility of a study, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), is triangulation. Following this approach, I triangulated using multiple data sources, that is, comparing and cross-checking data collected from interviews with different perspectives offered by the literature, documents, or follow-up interviews with the same participants. This procedure was especially advantageous when considering information provided by key knowledgeables, since their perspectives may be more limited, selective, and

[8] Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that the main validity criteria in qualitative studies should adopt different terms than those used by quantitative research, acknowledging the two approaches' diverse epistemologies. The authors, then, propose that "credibility" and "dependability" should be used instead of "internal validity" and "reliability."

biased, representing their perceptions and experiences, not truths (Patton, 2015). Another strategy for ensuring credibility was member checks/ respondent validation. Through this approach, I took the final report to some participants and asked if they found the analysis reasonable, considering their experiences and knowledge on the topic. A third strategy, suggested by Patton (2015), was spending sufficient time at the research site (prolonged engagement) and focusing on the elements in the archives and the interviews that were most relevant to the study (persistent observation). Finally, I used reflexivity to clarify the biases I brought to the study, emphasizing how they may have shaped the interpretation of the findings.

Triangulation and reflexivity also contributed to dependability since using multiple collection methods can be a strategy for obtaining consistent and dependable data. Documenting as many of the steps of the procedure as possible and double-checking transcripts and codes to identify apparent mistakes in the processes of transcribing and coding were also helpful strategies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although these approaches helped me clarify the consistency and stability of my research, I acknowledge that the replication of a qualitative study will unlikely yield the same results. As Tracy (2013) notes, socially constructed understandings are always in process and necessarily partial, so even if the study were repeated by the same researcher, in the same manner, in the same context, and with the same participants, the elements involved in the study and, hence, the findings, would have necessarily transformed over time. However, the issue of dependability does not discredit the results of qualitative studies, in which the more critical question is whether the findings are consistent with the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

4.7 Research Limitations

Considering that in all forms of qualitative investigation the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, this type of research is prone to shortcomings and biases that can impact the study. However, more important than eliminating these biases or "subjectivities," as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted, is identifying and monitoring them by allowing the theoretical framework and the research design to guide the study. Biases and subjectivities might have also arisen in data collection since I relied on interviews with key knowledgeables. These participants brought their expertise on the topic while being absorbed in their emotions and opinions. The methods described in the previous section, with emphasis on triangulation, helped diminish the impact of their subjectivities, supporting the findings' trustworthiness.

Still concerning data collection, another constraint of the research was access to participants and documents. As highlighted by Patton (2015), the findings may be limited based on selectivity in the people sampled for interviews or selectivity in document sampling. Though I wished to include specific participants in the research, they were unavailable or unwilling to participate. Regarding documents, data that could be crucial for the research were not be readily available or disclosed to the public. These materials might also be incomplete or damaged due to rough handling and inadequate storage.

A third limitation of this research pertained to the cost and timescale associated with conducting fieldwork abroad. Initially, the plan was for the majority of data collection to occur in Brazil. However, extended periods in Brazil were not feasible. As the study progressed, I sought alternatives to address the challenges posed by distance. Fortunately, many required sources were accessible online, and interviewees were receptive to online interactions. This facilitated

the development of a strong relationship with them, fostering a comfortable environment that encouraged openness in discussing their perspectives.

4.8 Conclusion

In Chapter 4, I examined the research methods employed throughout the dissertation. This comprehensive exploration encompassed the research setting, the meticulous process of sample selection, the intricacies of data collection instruments and techniques, and the chosen methods for data analysis. The approach taken in managing and interpreting the collected data is detailed, reflecting the careful consideration given to each step of the research process. Moreover, this chapter delved into ethical considerations, addressing potential biases that could have influenced the research. Strategies were implemented to identify and mitigate these biases, ensuring a rigorous and impartial approach to the study. The measures taken not only aimed at upholding the study's credibility and dependability but also provided a transparent framework for navigating the ethical dimensions of the research process.

In Chapter 5, I address the first research question posed in this study. The next chapter serves as a crucial bridge between the theoretical groundwork laid in Chapter 3 and the empirical findings that unfold in the subsequent chapters. It represents a significant step in the journey of unraveling the intricate interplay between social constructions, policymaking, and the experiences of public school students in Brazil.

Chapter 5: Constructing the Public School Child

> This gang that lives off plundering is composed, as far as we know, of a number exceeding 100 children of various ages, ranging from 8 to 16 years old. These children, naturally due to the disregard for their education by parents lacking in Christian feelings, have embraced a criminal life in the early years of their lives. . . . What is urgently needed is action from the police and the juvenile court to eradicate this gang and to take these young criminals, who no longer allow the city to sleep peacefully in its well-deserved slumber, to reform institutes for children or prisons.
>
> — Jorge Amado (2008 [1937], p. 4), *Capitães da Areia*

The above excerpt is part of the novel *Captains of the Sand* (*Capitães da Areia* in Portuguese), a literary masterpiece written by Brazilian author Jorge Amado. The novel, first published in 1937, follows a group of abandoned and orphaned children, known as the "Captains of the Sand," who form a gang to survive the harsh realities of their poverty-stricken existence in the streets of Salvador, Bahia. Those children often resort to petty theft and other survival strategies to fend for themselves. In the book, Amado addressed the social inequality, lack of access to education, and limited opportunities perpetuating the cycle of poverty for vulnerable children, allowing readers to glimpse into the struggles these neglected youngsters faced and the circumstances that led them to live in such a dire situation.

While highlighting the broader themes of social injustice and prejudice, the novel emphasizes the clash between the different social groups in Brazilian society. The Captains of the Sand are often seen as delinquents and troublemakers, primarily by the authorities and

wealthier segments of society, reinforcing negative stereotypes about the poor. However, Amado does not portray them as criminals but as victims of a society that has failed to provide them with the necessary support and care. Hence, the storyline encourages readers to empathize with the marginalized and reflects on the systemic issues perpetuating poverty and social inequality. It challenges stereotypes by humanizing these children and telling their stories with sensitivity, prompting readers to reflect on their own biases and preconceptions about poverty and those living in it. Jorge Amado's work helped to bring attention to the plight of impoverished children, encouraging discussions about social reform and the need to address the root causes of poverty (Ferreira, 2023; Queiroz & Souza, 2021). At the same time, the book exemplified that the negative stereotypes about poor children were still prevalent in Brazil a hundred years after the country's independence from Portugal, in 1822.

The novel also evinced one of the most prevalent and damaging stereotypes faced by socioeconomically vulnerable children: the association of poverty with criminal behavior and delinquency. This narrative is reinforced by the belief that uneducated poor children are more prone to criminal behavior, implying that their actions are a result of personal choice, lack of values, and/or the influence of their cultural and family background. Another prevailing idea highlighted in the excerpt is the approach regarding how to address impoverished and marginalized children whose parents were "lacking in Christian feelings:" punitive measures and incarceration. While it is important to consider historical context and avoid anachronistic judgments, the enduring stereotype that linked poverty, lack of education, and criminal behavior persisted over time. These ideas gain even greater significance when other critical elements, such as the race of these children, come into play.

In this chapter, I delve into the intricate social construction of Brazilian public school children and the narratives created around them. The focus of the analysis centers on the portrayal of urban poor and Black children, considering that, historically, the majority of public school students were part of impoverished households and of African descent. The research data underscore that stereotypes linking education, class, and race shape the public's perceptions of schoolchildren. However, these stereotypes often extend beyond individual public school children, intertwining with the larger communities they belong to, notably involving their families and reflecting their racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. The labels affixed to these students result from enduring narratives, particularly those associated with historically marginalized groups in Brazil. These deeply ingrained stereotypes have persisted across generations, exerting significant influence on the development of public policies tailored to this target population, thereby perpetuating and reinforcing stigmatizing labels.

In the discussion that follows, I also explore the societal constructs and causal narratives associated with children in Brazilian public schools, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and of African descent. Throughout the discussion, I examine the different ways in which various political actors have shaped the narratives around Black and poor children. Examples can be drawn from government officials, educators, media representations, and other societal perceptions. I begin by revisiting historical treatments of underprivileged children, focusing on debates that linked their education to concerns about potential criminality. The analysis then delves into the challenges encountered by Black children upon their integration into the education system, revealing the intricate overlap between economically disadvantaged and Black demographics. Furthermore, the analysis focuses on the

strategies tailored to these groups, highlighting a prevailing trend toward a colorblind approach that sidelines the crucial role of race in societal and policy considerations for marginalized communities.

Many of these persisting concepts trace their roots to a distant past when the nation was formulating notions about education, its beneficiaries, and guiding principles. As a result, the analysis commences at the end of the empire (1822-1889), as the republic (1889-present) began to take shape, marking the emergence of ideas concerning education for the impoverished and Black population. Shifting to contemporary viewpoints, this chapter offers insights from primary education instructors, policymakers, and specialists in race in Brazil (see Appendices A and B). These perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of enduring stereotypes surrounding impoverished and Black children within the country's public education system. They illuminate the continued prevalence of these stereotypes, shaped by educational institutions, policies, media depictions, and diverse societal perspectives.

Through this historical and contemporary exploration, the chapter addresses the second research question in this dissertation: How have Brazilian political actors historically used narratives and stereotypes to create, implement, and legitimize education policies concerning the intended recipients of public schools? Additionally, the discussion explores Subquestion 2, exploring how the societal perceptions and narratives surrounding Brazilian public school students are linked to their economic backgrounds and racial identities. The research shows that public schools arose with the aim of "civilizing" a particular segment of the population, primarily directed toward underprivileged children—those from poor, Black, and mixed-race backgrounds (Veiga, 2008). However, despite this intent, the formulation of public policies and

societal perceptions regarding the intended beneficiaries of schooling has often created barriers to access and permanence of these marginalized children in education.

5.1 The Formation of Stereotypes

Historically, Brazilian education system have been structured in ways that favored specific racial and social groups while marginalizing others, impacting the perception of students' abilities, potential, and anticipated performance. In Brazil, primary schools were designed to serve underserved communities, primarily composed of students labeled as disadvantaged due to their association with the impoverished class, encompassing diverse ethnic backgrounds—White, Black, and mixed-race. This approach tended to homogenize treatment for this demographic, often labeling them as inherently inferior in terms of educability (Patto, 1991; Veiga, 2016). Examining the historical link between criminality and education in Brazil, Arroyo (2015) observed the pervasive influence of baseless racial and class stereotypes within discussions on delinquency. The author highlighted, "Prejudices based on class and race are conspicuous in the discourse surrounding juvenile delinquency and the proposal to lower the age of criminal responsibility, forming a component of the classist, racist, and sexist structure inherent in labor and legal systems" (Arroyo, 2015, p. 39). In this context, the evolution of stereotypes within the education system became more complex, entwining race and class dynamics without a clear distinction between the two.

The categorizations assigned to children from economically disadvantaged and racially marginalized backgrounds bear significant consequences, affecting these students' academic performance and self-esteem. Additionally, stereotypes attributed to these children, such as those linked to criminality, often result in severe disciplinary measures like suspension and expulsion.

These punitive actions stem from the false assumption that these students are predisposed to disruptive behavior. However, how do these ideas form within society? How do they become entrenched in the policymaking process? The next section delves into two elements that have played central roles in shaping stereotypes about children in Brazilian public schools: class and race. The labels attached to these students greatly influenced policymakers' perceptions of public schools and, consequently, shaped the historical construction of ideas about the public school child. Understanding these historical constructs is crucial in comprehending the intricate relationship between public schools and prevailing societal perceptions about Brazilian children and their education.

5.2 Lower Classes, Dangerous Classes: Public Safety and Education for the Poor

In the work *Febrile city: Tenements and epidemics in the imperial capital*, Brazilian historian Sidney Chalhoub (2006) unravels the poignant narrative of the demolition of Pig Head (*Cabeça de Porco,* in Portuguese), the largest tenement in the city of Rio de Janeiro during the late 19th century. These apartment buildings, known as *cortiços,* were bustling, overcrowded dwellings that housed numerous families. They were a prevalent form of housing at the time, predominantly for impoverished individuals, many of whom were former slaves and their families. Amid the sweeping wave of modernization that was transforming Rio de Janeiro, then the capital of Brazil, these tenements were deemed undesirable, according to the city's ambitious urban renewal and sanitation plans. This episode, occurring in 1893, is a reminder that a mere 4 years after the Proclamation of the Republic, the deliberate exclusion of impoverished and racially marginalized citizens from areas considered central in Rio de Janeiro became a primary objective in the city's ambitious agenda of modernization and sanitation. The newspapers of that period fervently endorsed this decision, interpreting it as a symbol of the city's progress and its

departure from a past marked by squalor and criminality[9] (Chalhoub, 2006).

The historical account also sheds light on the fact that by the 19th century, prevailing social constructions equated impoverished classes with the notion of the dangerous classes. Politicians of the empire drew heavily from European writings on public safety, which associated a lack of occupation with criminality. According to these writings, the so-called dangerous classes were composed of individuals who had either already been incarcerated or those who, even if they had not been imprisoned, had chosen to sustain themselves and their families through criminal activities rather than through legitimate work (Chalhoub, 2006; Patto, 2007). The preoccupation with criminality was so significant that shortly after Brazil's independence, lawmakers enacted the extensive Criminal Code of 1830, which addressed various legal aspects concerning criminal offenses, penalties, and legal procedures. However, the concern regarding the "dangerous classes" was not primarily related to the crimes specified in the code. Instead, it was closely associated with the concept of idleness, an aspect that was not covered by the legislation of 1830 (Brazil, 1831).

Driven by the imperative of addressing the topic, legislators intensified their efforts to further strengthen repressive legislation against indolence in the late 19th century. At this juncture, the notion of idleness became intricately linked with a new factor: the enactment of the Golden Law and the subsequent abolition of slavery in the same year. Lawmakers were

[9] Chalhoub's (2006) research drew extensively from newspaper archives to reveal the distressing eviction of these residents from their homes. This forced eviction unfolded under the watchful eyes of the police, influential businessmen of the era, and even the mayor himself. The narrative underscores the absence of any public policy aimed at aiding the relocation of these dispossessed families. They were only allowed to salvage whatever belongings they could from their former homes and utilize the rubble to construct new houses in other parts of the city. It was through this makeshift process that the initial Rio de Janeiro *favelas*, such as *Morro da Providência*, first emerged.

preoccupied with the implications of abolition on the organization of the workforce. This concern found expression in Senator Paulino de Souza's analysis of what the end of slavery would signify for Brazilian society: "The disorganization of labor and the arrival of 700,000 individuals, unprepared by education and the habits of their prior freedom, for civil life, [will] present challenges to the economic and social order" (Brazil, 1888a, p. 42). In line with this perspective, the legislators' central goal was to foster moral education through labor (Chalhoub, 1983; Giarola, 2012; Odon, 2011). While education was a part of the discourse, the politicians' paramount focus was on public safety and the maintenance of the social order. The concern about the dangerous classes permeated discussions in the other chamber of the legislature, involving deputies from various provinces.

The discussions in the Chamber of Deputies surrounding public safety evinced that the topic was a focal point of the legislators' apprehensions and deliberations. The debates primarily revolved around the question of whether there was a solution to criminality or if criminal tendencies were inherent. The prevailing consensus among lawmakers was that it was indeed possible to rehabilitate offenders; however, it was crucial to prevent individuals from reaching the status of criminals in the first place. In this context, the development of policies to address poor children was of paramount significance. One of the deputies, McDowell, advocated in 1888, for the establishment of specific facilities to shelter "minors abandoned to idleness and perversion," emphasizing that they should be given "much greater care, as they are the seed that must bear fruit" (Brazil, 1888b, p. 257). The deputy proposed that these minors should be placed in institutions where they could engage in agricultural labor and other forms of vocational education. Within the context of the idleness law being pursued, the professionalization of

impoverished children was seen as a solution to curb criminality.

However, teaching impoverished and racialized children a profession in public institutions was not a new concern. The discussions surrounding this issue gained more momentum after the abolition of slavery, but a decade prior, the education of underprivileged and marginalized children was already a pivotal topic in debates about public safety. This was largely due to legislation that preceded the Golden Law and dealt with the liberation of children born to enslaved mothers. This law, referred to as the Free Womb Law, was officially ratified on September 28, 1871. It not only declared that children born to enslaved mothers would be considered free but also imposed an obligation on slave owners to provide for their upbringing and education until the age of 8 years. After this period, custody of the children would be transferred to the state, and slave owners would receive a state-financed indemnity to compensate for the loss of their "property" (Law 2040/1871). Following the enactment of the law, numerous policy initiatives were launched to expand the availability of public schools. The idea of the "dangerous classes" now encompassed not just impoverished youngsters but also free Black children.

The logic "full schools, empty prisons," which gained widespread prominence during the last decades of the empire, encapsulated the notion that schools played a crucial role in maintaining social order (Patto, 2007; Schueler, 1999). Nonetheless, encouraging children's consistent attendance and retention in existing educational institutions proved to be a considerable challenge. In response to this issue, various initiatives aimed at promoting the education of underprivileged and abandoned children were initiated by associations led by Brazilian citizens. One such initiative was the establishment of the Association for the Protection

of Education for Underprivileged Children in 1871. Their mission was to ensure the regular attendance of free children in the city's public schools by distributing clothing and school supplies to impoverished families at no cost. Additionally, they provided medical care and medicines to combat epidemics and diseases, which constituted significant barriers to the participation of underprivileged children in the education system (Schueler, 2001; Stamatto, 2017). In a time of modernization through sanitation, the risks associated with impoverished communities extended beyond concerns of criminality to encompass public health hazards.

Moreover, opening schools in densely populated areas, as envisioned by the Law of October 1827, proved unattainable due to the scarcity of teachers and financial resources for constructing suitable buildings (Saviani, 2013). Consequently, alternative solutions were explored, one of which involved establishing institutions like the Asylum for Underprivileged Boys. This institution was founded in 1875 as a residential school with the purpose of offering primary education and vocational training to underprivileged boys between the ages of 6 and 12 years (Decreto 5.849/1875). According to Minister Cunha Figueiredo, the institution's creator, the primary objective of the asylum was to shield underprivileged boys from the detrimental effects of inadequate education and to instill in them a "love for labor, particularly in the realms of industry and agriculture" (Ministério do Império do Brasil, 1877, p. 489). The establishment of the asylum was closely intertwined with ongoing discussions regarding the emancipation of slaves, the need to reconfigure labor relations, and the promotion of social control. After the introduction of the Free Womb Law, the establishment of asylums and similar institutions emerged as a strategic step to expand educational opportunities for free children born to enslaved mothers. This shift was driven by the expectation that, from 1879 onward, the state would be

responsible for nearly 50,000 children (Fonseca, 2002a; Schueler, 1999), whose custody could be transferred according to the Free Womb Law.

The worry regarding underprivileged children and potential criminality persisted well into the late 19th century, captivating the attention of the government and various influential figures. A telling example of this concern is evident in the Popular Conferences held in the Glória Parish, Rio de Janeiro, between 1873 and 1890. These public forums were platforms for discussing diverse scientific and educational ideas encompassing pedagogical, literary, and contemporary topics. They attracted individuals keen on educational matters, with calls for participation advertised in prominent newspapers, drawing teachers, intellectuals, and esteemed members of society, including the emperor and his family (Carula, 2007). These conferences fostered discussions on the teaching profession, pedagogical principles, and instructional methodologies geared toward enhancing public education. A recurring theme in these discussions revolved around the perceived link between education or its absence and criminal behavior. Among the speakers, jurist Carlos Bush Varella stood out as an articulate orator. In 1874, Varella delivered lectures on "The Education of the Proletarian's Child, the Abandoned, the Vagabond, and Young Delinquents, and The Methods to Make it Effective." According to reports in *Jornal do Commercio*, a notable newspaper of the time, Varella's discourse aimed to showcase how institutions in France, Germany, and the United States had successfully accommodated and educated underprivileged and delinquent youths. He advocated for Brazil to follow a similar path, cultivating citizens who would not only benefit the nation but also themselves (“Conferências Populares”, 1874; Schueler, 1999). These debates underscored that the relationship between education for the underprivileged and the occurrence of criminal

behavior was an accepted idea among Brazil's intellectual elite. This perception would continue to shape society's views regarding children from impoverished backgrounds during the republican era.

Education and Criminality Among Impoverished Youth

Following the republic's proclamation in 1889, discussions about public education intensified, highlighting the importance of addressing child delinquency and idleness in cities as part of a broader effort to combat "social ills" (Zanella & Barros Lara, 2005). The reform of education was particularly important in a moment marked by debates surrounding the reconstruction of the nation through primary education and the perception of the decline of public schooling (Schueler & Magaldi, 2008). Given the emergence of a new government and the nation's desire to reshape its identity, the stereotype associating impoverished children with criminal behavior took center stage in the formation of new legislation. This perspective heavily influenced the establishment of the Code of Minors (*Código de Menores*) in 1927. The legal framework aimed to protect the rights and welfare of children and teenagers, focusing on their upbringing, education, and social reintegration. Notably, the code categorized impoverished children, further shaping perceptions and policies regarding these vulnerable youth.

In an effort to protect minors, the code associated poverty with an increased likelihood of moral deviation, perpetuating the stereotype that underprivileged children were more inclined toward delinquent behavior. To address this perception, the legislation allowed authorities to place these children in state care, mandating their residence in shelters or their introduction into the labor market. This approach reinforced the belief that engaging in work served as a means of moral and social rehabilitation for the so-called delinquents. Additionally, these marginalized

children had different potential paths. They might be sent to reformatories, specifically designated for “delinquents” aged 14 to 17 years, offering educational and vocational training. Alternatively, there was the preservation school, education institutions primarily tailored for minors under 14 years without a family (Castro & Meira, 2022).

The Code of Minors, although designed with the seeming intent to safeguard and rehabilitate children, linked poverty with delinquency, considering it a contributing factor to children's susceptibility to moral and behavioral issues. In the implementation of its provisions, the framework reinforced stereotypes about destitute children. Analyzing public policies toward impoverished children in the early republic, Passetti (1995) revealed that the code propagated the idea that a lack of family structure led to the emergence of common criminals. Consequently, the central government assumed responsibility for education, health, and discipline among children and adolescents. Distinctions between impoverished children and those then called "delinquent, abandoned, and vicious minors," became increasingly blurred (Schueler, 1999). Moreover, the 1927 legislation further perpetuated stereotypes about economically disadvantaged children. They were no longer merely viewed as "deprived" but were also labeled as "delinquent" and seen as a threat (Passetti, 1995). This legislation remained in force until 1979 when a new set of laws for minors replaced the existing framework.

Following the implementation of the Code of Minors, there was a noticeable legislative trend linking poverty to potential criminal behavior. Underprivileged children and young offenders from impoverished backgrounds were labeled as minors, subjecting them to increased institutional oversight. This expansion justified monitoring impoverished and potentially at-risk young individuals (Passetti, 1995). In 1942, the establishment of the Child Assistance Service

(*Serviço de Assistência ao Menor* [SAM]), under the Ministry of Justice, emerged as an example of this trend. SAM functioned similarly to the penitentiary system, focusing on children and adolescents. It applied a corrective and punitive approach, defining different protocols for adolescent offenders and underprivileged or abandoned minors. In addition, regional governments developed specific institutions like the Temporary Detention of Minors (*Recolhimento Provisório de Menores* [RPM]) in São Paulo, in 1954. Simultaneously, some members of society viewed impoverished children as subjects of charity. Notably, the Brazilian Legion of Assistance (*Legião Brasileira de Assistência* [LBA]) was established by the First Lady Dona Darcy Vargas and served as a national social assistance agency. Further initiatives aimed to assist specific groups of children. For instance, the House of the Little Worker (*Casa do Pequeno Trabalhador*) provided training and job opportunities for low-income urban children and adolescents. Similarly, the Girls' House (*Casa das Meninas*) offered socioeducational and material support to female adolescents facing behavioral issues (Lorenzi, 2016).

In the 1960s, institutions and national policies emerged, including the National Policy for the Well-Being of Minors (*Política Nacional do Bem-Estar do Menor* [PNBEM]) and the National Foundation for the Well-Being of Minors (*Fundação Nacional do Bem-Estar do Menor* [FUNABEM]), having discipline and punishment of minors as their cornestone. The 1979 revision of the Code of Minors sustained a similar pattern of control and authority over minors. It introduced the category of "minors in irregular situations," granting heightened power to judicial authorities and allowing extensive control over the fate of this specific group (Lorenzi, 2016, para. 7). The establishment of these organizations sidelined social movements advocating for a less repressive and family-oriented strategy, diverting from educational approaches (Perez &

Passone, 2010). Osterne's (1986) analysis of institutions aimed at underprivileged youth identified a tendency, starting from the establishment of SAM, to exclude children and adolescents from social life instead of prioritizing their education.

During the transition toward political openness in the military regime, various organized groups advocated for an immediate review of the legal code. The 1988 constitution marked the end of formally linking poverty with delinquency. This shift hinted at a potential change in perspective within the Child and Adolescent Statute (*Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* [ECA]), placing greater emphasis on education to shape future citizens (Passetti, 1995). Despite the shift toward democratization altering views on impoverished children and criminality, deeply entrenched stereotypes persisted. There was a prevalent belief that public schools were primarily intended for underprivileged children who were perceived as being under control but with a latent potential to turn toward criminal behavior at any moment. In contrast, separate institutions were established for children already labeled as criminals, seen as needing discipline and punishment. These stereotypes not only shaped perceptions about public schools but also influenced policymaking directed at these educational institutions due to their significant attendance by vulnerable children. The situation was exacerbated when race became a factor in the social construction of this targeted population. The subsequent section delves into how labels attached to Black children further complicated and contributed to this complex scenario.

5.3 Stereotypes about Black Students: Racism in Brazilian Public Schools

Considering the initial education laws in Brazil and the students targeted for public instruction in Rio de Janeiro, Schueler (1999) and Veiga (2010) highlighted the notable absence of data regarding students' racial identity in official records. This absence reflected a deliberate

approach meant to diminish the distinctions among Whites, mixed-race individuals, and Blacks—both free and freed (Schueler, 1999). This inclination was not confined to educational records; rather, it was a choice made by elites and social scientists who perceived race as an insignificant factor in understanding Brazilian society and its workings. According to Skidmore (1991), racial identifiers were noticeably missing from censuses conducted between 1890 and 1940. Even in the censuses of 1950 and 1960, when the variable was included, there was no correlation between race and data concerning health indicators, housing, education, income, or wealth (Skidmore, 1991). In education, however, the absence of student information in records can also be linked to prevalent racial ideologies that influenced primary school policies. Given the subtlety in the relationship between race and education in Brazil, especially compared to countries like the United States, where segregation policies were overt, it is crucial to grasp particular perspectives on race within the country to fully comprehend the construction of stereotypes about Black students in Brazilian public schools.

The discussions regarding race and color became increasingly prominent in Brazil after the proclamation of the republic. During the empire, debates mainly revolved around slavery, equating the status of being Black with enslavement. Even as manumissions grew and laws such as the Free Womb Law were introduced, the distinctions between “free” and “captive” individuals, or “citizens” and “non-citizens,” began to emerge (Pacheco, 2011). However, despite the enactment of the Golden Law, racial prejudices and unequal social structures between Whites and Blacks persisted, propagated by Brazil's intellectual and political elites. This continuation was not surprising given that slavery had defined the social structure for more than 3 centuries, normalizing the dehumanization of Afro-descendants.

Sociologists, such as Florestan Fernandes (1969), studying racial relations after the abolition of slavery, highlighted the absence of support or social assurances for the formerly enslaved to adjust to their new lives and employment. Brazilian policymakers neglected the importance of creating legislation to integrate new citizens into society. Interestingly, they did not adopt segregation laws or offer alternative perspectives, unlike some other parts of the world. The absence of formal resistance and the lack of specific laws prohibiting former slaves and their descendants from entering Brazilian society were overshadowed by the country's leaders' negligence, perpetuating inequality and injustice (Fernandes, 1969). This omission, however, did not impede the various forms of racial discrimination that persisted, despite the absence of official segregation. One such example is the prevailing racist concept of White supremacy, which was rooted in the "scientific discourse," dominant in Brazil in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These notions were endorsed by influential figures such as the physician Nina Rodrigues, who studied mixed-race communities in rural Bahia in an attempt to identify physical traits associated with criminality and degeneration resulting from miscegenation (Borges, 2005).

The transition from a monarchy to a republican system spurred Brazil’s intellectual and political elites to reassess the core identity of being Brazilian, centering on race as a focal subject. Examining the strategies employed during this period, Skidmore (1991) emphasized that Brazil was not a biracial but a multiracial society. Consequently, the political and intellectual elites embraced a distinctive approach regarding race: assimilation. This strategy diverged from earlier scientific racism by believing in the occurrence of racial blending, where Whiteness would dominate the characteristics of other racial groups, including Afro descendants and Indigenous people. Therefore, racial mixing was not viewed as a problem but rather as a solution

(Borges, 2005; Fernandes, 1969; Skidmore, 1991). This shift took place within an environment in which different races harmonized, establishing the idea of racial democracy. This conception strongly influenced one of the most respected works of Brazilian sociology, *Masters and Slaves*, published in 1933 by the sociologist Gilberto Freyre. In this book, Freyre highlighted the equitable contributions of Indigenous, White, and Black individuals in shaping the country, leading to the creation of a multicultural and democratic nation. This perspective promoted a widely held belief in Brazil: that Brazilian culture envisions a world without racial distinctions (Bernardino, 2002).

This prevailing belief among intellectuals that "color is just incidental [and] we are all Brazilians" (Guimarães, 2008, p. 72) had tangible effects on how the country's society was structured. One of the outcomes of this colorblind approach was the removal of racial categories from censuses until 1940. The category was reintroduced in 1950 but dismissed 20 years later, citing the complexity of classifying color in Brazilian society due to miscegenation, challenging even for ethnologists and anthropologists. Accurate classification would require morphological examinations that laypeople could not conduct (Paixão & Carvano, 2008). Additionally, discussions on this issue were absent from historical research, and few studies about race were conducted in the initial decades post-abolition (Skidmore, 1991). This was partly due to the prevailing conviction[10] that the future of the country would be predominantly White, and that race and skin color would make virtually no difference in the country (Skidmore, 1983). Brazilian educators and policymakers focused on primary education were similarly affected by

[10] Skidmore (1991) recounted an anthropologist's prediction in 1911, suggesting that the country would be mostly White in a century. This viewpoint was met with skepticism by his peers due to its "pessimism."

the idea that in a multiracial society, it was better to omit race from the equation.

The absence of racial classification in legislation and official documents did not imply that Black children would automatically gain access to the first Brazilian public schools. The exclusion of these prospective students from public education dates back to the first educational measures in the country, including the initial primary education reforms. Despite the Couto Ferraz Law, which mandated primary schooling for children aged 7 years and over, not all children were allowed to attend school. The new legislation specified the restricted target group of public educational institutions, disallowing enrollment and attendance for children with contagious diseases, those who were unvaccinated, and slaves. The law prohibited enslaved individuals from attending schools but not free Black people. However, examining the 1853 Couto Ferraz Reform, Silva and Araújo (2005) argued that Black children faced exclusion due to the association in 1800s Brazilian society between them and prevalent contagious diseases of the time, such as smallpox and tuberculosis. Regarding enslaved children, Fonseca (2002b) highlighted that these youngsters received education through alternative means apart from formal schooling. They were educated for work, reflecting the subjugation derived from their captive status. Moreover, enslaved individuals demonstrated resilience against the obstacles to their education by forming clandestine groups, and even schools, to advocate for their basic learning. Within these gatherings, such as the Preto Cosme School, founded by a literate former slave, they acquired some skills in reading, writing, and mathematics (Gondra & Schueler, 2008; Silva & Araújo, 2005).

The obstacles faced by Black children in accessing formal education did not lead to their total exclusion from primary schools. Since the implementation of formal schooling for all

Brazilian citizens after independence, Black and mixed-race children were part of the education system-the elementary public school of the 19th century was primarily intended for "moralizing" this target population. Despite their presence, it was within an irregular and unstable educational environment (Veiga, 2008). This situation arose primarily from the decentralization of educational laws, which commenced with the additional act of 1834 and was further reinforced by the 1853 reform, discussed in Chapter 2. This decentralization allowed for various contexts in which Black children could access schooling, despite the prevailing stereotypes associating them with illness. Several studies in different provinces such as Santa Catarina (Correia & Silva, 2012); Minas Gerais (Fonseca, 2002b); and even in the capital, Rio de Janeiro (Schueler, 2001) indicated the presence of Black students in public schools. The only explicit prohibition in regional legislation was the attendance of enslaved children, as defined in the education laws in Rio Grande do Sul and Mato Grosso (Barros, 2016; Gouvêa, 2007).

The presence of students of African origin in classrooms often resulted in tensions and subsequent conflicts emerging from interactions among children and families of diverse racial backgrounds. These tensions were primarily rooted in stereotypes associated with enslaved populations, affecting children of African descent (Veiga, 2010). Since race was seldom discussed, prejudice against children of color often intertwined with class biases (Nogueira, 2007). Still, overt racial prejudices persisted in primary schools from the early decades of the establishment of education as a public policy. Describing the school situation in 1889, historian José Ricardo Pires de Almeida (2000) noted the following:

> Children from reasonably well-off classes do not go to public school because their parents have more or less the prejudice of color, or because they fear, and rightly so, for

> the morality of their children in contact with this multitude of boys whose parents send to school just to be away from them for a few hours. In this way, these children learn better and faster than those who attend public school. (p. 90)

This quote demonstrates that the prejudice against Afrodescendants present in Brazilian society was also pervasive in the public school system. Members of the free Black community took initiative in response to the racism prevalent in schooling. They sought to establish private institutions in which their children could receive education without facing dehumanization or demoralization. One such school was led by Pretextato dos Passos e Silva, a Black teacher. In his appeal to the government for permission to open the school at his residence, the educator highlighted that numerous families were urging him to educate their children. He supplemented the request with a pointed critique of the racism faced by Black boys in Rio de Janeiro's schools. These boys were either barred from attending or, if they did, received an education that was not "comprehensive" due to personal and emotional coercion (Silva, 2002, p. 151). Pretextato Silva's request exposes the frequent tensions between teachers and public school students of particular racial backgrounds. Even with sufficient reasons to abandon classes, such as poverty, the necessity to work, or a perceived lack of utility in the knowledge imparted, Black students faced other obstacles, namely a routine nature of classes characterized by instances of violence. The arbitrary actions of teachers, including the use of physical punishments, indicated that, in their view, these students were deemed deserving of such treatment (Veiga, 2010).

In addition to physical mistreatment, teachers played a role in perpetuating stereotypes about students of African descent. Such judgments were based on the belief that these students could negatively influence the behavior of children from families considered more respectable

(Almeida & Sanchez, 2016). In a report analyzed by Barros (2005), a teacher in São Paulo complains about "little Black children who wander around, children of free Africans who enroll but do not attend school regularly," and who, not being interested in educating themselves, would only attend school to leave behind "the vices with which they are contaminated; teaching others the practice of abominable acts and the use of expressions they learn in those dens where they live" (p. 84). This teacher's account expressed a strong aversion to the presence of these students in school, suggesting they were only there because he could not prevent them from registering. Black students faced an additional hurdle: They had to prove their freedom. While the legislation banned the presence of enslaved children but not Black children, in reality, school access was denied to those unable to demonstrate their free status (Barros, 2005). This obstacle made it even harder for children to keep attending school and did not diminish the prejudice against this population. The accounts suggest that Black students were stigmatized with labels like idleness, vices, lack of cleanliness, debauchery, among others, deeming them unfit for the school environment.

After the enactment of the Free Womb Law, discussions about education for Black children evolved into more nuanced debates. Beyond political elites, these conversations permeated intellectual circles, revealing diverse interpretations of the link between education and freedom. Agostinho Marques Perdigão Malheiro (1867), a staunch advocate of educating enslaved people, criticized the elites for neglecting captives' instruction. He argued that this neglect stemmed from the perception of slaves as mere "working machines," undeserving of rights, including education (Malheiro, 1867, p. 44). Contrastingly, José de Alencar, a politician and novelist who opposed the idea of freeing enslaved mothers' children, emphasized that

freedom would be meaningless without education. In his view, education and notions of citizenship should precede any laws guaranteeing freedom to captives' progeny (Fonseca, 2011). Despite the diverse positions held by politicians and intellectuals, a common notion emerged after the Free Womb Law: making those children free equated to making them citizens, and making them citizens implied granting them rights. Reports from the Ministry of the Empire (1873, 1874, 1877, 1878), the governmental body in charge of overseeing public instruction, revealed that these discussions were not primarily aimed at addressing historical marginalization or recognizing former enslaved populations as full citizens with rights. Rather, they served as a strategy to align the empire with a liberal ideal of integration with a modern world.

In the late 19th century, the emphasis on primary education and public instruction became pivotal for shaping the new country. Public schools, once suggested by emperor Dom Pedro I to provide elitist education, gradually distanced themselves from the elites. In this transition from slavery to free labor, public schools transformed into spaces where poor children were moralized and prepared for the workforce, contributing to the construction of modern Brazilian society. Prominent figures underscored that providing education to freed people would not only enhance children themselves but also contribute to societal improvement. Defending Black children's formal instruction, Perdigão Malheiro (1867) suggested the following:

> The essential is that beyond moral and religious education, they learn a profession, even if it is as farmers or agricultural workers; they will continue to serve where it suits them or do it elsewhere or will work for themselves; anyway, may they learn a trade, a profession, from which they can support themselves and their families if they have one. Some may even be taken in the letters or other occupations; schools are open to them

since they will be free by birth. (p. 162)

Analyzing the place of racial relations for Brazilian educators and their intellectual peers, Dávila (2003) argued that race continued to be a metaphor used to encapsulate the past, present, and future of the nation at the beginning of the 20th century. At one pole, Blackness symbolized the past and was depicted as primitive, prelogical, and childlike. White elites associated Blackness with unhealthiness, indolence, and criminal tendencies. Whiteness, on the contrary, represented the ideals of well-being, refinement, science, and modernity. Educators such as the Minister of Education and Health Gustavo Capanema and child psychologist and reformer Manoel Lourenço Filho overtly adopted this perspective on race. It was clear to them that Brazil's future lay in Whiteness. The bias against Black students persisted not only in political discourse but also in school access and the classroom in the following decades.

5.4 Black Students in 20th Century Brazilian Public Schools

The difficulties encountered by Black students, prevalent during the 19th century, endured into the first decades of the 20th century—coinciding with ongoing debates about the significance of promoting popular education. Obstacles such as a lack of appropriate clothing, the absence of a responsible adult for enrollment, and issues in acquiring school supplies and meals were challenges faced by students of African origin in accessing education (Barros, 2005). Additional stereotypes solidified, depicting notions of the supposed "limited" intelligence of Black and mixed-race individuals, suggesting their "inability" for advanced studies (Müller, 2016, p. 72). While the founders of the country championed education as a fundamental right of the Brazilian citizen, their views on public instruction reinforced the subordinate status of public schools and their student body. In this context, a noticeable trend persisted—affluent families

chose not to enroll their children in public schools, instead opting for home-based learning or private institutions. This decision was influenced by prevailing notions surrounding Black students and the perceived impact their presence in schools might have on other pupils (Veiga, 2016). Reflecting on his experiences as a primary education instructor in the province of Minas Gerais during the 1920s, teacher Anselmo Barreto (1951) reminisced,

> Another fact that intrigued me at that time was social inequality. Children of parents who had "nobler" professions did not like to have relationships with their classmates, the children of workers and farmers. . . .Prejudice against the little Black kids was very high. Nobody liked to be close to the few who attended school. (p. 23)

Mindful of the challenges and biases hindering the inclusion of Black children in public schools, prominent organizations emerged to safeguard and advocate for the education of these overlooked pupils. In the 1910s and 1920s, various entities surfaced to champion the right to education for the Black population, emphasizing the imperative of literacy (Domingues, 2008). However, it was in the 1930s that one of the most outspoken organizations for the education of Black children came to the forefront: the Brazilian Black Front (*Frente Negra Brasileira*, [FNB]). The reception from those of African descent toward the FNB was notable. *A Voz da Raça*, a newspaper promoting the work of FNB, reported that the organization had already established more than 60 branches throughout São Paulo and other states (Santos, 1936). The Front integrated a range of programs to enhance the well-being of its members, coupled with an overarching message of the moral and material progress of the Black race, which included a strong emphasis on education. According to FNB members, Blacks should study "so as not to be insulted at every moment. Educated and instructed, we will be respected; we will make ourselves

respected" (Feliciano, 1933, p. 4). The belief was that as Blacks advanced in education, they would garner respect, recognition, and value from the broader society. Education was seen as wielding the power to neutralize racial prejudice and, ultimately, eradicate it.

In a way, the belief that education could empower Blacks to overcome racism and prejudice was in line with the mindset that elites began promoting by the second decade of the 20th century. Breaking away from the notion that Brazil was destined for perpetual backwardness due to its significant non-White population, they embraced the idea that degeneracy was an acquired condition—therefore, it could be remedied. While Blackness retained its negative stereotypes, individuals could transcend the social categorization of being Black through advancing in health, education, or cultural refinement or by ascending the social ladder (Dávila, 2003). From this point onward, the discourses perpetuating the denial of racism and promoting the ideology of racial democracy became increasingly intertwined with the concept of meritocracy. Almeida (2020) highlighted how the combined historical impacts of racism and the ideology of meritocracy led to the perception of racial inequalities faced by Afro-Brazilians, such as poverty, unemployment, and material deprivation, being attributed to the lack of individual merit. As the author emphasized, "If there is no racism, the responsibility for the condition of Black individuals who might not have attained everything within their reach is placed squarely on them" (Almeida, 2020, p. 82).

By the 1940s, while not reaching every family, the public school system had become a primary interface between the population and the state. Nationally, substantial government resources were directed toward education, mirroring an overarching pedagogical optimism that viewed education as the catalyst for transforming the entire nation (Dávila, 2003). At the same

time, the discourse of Brazilian racial democracy gained more prominence. Intellectuals transformed racist ideas, reinforcing the concept of racial democracy, reimagining a history of harmonious cultural integration among all peoples, and shifting scholarly attention from "race" to "culture" (Passos, 2012, p. 14). The once-prominent ideal of embranquecimento gradually gave way to the celebration and acknowledgment of the Brazilian people, whose culture was portrayed as unique but homogeneous. Within this context, education, rather than mitigating, intensified the persistence of racism in societal structures (Almeida, 2020) for not acknowledging the disparities between students of different racial backgrounds.

While the racist discourse in 20th century Brazil combined elements of popular culture and scientific theories, a new approach that reinforced existing racist practices emerged in education policy: the use of statistics. Proponents advocating for the use of statistics often comprised intellectuals, policymakers, and educational reformers, who believed that quantitative methods could provide empirical evidence to guide educational policies and reforms. They were influenced by international trends, particularly emerging in the United States, where statistical analysis was gaining prominence in various fields, including education (Dávila, 2003; Rocha, 2020). Psychological and physical assessments, akin to those historically employed to categorize individuals such as criminals, the mentally ill, and others deemed “degenerates,” would now be extended beyond clinical settings to assign students their places within the school system (Dávila, 2003, p. 141). Some of the most influential figures advocating statistical methods in education were Lourenço Filho and Isaías Alves, prominent Brazilian educators and reformers.

The first educator developed the ABC Test, an instrument of “differential psychology,” meaning the study of differences in mental aptitude of students. The assessment essentially

identified students who could proficiently recognize and write words associated with specific objects, like “car,” “key,” “hand,” and “radio,” while also demonstrating advanced motor skills in drawing geometric patterns. These students were then classified as "mature" or "immature" (Dávila, 2003, p. 141). In *ABC Tests: For Assessing the Maturity Required for Learning Reading and Writing*, first published in 1934, Lourenço Filho (2008) described the tests and showed their scientific importance, arguing that

> ABC tests can be used as a reliable measuring instrument, that is, they possess the requirements of sensitivity, consistency, and coherence desired in a measuring instrument. It further demonstrates, based on statistics, that the measures carried out with them can have prognostic value, meaning that the students who perform better in the tests are the ones who learn more easily and quickly, whereas those who perform less well are the ones who learn more slowly and with greater difficulty. (p. 76)

Isaías Alves, a graduate of Teachers College, was deeply influenced by the testing movement during his time in the United States. Mentored by educational psychologists Arthur Gates and Edward Thorndike, known for their significant contributions to reading tests and assessments, Alves (1932) held the belief that these tests could greatly benefit Brazil's educational landscape. He envisioned testing as a means to categorize students into groups based not only on age but also on intelligence, aiming to streamline the process for public school instructors by forming homogeneous groups. This approach would presumably enable teachers to tailor their teaching methods to address the specific needs and abilities of each group effectively. According to Alves (1932), “in light of psychological experimentation, the educator ceases to be a simple artist to become a man of science” (p. 21). He advocated for the implementation of two

primary intelligence measurement assessments: the Terman Group Test and the Binet IQ Scale.

Despite the seeming good intentions of these educators and other advocates of statistics as a tool to improve the public education system, the interpretation of statistical findings often reflected prevailing racist ideologies. Statistical analyses were susceptible to deeply rooted biases, perpetuating discriminatory practices within education rather than alleviating them. The outcomes of the tests endorsed by Lourenço Filho and Alves, conducted in schools in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, revealed substantial disparities in students' intellectual capacities, primarily explained by social class and race (Dávila, 2003). Lourenço Filho (2008) conveyed this discrepancy using scientific language, noting that the tests "revealed a significant disparity between the white and black groups" (p. 73). Alves (1932) presented similar findings, consistently couched in subtle academic language. Despite the initial goal of providing objectivity, statistics were often employed to reinforce existing racial biases, inadvertently fortifying inequality within the educational framework. However, the discussion about racial differences was portrayed as neutral scientific findings.

The absence of discussions on race in conversations regarding public schools and education policymaking appeared to be the standard in 20th-century Brazil. This neglect toward the subject provoked a response from intellectuals who sought to dismantle the notion of racial democracy. They aimed to reveal how the differences between Black and White students in Brazilian schools were affected by factors like economic disparities. Seeking to challenge the concept of racial democracy and uncover the underlying reasons for the exclusion of Black children from schools, Fernandes (1969) presented findings from interviews conducted with Afro-Brazilian families. One of his informants, a Black intellectual and civil servant, stated,

> the problem lies in the precariousness of the Negro's economic situation. . . .I don't believe that any father does not want his children to go to school, but it so happens that a father can never give a good education to his children because he's forced to resort to their work in order to support the home. (p. 297)

A second interviewee was even more emphatic:

> How can we send our children to high school if we don't have enough money to support ourselves? We have to send our children to the factories, wherever they may be. Free education is a fiction. It does not exist. (p. 297)

Critical scholars and the public recognized that the notion of racial democracy was a fabricated concept, used as a tool of symbolic domination to maintain the existing social hierarchy. Despite this understanding, political elites responsible for social policies continued to promote the ideal of a nation free from intolerance and discrimination. This ideal became more pronounced during the 1960s and 1970s, especially under the dictatorship, which suppressed discussions about racial issues. Consequently, the concept of racial democracy transformed from a myth to an unquestioned belief. Amidst censorship and repression, research in the social sciences addressing race and class was labeled as subversive and "unBrazilian" (Skidmore, 1983, p. 108). Any critical examination challenging the idea of racial democracy was considered destabilizing, seen as a threat to national unity and patriotism (Trapp, 2021). The dictatorial stance implied that if racial discrimination was not acknowledged, there was no need to address it (Passos, 2012). The colorblind approach enabled racism to persist in diverse forms within school environments. Nevertheless, there were also instances of resistance against this negligence.

The transition to the 1980s witnessed significant resistance from the Black movement, notably the Unified Black Movement (Movimento Negro Unificado [MNU]), which gained greater prominence in the post-redemocratization era. MNU has been instrumental in advocating for racial equality and educational reforms, combating racial discrimination, championing the rights of Afro-Brazilians, and advancing educational initiatives focused on Black empowerment and inclusivity. Recognizing that schools serve as a vital space for Black individuals, efforts were directed toward combating prejudice within the education systems (Gonçalves & Silva, 2000). From its inception, MNU has advocated for the inclusion of Black culture in school curricula and fought against the stereotypical and biased portrayal of Black history in educational materials and textbooks (Almeida & Sanchez, 2016). Following the redemocratization period and the introduction of a new constitution in 1988, MNU and other civil society organizations effectively raised awareness within the educational sector, garnering support for their fight against racism. Still, significant challenges to the education of Black children persisted.

Even with concerted efforts from the democratic government and society to acknowledge the damaging impact of stereotypical perceptions about Black students on their education and self-esteem, entrenched preconceptions endure in Brazil. Despite the historical hurdles faced by Afro-descendants in the country and a history marked by bias and disregard, the educational experiences of Black students differ not only in terms of academic performance but also in the quality of the education system they encounter. Studies delving into educational textbooks, as illuminated by Pinto (1992) and Barboza (2020), shed light on a skewed, distorted, and stereotypical portrayal of Black people in both illustrations and texts depicting everyday life and the history of the country. These representations often obscure or misrepresent the significant

roles and contributions of Black individuals in historical events. Additionally, research suggests a correlation between the underperformance of Black students in school and a hostile educational environment, partly influenced by the content within textbooks (Gonçalves, 2015; Pereira, 1987). This hostile setting can make non-White children feel undervalued and discriminated against, leading to a lack of motivation to meet academic expectations. Consequently, this perception contributes to higher rates of school dropouts and grade repetitions among this demographic.

The disparities experienced by students of African descent commence during preschool and persist through primary education due to their attendance at lower quality schools. These institutions, often situated in peripheral areas and lacking adequate resources, cater to a deprived population and operate with shorter shifts. Consequently, Black students face a climate of pessimism regarding their prospects, resulting in markedly low academic achievements (Pereira, 1987; Pinto, 1992). This situation is compounded by the spatial racial segregation prevalent in major urban centers, leading to the concentration of Black students in underserved schools. Furthermore, studies suggest that this educational distribution pattern extends even to middle-class Black families, who, aiming to shield their children from potential conflicts, opt for schools with a higher proportion of Black students and teachers (Gonçalves, 1987; Gonçalves, 2015; Pereira, 1987). This observation aligns with the assertions made by Fernandes (1969), emphasizing that prejudice holds significant influence, sometimes even greater influence than challenges stemming from economic disparities.

Within public schools, unchecked stereotypes prevalent in Brazilian society are often perpetuated by teachers. The learning environment can be influenced by their attitudes, potentially leading to unequal attention given to Black students, often perceived as incapable or

unteachable. This perception might then shape the actual experiences of these students (Pereira, 1987; Gonçalves, 2015). Gonçalves (1987) investigated how public primary school teachers addressed racism and discrimination after redemocratization. The findings revealed that many teachers held negative views about the term "discrimination" due to its tendency to stereotype and penalize individuals and social groups. However, they were reluctant to acknowledge racial discrimination within schools, adding complexity to the goal of ensuring equal treatment among students. Despite efforts to combat discriminatory practices, this approach inadvertently exposes subtle instances of racial discrimination within Brazil's public schools. Similar to the broader societal silence surrounding racism, signs of racial discrimination in education institutions might not always manifest as overt hostility or repression directed at Black children. Instead, racism often permeates knowledge and discourse practices within the school environment. Furthermore, the internalization of negative societal images influences the self-concept of students, affecting their hopes for success and resulting in harmful consequences for Black children (Fazzi, 2004).

In Brazil, stereotypes about Black schoolchildren have deeply entrenched themselves within the educational landscape, shaping perceptions and experiences. These biases often manifest in subtle ways, affecting the treatment and opportunities available to these students. The following section delves into the persistence of these stereotypes. Interviews conducted with various political actors, including teachers, policymakers, scholars, and specialists closely linked to the public school system, shed light on the ongoing prevalence of these stereotypes and their evolving nature. Through these conversations, the research aimed to uncover the nuanced perspectives and insights of these individuals concerning the perpetuation and evolution of stereotypes within Brazilian public schools.

5.5 Being Poor and Black in the Brazilian Public School Today

Policy agendas stem from specific concerns, some of which revolve around identifying what constitutes the problem, attributing responsibility, and finding solutions to mitigate harm. Challenges transform into problems when perceived as solvable through human action; before that, they are seen as natural or fateful (Stone, 1989). This shift is key in setting priorities, shaping what gets attention from policymakers. Identifying who is affected by these issues is also crucial. It determines the urgency and attention these problems receive from governments and political actors. Consequently, the construction of target populations and the pursuit of identifying the true cause play a significant role in shaping prevailing narratives guiding policy decisions and conferring legitimacy upon them. Considering that the construction of these target groups perpetuates stereotypes, not merely through political influences but also via cultural, media, historical, and religious lenses (Ingram & Schneider, 1993), and that causal theories are strategically formulated to maintain the status quo (Stone, 2011), the final section of this chapter aims to delve into the persistence of stereotypes and causal stories surrounding Black and economically disadvantaged Brazilian students across time.

Understanding the endurance of social perceptions regarding public school students today necessitates a comparison with historically entrenched stereotypes surrounding these groups. In addressing Research Question 2, I conducted interviews with diverse political actors associated with Brazilian public education. These individuals, spanning various regions and roles within school administration, teaching, and educational policymaking, offered a lens through which the persistence of stereotypes about schoolchildren became apparent. Their insights illuminate the enduring presence of these stereotypes and elucidate how different biases persist, permeating

discussions and shaping perceptions, policies, and practices within the education system. Consequently, these social constructions and causal stories perpetuate disparities and impede the establishment of an inclusive and fair learning environment for all students.

The interview protocol aimed to uncover the connections between stereotypes about public schools and considerations of race and class, examining how these perceptions persisted over time. While not all interviewees possessed specialized knowledge about the historical social construction of public school children and the causal narratives explaining their "failure" in school, their responses echoed the evidence presented in the literature and archival research.

The relationship among public schools, class, and race remained a central theme in all interviewees' responses. Even in instances in which these topics were not explicitly discussed, race and class emerged in their replies. As one the interviewees, educator and political scientist Daniel Cara stated, discussing public education in Brazil, "It is challenging to address social classes without delving into racism." While class and race, along with associated biases like classism and, notably, racism, were prominent in the interviews, further layers of complexity offered by the responses are explored next.

Expanded Access for a More Diverse Population

For many respondents, the perception of public school students underwent a transformation as a more diverse group entered these educational institutions. Initially, public schools were viewed favorably, providing a conducive environment for learning and delivering quality education, particularly when they primarily accommodated White, middle-class students. However, as students from Afro-descendant and economically disadvantaged backgrounds began enrolling in public schools, perceptions changed. Not coincidentally, public policies aimed at

enhancing these institutions became scarce. Márcia Lobosco, a teacher in public schools and specialist in race and education, recalled a state public school in the interior of Rio de Janeiro, once considered a reputable institution primarily attended by students with average economic standing and mostly White. She remembered that "impoverished individuals could not access public schools in a small town; they simply could not get there." As public policies enabled greater access for students from marginalized families, the quality of education offered in these institutions became compromised. Lobosco concluded, "No one wanted their child studying at that public school, even with a good standing in the city."

For Cleuza Repulho, education policymaker, the recognition of "the importance of being in school came late for the poorest and for the Black." This delay was primarily due to their restricted access to schools, either because of the absence of policies or logistical challenges in reaching educational institutions. Additionally, these groups often perceived the significance of education differently than other segments of society. However, when access barriers began to diminish, their access sparked criticism from those who sought to maintain their privileges. The notion that diversity was adversely affecting the quality of education gained prominence, particularly among the elites and middle class albeit subtly. In Repulho's perspective,

> we [policymakers] started bringing more people to school, and it bothers when the poor, when the Black, go to school because then they also begin to understand their rights, right? I put it this way: Before, public school was a privilege; today, it is a right. Privilege is for a few, but the right is for everyone, and this is a change. The school has not worsened; the school has improved.

Although expanding access to education is typically seen as positive, in Brazil, the influx

of Black and economically disadvantaged students was accompanied by a perception that it could negatively affect educational quality. This view, championed by elites and the middle class, implied that the increasing enrollment of these students could lead to a decline in educational standards, and, for that reason, education tailored for them might be of inferior quality. That is the main reason why middle-class families make every effort to attend private school because, in public schools, “everything seems of bad quality,” as pointed out by Lobosco. This biased perspective contributes to perpetuating disparities in the Brazilian education system, as noticed by the informants in this research.

Quality and Type of Education

The improvement in education access not only influenced how schools were perceived in terms of quality but also shaped societal views on the type of education that children in public schools should receive. Concerning public school education, a historical perception has been established, suggesting that, as public education is directed toward the economically disadvantaged, the standards can be set low. Lavini Barros, a teacher in public school and advocate for antiracist education, argued that Brazilians were educated in a society that has a culture of looking at those in private schools as a certain socioeconomic group and those in public schools as another socioeconomic group. She added, "We learned to look [at students] in hierarchy. We placed the idea of socioeconomic status and knowledge walking hand in hand when, in fact, they do not necessarily." Schoolteacher Márcia Lobosco's insights also serve as an illustrative example of this perspective:

> I believe there is a mentality that these students may not require as much support. If we provide too much, it might not be useful for those without a well-structured family to

> guide them in their studies. While I acknowledge these limitations, I am concerned that we might lower our expectations. . . .[if I yield to this mentality,] I would begin offering only the bare minimum, considering that this student may only be waiting to receive their diploma.

These interpretations about the public school are in great part attached to the perspective that, in these institutions "nobody wants to study, nobody wants to go to college, and that everyone is lazy," according to Silvana Bezerra, a professor of education in the interior of Rio de Janeiro. Student labels can extend beyond individual students, influencing the perception of an entire class. These labels play a crucial role in shaping the quality of instruction that teachers opt to deliver as well as the level of demand for lessons and interactions within the classroom, as perceived by Barros. Cara emphasized that students end up carrying the stigma of precariousness attached to schools, and with this stigma, it becomes even harder to achieve quality education.

The biases become more pronounced depending on the neighborhood or region where a school is situated. Considering schools in Northeast Brazil, Suzana Veiga, a former public school teacher, pointed out that Black students attended more remote schools, often marginalized by the government. However, this reality is not confined to one region in the country. Public schools situated in peripheral areas of São Paulo, for instance, also grapple with the challenges specific to these regions, encompassing issues like security and infrastructure. The challenges extend beyond the confines of the education system, shaping societal perceptions of young people, as noted by Haydée Paixão, an expert in public policies with a focus on antiracist education. Consequently, the conditions of schools have a profound impact on the experiences of students.

Despite the lower quality of education, families prefer these more peripheral schools due

to the prejudice their children face when studying in central areas. This evidence highlights the existence of elitist schools, even within the public school system. The presence of such schools, which typically cater to Whiter or fairer complexioned students, also influences the choices of Black teachers in selecting where to teach. According to a study conducted by Cleuza Repulho in the state of São Paulo, Black teachers opted to work in peripheral schools, even if they reside in the city center, as they felt more comfortable in those environments. In certain peripheral schools, nearly 80% of the faculty members were Black. Repulho denounced, "Black teachers, Black and poor children. Ghetto, this is a ghetto."

The stereotypes about poor and Black students also define the kind of education they will receive in public schools. Aligned with the historical construction that these students must be prepared to be part of the workforce, the interviews evinced that this stereotype persists. They are often perceived as individuals who may not ascend to prominent intellectual roles in Brazil nor take on leadership positions in politics. Instead, they are expected to stay within the traditional subalternized spaces occupied by their families. Suzana Veiga argued that education for these individuals aims primarily to ensure they are not illiterate, but also that schools are dedicated to imparting only the essential skills required for specific job roles. On top of facing issues in public schools such as insufficient funding, poor infrastructure, and a lack of qualified instructors covering all necessary subjects, students receive limited encouragement to pursue further studies.

Silvana Bezerra recounted conversations with students in a vulnerable region in the interior of Rio de Janeiro who expressed frustration with teachers unwilling to teach certain subjects, assuming they could not aspire to attend university. In response to their protests, they

were dismissively told, "You are going to be cashiers in the local supermarket; you do not need to learn these more complex subjects." According to Bezerra, while this statement may sound alarming, it reflects an underlying ideology in the country: Higher education is not meant for everyone. She also argued that his perspective reinforces the prevailing notion that individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds should primarily serve as workers. Even when students insist on the dream of attending university, they are encouraged to opt for specific courses, such as pedagogy, which traditionally face less competition in entrance examinations. In Suzana Veiga's perspective, the message to these students is clear: "Dream, but not too big."

Based on the stereotype that children and adolescents in public schools may not pursue higher education, teachers and principals often guide them toward learning a trade as a perceived secure path. This often involves redirecting students to technical schools, institutions that specialize in providing practical skills and specific profession-oriented education, typically in fields like technology, engineering, healthcare, or other vocational areas. However, students are not free to choose any profession; they are influenced to opt for technical areas perceived to offer easier employment opportunities, as noted by Suzana Veiga. She added that specific areas are designated for these young people: "They will not be a young apprentice in an architectural office or in a hospital's administrative sector. . . . So, it is always about maintaining the basics for them to survive, but never to socially ascend." In addition to stereotypes influencing perceptions of public school education, another equally detrimental stereotype surfaced—the concept of an ideal student predestined for success, as elaborated in the following section.

The Ideal Student, Student Learning, and Self-Esteem

Interviewees pointed out a dual narrative about public school students—one reinforcing

the stereotype of these students deserving a lower quality education and another challenging this perception. This counter-narrative introduces the concept of an ideal student, suggesting an image that students should emulate for success. Daniel Cara argued that the distinction between ideal and non ideal students creates an additional divide, between the chosen ones (mostly White or lighter skinned) and the neglected (mainly Black students from impoverished families). This division leads to growing disillusionment among the neglected group, resulting in not only dropouts, but also "mental evasion"—students physically present but mentally disengaged in classes, as pointed out by Lavini Barros. The stereotype of the ideal student perpetuates the belief that Black and poor students lack enthusiasm for learning, underestimating the cognitive and intellectual capabilities of children and adolescents attending public schools, according to Glória Almeida, an expert in public policies with a focus on antiracist education. This prevailing belief continues to shape their educational path, placing the responsibility on the student to pursue an ideal and reinforcing discourses of meritocracy. Silvana Bezerra emphasized that when considered in conjunction with the concept of the ideal student, meritocratic ideals become a central value in shaping the belief that students' success is exclusively determined by their demonstrated abilities, talents, and merit. The notion that individuals are solely responsible for their life outcomes exerts an impact on the self-esteem of public school children.

Many interviewees emphasized the significant impact of students' self-perception, highlighting its direct correlation with the treatment they receive in schools. The prevailing sentiment was that students tend to internalize and reproduce the stereotypes propagated by teachers and other individuals within the education system. The perpetuation of these stereotypes contributes to shaping students' self-image and, consequently, influences their educational

experiences. Silvana Bezerra recalled a conversation with a former student who echoed the negative labels assigned by teachers during his academic journey. The student employed expressions such as "a lost cause," "a failure," "the seed of evil," and "a demon" to describe himself, indicating the profound mark left on him by these descriptors. The narrative concluded with a somber reflection: "Because I was a troublemaker in school, I decided to drop out." In recounting an activity involving students from public and private schools, Márcia Lobosco talked about when they were tasked with debating a teacher-selected topic. Despite public school students initially perceiving the debate unsuitable for them, the activity ultimately proved highly beneficial for both groups, showcasing their capacity to engage. The hesitation revealed a noteworthy issue of low self-esteem among public school students, who appear to internalize the belief that students in private institutions are perceived as more intelligent and capable solely based on their socioeconomic status.

Factors contributing to students feeling like they do not belong in school include the inadequacy of teaching materials. According to many interviewees, Black children lacked representation in educational materials, leading to a distorted perception of what it meant to be Afrodescendent. From a young age, students confront narratives that make them dissatisfied with their own identity. Despite Law 10,639/2003 mandating the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture in all schools, public or private, interviewees observed that narratives about Black Brazilians often centered around slavery. Maira Mantovani, a public school teacher and expert in antiracist education, emphasized the "need for changes in educational materials, a shift in approaches to slavery. When we identify someone as Black [in teaching materials], we immediately associate them with a slave, and this needs to change in our education." Beyond the

negative depictions found in educational materials, students' self-perception is influenced by various stereotypes, encompassing notions related to a future marked by criminality and social marginalization, which will be explored in the following discussion.

Crime and Marginalization

The stereotypes that connect poor and Black students to crime and marginalization are also recurrent in the insights offered by the interviewees. According to their interpretations, these long-standing ideas about public students, especially those from marginalized and peripheral areas, follow two logics. The first one was connected to a self-fulfilling prophecy, meaning that because students so often heard that they would likely be associated with crime, such as drug trafficking, they come to believe that this destiny is inescapable. The second is linked to the idea that the environment will facilitate these children's connection to a life of crime and felony, since public schools are usually located in areas dominated by criminal organizations and drug lords. In both perspectives, however, the public school child is falsely conceived as having no aspirations and attending school merely to engage in disruptive behavior. Consequently, students are labeled as troublemakers, perceived as inclined toward fighting, talking back, and disregarding rules, as highlighted by Isabelly Nascimento, an expert in public policies with a focus on antiracist education.

Young Black men are often stigmatized as more violent and predisposed to criminal behavior. According to Maira Mantovani, certain teachers tended to categorize children, particularly undisciplined Black boys, based on stereotypes associated with criminality, linking their behaviors, attire, and speech patterns to these preconceived notions. However, these children are merely mirroring the behaviors of the men they encountered in their communities,

households, or the vicinity of the school. The school environment, by marginalizing and isolating these children due to the assumption that they resemble criminals, actively contributes to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Mantovani emphasized, "Crime becomes an outlet because they see workers laboring continuously without progressing, remaining in poverty and being exploited. Then, they observe the drug dealer, see the person who rules the drug trade, and that person has everything [they want to have]."

The prevailing perception of public schools as unsafe, as noted by interviewees, stemmed from a deeply ingrained myth: the belief that being economically disadvantaged inherently renders someone dangerous, as pointed out by Bezerra. Márcia Lobosco recalled an incident from over a decade ago when the private school she worked at moved to a new building near a public school:

> Students had to walk through that area, and parents worried something might happen. It was a sad situation. Even today, parents of students in the morning shift still fear for their [children's] safety. This leads to our students passing through the area with visible signs of anxiety. Despite our school having a different schedule to address parent concerns, there is still a belief that those public school students engage in risky activities outside school. Rumors of smoking marijuana and frequent robberies in the area circulate. However, in reality, we have seen none of that ever happening.

While the stereotype linking public school children to criminality endures, the firsthand experiences of interviewees in both research and practice reveal that only a minority of students are involved in wrongdoing, as noted by Silvana Bezerra. Despite this reality, the pervasive belief perpetuates the false notion that the majority of these students are engaged in criminal

activities and require either saving or punishment. When faced with challenges at school, these children are often subjected to different treatment, sometimes involving police intervention. Maira Mantovani recounted an incident in which the police were called to control the behavior of a student perceived as violent. The student, aware of the prevalent perception, expressed, "I'm going to be a *capoeira* [an Afro-Brazilian martial art] teacher. They think I'll be a criminal but let them think that. I've already chosen my profession." This underscores the profound impact of stereotypes on the student sense of belonging within the school environment. Cleuza Repulho emphasized that due to prevailing prejudice and exclusion, the children who continue their studies are like survivors in the public school system. Their experiences are significantly shaped by how policymakers and teachers depict and treat them, as discussed in the following section.

The Role of Policymakers and Teachers

When questioned about the primary contributors to the creation and perpetuation of stereotypes within public schools, the interviewees hesitated to provide a direct response. However, through the course of the conversations, two key political actors emerged: policymakers and teachers. From the standpoint of the social constructionist perspective employed in this dissertation, it becomes evident that policymakers play a crucial role in shaping the characterization of target groups, significantly influencing their political participation and the formulation of policies directed toward them. Given their pivotal role in making crucial decisions in education policymaking, their biases and interpretations of stereotypes hold paramount importance for public schooling and its beneficiaries. Additionally, teachers, through their actions, biases, and instructional materials, can contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes. Unconscious biases may impact their expectations and interactions with students, reinforcing

stereotypical beliefs and affecting students' learning experiences and self-esteem.

The perspectives of many interviewees highlight the considerable gap between policymakers and the target population of Brazilian public schools, primarily because policymakers often rely on stereotypes to shape their perceptions of reality. This dependence on preconceived notions leads to a lack of firsthand knowledge about the actual conditions of public schools and the experiences of public school children. As noted by Daniel Cara, "They [policymakers] don't even understand what public schools are. The elitism is so significant that they believe they can 'save' the school without understanding it, treating public schools in a stereotypical manner." This disconnect becomes evident in policy decisions that may not effectively address the specific challenges faced by these students. Janaína Barros, pedagogical coordinator in the state of Bahia, in expressing her discomfort with the policies aimed at her school serving Black communities, emphasized this disconnect:

> The state government formulates public policies. However, when these policies reach the school level, based on the student profile, I find it challenging to implement them. As a result, we end up with numerous public policies that lack teacher adoption or even lead to teacher attrition. There is a significant lack of individuals in the Department of Education with a strategic mindset.

Stereotypes serve as a constraining factor, distorting policymakers' comprehension of the intricate realities within public education. This disparity is evident, for example, in the curriculum. Suzana Veiga emphasized that lessons, teaching materials, and the school year are typically planned without considering students' daily lives: "Because historically, we have seen an education system that was conceived top-down. So it was designed by people who are not

necessarily educators." Márcia Lobosco shared a similar perspective, adding that "the things that come from the top are much more challenging to put into practice." To bridge this gap, according to the interviewees, a more informed and nuanced approach is necessary—one that moves beyond stereotypes and genuinely comprehends the diverse dynamics of public schooling in the country. Daniel Cara argued that "it is important that they connect to the people, to the real Brazilian people."

Social constructions propagated by teachers in Brazil's public schools can wield significant consequences for students. Given that these educators have direct and prolonged contact with students during their school hours, their biased expectations and preconceived notions assume a particularly influential role in educational practice. As discussed in the previous section regarding student learning and self-esteem, teachers emerged as primary influencers impacting students' self-perceptions and future aspirations. While most respondents acknowledged that stereotypes are not always deliberately constructed in the teacher-student relationship, they argued that this interaction reinforces biased preconceptions about the public school child. Janaína Barros emphasized how "a single phrase can end up marking and generalizing the profile of students who do not fit into the standard that the teacher would like them to have." According to Interviewee A, teachers' opinions hold such importance that even if they do not articulate the stereotype verbally, their actions in the classroom convey messages that perpetuate the distinction between the chosen and the neglected.

However, all interviewees acknowledged the role of teachers in stereotype perpetuation and argued that this behavior is rarely intentional, but rather a result of ignorance about how preconceived notions, especially those related to race, can impact pupils. They pointed out that,

due to educators' reluctance to engage in difficult conversations or their lack of knowledge on addressing issues related to racism, they often lean toward more "neutral" perspectives when confronted with certain situations in school. For instance, conflicts are often interpreted as instances of bullying, a topic widely accepted by both teachers and principals as something that should be addressed, while racism remains a taboo subject. Within this perspective, interviewees emphasized the importance of educators being cognizant of their biases and actively striving to establish an inclusive and supportive learning environment that challenges rather than perpetuates stereotypes. Training initiatives covering topics such as racism and implicit biases can aid teachers in moving away from a colorblind approach that tends to downplay the significance of race in the educational experiences of public school children.

Despite grappling with biases and systemic challenges, the participants in this research expressed an optimistic outlook for the future. They emphasized the increasing commitment of educators and students to challenge stereotypes, foster inclusivity, and advocate for a diverse education. This optimism is rooted in the belief that collective endeavors to dismantle stereotypes and create an empowering environment can bring about transformative changes in education, benefiting every student irrespective of preconceived notions. The key to this change lies in focusing on the public school child and not succumbing to ideas promoted by those unfamiliar with them, avoiding the tendency to categorize them into restrictive "boxes." In the words of Janaína Barros: "Listening to the children from the school, you make me avoid creating new stereotypes. Listening to the children from the school makes me question stereotypes."

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the historical social construction of Black and poor children, the primary demographic of Brazilian public schools, with a focus on Research Question 1: "How have Brazilian political actors historically used narratives and stereotypes to design, implement, and legitimize education policy according to their interpretations of public schools' target populations?" and Subquestion "How do the social constructions and causal stories about Brazilian public school students relate to their socioeconomic status and race?" Utilizing literature on the history of Brazilian education and historical research based on archives containing documents, legislation, and newspapers, the findings revealed that specific ideas about impoverished and Black people emerged in Brazilian political discourse since the country's inception. These ideas, influencing the design of policies targeting these groups, were predominantly rooted in stereotypes perpetuated by elites rather than an accurate representation of the populations. This underscores the notion that the policymaking process is often driven by emotional and value-laden images rather than objective depictions of reality (Schneider et al., 2014).

The limited political power of impoverished and Black Brazilians meant they had little agency in altering the negative portrayals of them, and they were often depicted as dangerous; associated with criminality; and burdened with stigmatizing labels related to vices, diseases, and lack of hygiene. Policies aimed at these populations were intricately connected to the perceived need for work, contributing to social progress and order. Afrodescendants, however, faced a different approach due to the near-forbidden nature of discussing race in political discourse. This resulted in a subtle social construction that continued to perpetuate biases attached to enslaved

populations, coupled with a colorblind perspective of "we are all Brazilians." This seemingly inclusive perspective did not shield Afrodescendants from prejudice, exclusion, and racism.

The intersectionality of race and class further complicated matters, as stereotypes persisted, maintaining these populations in subalternized positions in politics, the economy, society, and education. Consequently, political actors, particularly governing elites wielding power in educational policymaking, incorporated these stereotypes when formulating policies, with students' race and class playing a central role as they inherited the social constructions of the groups to which they belonged. While impoverished children inherited two primary stereotypes—being perceived as dangerous and needing control through work—Black children, due to their economic status, encountered a similar social construction but with an added layer of complexity introduced by racism. This complexity is rooted in the extensive history of a country marked by over 3 centuries of slavery, further shaping the stereotypes associated with Black Brazilian children.

The persistence of social constructions and causal stories, which often endure over time, hinges on the ability of the target group to mobilize and challenge perceptions imposed by policymakers, the media, and the public—a phenomenon that occurs infrequently (Schneider et al., 2014). To delve into the contemporary role of stereotypes and understand how these constructions persist, I conducted interviews with key figures in the education policy process. The goal was to gather a nuanced and varied perspective on how social constructions and causal stories manifest today. These interviews involved individuals at various stages, including design and implementation, and in diverse roles such as teachers, principals, policymakers, and specialists in race and education policies.

From the interviews, recurring themes emerged, aligning with literature and archival sources that detailed the emergence and transmission of notions and images about marginalized groups in Brazil, particularly in relation to public school children. Notably, deeply ingrained stereotypes resurfaced, with assumptions about students' academic capabilities being tied to their socioeconomic backgrounds and/or racial identities. These preconceptions can overshadow the true potential and aspirations of students from marginalized communities. Discussions frequently centered around the notion of an "ideal student" and meritocratic ideals, both playing pivotal roles. These biases often lead to limited expectations for certain student groups, resulting in compromised academic standards or insufficient support systems for their educational progress. The prevailing stereotypes revealed in the perspectives shared by the interviewees indicated a belief that students from low socio-economic backgrounds should be directed toward low-paying jobs, discouraging aspirations for university education. Nevertheless, it is important to note that many individuals within the school community, including all the participants in this study, are actively challenging and resisting such limiting notions ingrained in the system.

Moreover, the interviews shed light on biases embedded in teaching practices and materials, revealing that students from specific backgrounds or identities are subjected to a system that still promotes subtle racism. Stereotypical perceptions about behavior or academic performance can influence educators' perspectives, shaping disciplinary decisions and perpetuating an unequal learning environment. Policymakers also emerged as influential contributors to this issue, as their decisions and actions embed biases into educational policies, reinforcing the stereotypes that shape the experiences of marginalized student groups. The interplay between teaching practices, policies, and the perpetuation of stereotypes underscores

the imperative for comprehensive reforms aimed at addressing systemic biases in education. It highlights the necessity of developing policies that genuinely reflect the on-the-ground realities within the classroom, fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

In Chapter 6, I will analyze the strategies employed by two prominent educators, Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire, in addressing stereotypes within the context of Brazilian public schooling. As influential figures advocating for public education as a catalyst for democracy, both Ribeiro and Freire aimed to put their pedagogical theories into practice while holding significant roles in public administration—Ribeiro in Rio de Janeiro and Freire in São Paulo. The chapter will explore how their policies, specifically targeting impoverished and Black students, reflected their commitment to translating educational philosophies to try to change the reality of public schools and their students. It will also examine their distinctive interpretations of the public school child and the new perspectives they introduced for the target populations of public schools. Ultimately, the discussion will reflect on the intersection of education, justice, and equity within the framework of their contributions to shaping a more inclusive and just education system.

Chapter 6: From Ideals to Action: Darcy Ribeiro's and Paulo Freire's Impact on Rethinking Brazilian Education

The Amazon Rainforest stands as a true marvel of nature, an intricate tapestry of life that holds unparalleled biodiversity and ecological significance. Within this vast expanse of diversity and beauty, a myriad of awe-inspiring phenomena unfolds. Among these remarkable events, the Meeting of Waters—known as *Encontro das Água*s in Portuguese—ranks as one of the most emblematic spectacles in the Amazon region. The Meeting of Waters refers to the point where the dark, coffee-colored waters of the Rio Negro meet the sandy, lighter colored waters of the Solimões River. Despite being two distinct rivers with different temperatures, speeds, and sediment loads (Laraque et al., 2009), the waters of the Rio Negro and the Solimões flow side by side for several kilometers without immediately blending. Over time, the two rivers gradually mix and the distinction between their waters turns less apparent. As they merge, their waters become one, forming the Amazon River, the greatest flowing river on Earth. The convergence of the ebony currents of the Rio Negro and the sandy flow of the Solimões River is not just a striking visual display but also nature's way of showing that when different elements work in harmony, they can produce something unique and remarkable.

In 1991, Lia Faria drew an analogy between the work of Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire and the Meeting of Waters phenomenon. This comparison emerged during the seminar CIEP–Critique and Self-Critique, the first event in which both educators participated together in Brazil after their exile imposed by the civil-military dictatorship that ruled the country for more than 2 decades. According to Faria's perspective, the two Brazilian thinkers, in their professional and political journeys, flowed much like the Rio Negro and Solimões Rivers—following closely intertwined yet distinct paths, while steadfastly holding onto their dreams and utopian visions. At

the same time, their work and philosophies converged toward the same ultimate goal: the construction of a democratic Brazil and a more equitable, compassionate society (Faria & Silva, 2008). Just as the Rio Negro and Solimões Rivers come together, maintaining their individual identities, Ribeiro and Freire similarly navigated their paths, contributing to a collective aspiration for a just and democratic country.

In the realm of Latin American intellectual thought, Ribeiro and Freire emerge as prominent figures who dedicated their lives and work to understand the historical origins of social injustice in their homeland. Both educators' attention focused on the intricate workings of hierarchical structures deeply ingrained in Brazil's colonial history, translated into different systems of oppression, such as social inequality and racism. Their intellectual endeavors in the 1950s and 1960s aligned with those of other Brazilian scholars, activists, and thinkers who collectively grappled with the challenge of leveraging their intellectual work to drive change in a society entrenched with inequality and exclusion and that replicated structures of the past. These intellectuals championed the notion of "provoked changes," advocating for deliberate, rational interventions actively engaged in transforming the country (Villas Bôas, 2006, p. 13). Ribeiro (1986c) emphasized the central role of intellectuals in driving social change stating that "in a country that succeeded, where every child attends school, where everyone eats and has a job, the intellectual can afford to be disinterested. In Brazil, a disengaged intellectual is an agent of the status quo" (p. 4). Freire also believed that intellectuals should actively participate in societal transformation rather than remaining passive observers. He asserted that the significant and fundamental role of intellectuals can only be genuinely democratic when they serve the interests of the working class without attempting to manipulate them through their technical or scientific expertise (Freire & Faundez, 1998).

Going beyond mere theoretical discourse, Ribeiro and Freire ventured into the realm of practical action. They had the opportunity to translate their ideas into real-world practice, a privilege not afforded to all intellectuals, allowing them to enact their visions through public policy. This chapter employs an analytical lens, drawing insights from the educators' published works, interviews, and scholarly articles. Its primary focus is to uncover the foundational theoretical and philosophical principles that shaped their worldviews. By examining the educators' lives and works, the chapter aims to illuminate the basis guiding their transition from theoretical ideals to practical implementation. Additionally, it delves into how they evaluated the historical stereotypes and social constructs surrounding Brazilian public school children.

At its core, this chapter seeks to respond to Research Question 2: How did Ribeiro and Freire reinterpret the public school child in the process of redemocratization in Brazil (1983-1991)? It aims to specifically answer the following subquestions: (a) How did Ribeiro and Freire view the causal stories of school failure and their connection to the target population of Brazilian public education? and (b) How did they address the negative stereotypes surrounding public school students in their intellectual work? The aim of this chapter is to delve into the development of Ribeiro and Freire's perspectives on education, public schools, and the primary recipients of educational policies—namely, the public school child. By introducing and contextualizing the central figures pivotal to the case studies analyzed in this dissertation, the chapter establishes the groundwork for comprehending the distinct educational contexts explored in this research. Additionally, it outlines Ribeiro’s and Freire’s key writings, illustrating how their perspectives on education and the Brazilian reality laid the intellectual foundation for the policies crafted during the era of redemocratization, as discussed in Chapter 7.

6.1 Ribeiro: The Public School as a Locus for Promoting Social Justice

I am against:

An elitist and anti-popular education.

The illiteracy of most Brazilians.

Dropout and repetition at school.

The lack of awareness of this calamity.

The encyclopedic and ostentatious character of our teaching.

The funnel that only allows five per thousands of students to reach the university.

The disregard for higher education.

The multiplication of private and low-quality schools.

I am in favor of:

A popular and serious primary school.

A good education to form the Brazilian people.

The use of public resources in public schools.

Education aimed at economic and social development.

An education founded on a lucid consciousness.

— Darcy Ribeiro, 1997, p. 233

Darcy Ribeiro was born Darcy Ribeiro Silveira in 1922 in Montes Claros, in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. He was the second child of a working-class family. His mother's family, the Silveiras, faced financial difficulties, while his father's relatives, the Ribeiros, were affluent and held political influence. Darcy Ribeiro's father passed away when he was just 3 years old, which resulted in limited contact with his paternal relatives. Following his father's death, Ribeiro's mother faced financial challenges and worked as a primary school teacher in addition to

selling sweets and cakes to provide for her two young children. Later in his youth, Darcy Ribeiro formed a close bond with his uncle, Dr. Plínio Ribeiro, a respected physician in Montes Claros. Dr. Ribeiro possessed an extensive library and enjoyed considerable social prestige, elements that played a pivotal role in shaping Ribeiro's intellectual curiosity and career choice. Later, Ribeiro decided to attend medical school and relocated to the state capital, Belo Horizonte, to commence his medical studies. However, the young Ribeiro soon realized that the classes that truly ignited his passion were those related to social sciences and philosophy (Ribeiro, 1990, 1997).

Motivated by this newfound interest, he made the decision to relocate to São Paulo, where he embarked on a new academic journey by enrolling in the School of Sociology and Politics of São Paulo (*Fundação Escola de Sociologia e Política de São Paulo* [FESPSP]), from where he graduated in 1946. This training in social sciences provided Ribeiro with a unique opportunity to directly learn from prominent figures. These included luminaries such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Gilberto Freyre, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, and his primary mentor, Herbert Baldus. Professor Baldus focused his research on Indigenous peoples in Brazil, an interest that he passed on to Ribeiro. Beyond academic pursuits, Baldus encouraged Ribeiro not only to explore the intricacies of Indigenous cultures but also to expand his horizons by embracing alternative ways of life, and distinct thought patterns as exemplified by Indigenous communities (Ribeiro, 1997). After completing his studies, Ribeiro received an invitation to join the team of Marshal Cândido Rondon, the inaugural director of Brazil's Indian Protection Service (*Serviço de Proteção ao Índio* [SPI]) and widely regarded as one of the foremost advocates for Indigenous rights in the nation. From 1946 to 1955, Ribeiro served in the Amazon region and established himself as one of Brazil's most respected ethnographers and indigenists (de la Peña, 2005).

Leveraging his extensive experience and dedication to the Indigenous cause, Ribeiro was instrumental in the founding of the Indigenous Park of Xingu and in organizing and overseeing the first postgraduate course in anthropology in Brazil.

In the late 1950s, Ribeiro's life and career took a significant turn when he crossed paths with another of his esteemed mentors, Anísio Teixeira. Teixeira was at the helm of the Brazilian Center for Education Research (*Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisas Educacionais* [CBPE]), affiliated with the Ministry of Education. He extended an invitation to Ribeiro to deliver a lecture on Indigenous peoples at CBPE, and during this encounter, they "fell in love intellectually for each other" (Ribeiro, 1997, p. 324). From this encounter, Ribeiro was persuaded to embark on a new path in education, prompted by Teixeira's "intellectual seduction" (Ribeiro, 2010, p. 15), and joined a collective of intellectuals who shared a common goal: understanding the state of education in Brazil and formulating innovative solutions for the public school system. Ribeiro became involved in educational and political initiatives, including the campaign to defend public education, and aimed to influence the formulation of the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação* [LDB]), which was under discussion in the Brazilian National Congress in 1959. This marked the beginning of a chapter in Ribeiro's career in which he would contribute to reshaping public schools in the country.

Collaborating with Teixeira, Ribeiro faced staunch opposition for their public education initiatives, especially from Brazilian religious leaders who vehemently opposed Teixeira's advocacy for secular public education. This opposition escalated to the point where President Juscelino Kubitschek removed Teixeira from the Ministry of Education. In response, Ribeiro led a successful campaign to reinstate Teixeira, with Kubitschek inviting him back to the Ministry and appointing Ribeiro as his deputy director. From that point forward, their work included

expanding the campaign for public education, mobilizing the CBPE research program, and establishing regional centers for more specialized studies. This episode served as a stark illustration of the influence of regressive forces in Brazil. According to Ribeiro (1960), "These forces find formidable allies in the enduring presence of underdevelopment and poverty, which stand in opposition to our aspirations for universal education" (p. 232).

With the relocation of Brazil's capital to Brasília in the 1960s, Ribeiro began formulating the creation of the University of Brasília (*Universidade de Brasília* [UnB]). The objective was to establish a university that would address not only Brazil's challenges but also those of Latin America (Ribeiro, 1969). The project received approval from President Kubitschek, with architectural designs by Oscar Niemeyer, and the UnB was inaugurated in 1961, having Ribeiro as its first rector and Teixeira as vice rector. Given the prominence achieved through the creation of the UnB, Ribeiro was summoned in 1962 to assume the role of minister of education. During his tenure, Ribeiro introduced substantial political and social elements into the adult literacy program, adopting the Freire method, and lent support to literacy campaigns aimed at reaching the most underprivileged segments of the population (Afonso, 2023; Lôbo et al., 2008). The objective was to provide education to the people, effectively embodying Teixeira’s (1957) core belief about education: Education is not a privilege.

Ribeiro's political journey continued to unfold. He initially served in President João Goulart's government, assuming the role of chief of the Civilian House of the Presidency of the Republic and leaving the Ministry of Education. However, the 1964 civil-military coup forced his exile, first in Uruguay and then in Venezuela, where he developed the New University of Venezuela project. Later on, Ribeiro embarked on a mission to reform universities across several South American countries, including Chile and Peru, and played a key role in designing the

Scientific and Technical University of Algiers in Algeria. Upon his return to Brazil, Ribeiro entered the political arena in a more decisive way by joining the PDT, a party founded in 1979 by the experienced left-leaning politician Leonel Brizola. Brizola, known for his steadfast opposition to the dictatorial regime, had returned to Brazil and decided to run for governor in the first state election held in the country after 17 years of indirect elections controlled by the dictatorship (Bomeny, 2007). He invited Ribeiro to be his running mate as the vice-governor candidate for the Rio de Janeiro state elections (Marques & Gonçalves, 2016). This political move occurred in a climate in which the military rule and its associated values had significantly lost credibility (Moreira & Soares, 2019). The PDT, including Brizola and Ribeiro, emerged victorious in the 1982 elections.

Back in the late 1950s when Brizola was the governor of Rio Grande do Sul (1959 to 1963), he introduced an ambitious education project known as No Child Without a School, leading to a significant expansion of the state's public schools, affectionately referred to as *brizoletas* (Quadros, 2001). Therefore, it came as no surprise that, shortly after his inauguration in March 1983, the new governor identified basic education for Rio's underprivileged populations as a top priority for his term (Brizola, 1986). Recognizing Ribeiro as the "moral entrepreneur" with both political clout and educational expertise to advance the cause of education (Nicholson-Crotty & Meier, 2005, p. 223), the governor appointed him to lead the Special Education Programme (*Programa Especial de Educação* [PEE]) and serve as its intellectual mentor (Faria, 2017). For Ribeiro, this was the perfect opportunity to implement the educational revolution he had envisioned.

Planned as a means to uplift public education and rectify historical injustices, the PEE aimed to secure the democratic rights of Rio de Janeiro’s citizens by ensuring access to free and

quality education tailored to their specific needs. The Brizola administration articulated the PEE's fundamental principles through 19 overarching goals. These encompassed provisions for school supplies and uniforms for all students, enhancements in the quality of school meals, access to medical and dental assistance, refurbishment of school infrastructure and furniture, and a comprehensive review of all educational materials (Bomeny, 2007).

One of the key objectives within the PEE was the establishment of the Public Education Integrated Center (*Centro Integrado de Educação Pública* [CIEP]). These institutions were designed to offer full-time education and holistic support to children from low-income families, representing the cornerstone of Ribeiro's education policies. Ribeiro envisioned this initiative as a crucial step in rectifying educational disparities in Brazil, starting with Rio de Janeiro, which he affectionately referred to as his "little homeland" (Roda Viva, 1988). However, implementing these plans encountered significant challenges amidst a context marked by decades of neglect toward public schools. These hurdles echoed the struggles faced by Freire, Ribeiro's friend and fellow educator, whose experiences will be explored later in this chapter.

6.2 Ribeiro's Sociological and Educational Perspectives on Brazil

To answer the research questions posed in this chapter, it is vital to understand Ribeiro's core sociological perspectives regarding inequality in Brazil and the need for transformative educational change. These conceptual underpinnings provided the intellectual bedrock upon which Ribeiro's education policies were constructed during his tenure as vice-governor and secretary of education and culture. Moreover, these perspectives formed the basis of Ribeiro's comprehensive educational vision for public schools as well as his approach to the target population accessing these institutions. The following critical works laid the philosophical groundwork for and shaped the fundamental tenets of Ribeiro's worldview concerning public

education: *Latin America: The Greater Motherland* (*América Latina–A Pátria Grande*) and *The Brazilian People: The Formation and Meaning of Brazil* (*O Povo Brasileiro: a Formação e o Sentido do Brasil*). This analysis also draws from the archives at FUNDAR, which offer more candid insights into Ribeiro's perspectives regarding public schools and their students. A comprehensive understanding of these foundational concepts is essential for grasping his views regarding the target population of public schools and the underlying causal narratives that seemed to perpetuate the notion of "school failure."

Why Hasn't Brazil Succeeded Yet?[11] Colonization and the Dominant Classes

Ribeiro's period of exile, which began in 1964, played a pivotal role in shaping his perception of Latin America as a critical arena for his own country's process of development. From his experiences in South American nations, he not only embraced but also steadfastly held onto the aspiration of integrating Brazil with its Latin American counterparts. This situation prompted a need to dig deeper into why the region remained underdeveloped and uncover the real causes behind this seeming backwardness. As Ribeiro (1978) put it, "What characterizes today's Latin America, in terms of culture, is the sudden realization that everything is subject to questioning. The old explanations were justifications. It is necessary to rethink everything" (para. 15). Therefore, to reevaluate Latin America was, essentially, to reassess Brazil itself.

Ribeiro's sociological work often delved into the shared historical experiences among Latin American nations, emphasizing common threads, such as colonial legacies, socioeconomic inequalities, and cultural identities. He questioned why, despite similarities in how the societies were formed and inequalities established, Latin American peoples persisted in living as though

[11] This is the "research question" for *The Brazilian People: The Formation and Meaning of Brazil* (Ribeiro, 1995).

isolated islands, primarily looking outward to the "developed world" rather than seeking internal cohesion to address shared issues (Ribeiro, 1986a, p. 3). He noted that, particularly, nations along the Atlantic coast, despite ancestral ties to Africa, leaned toward North America instead of acknowledging their African heritage. He noted that Latin Americans often perceived themselves as a global suburb, marginalized and positioned as if "put upside down in the bottom shell of the Earth to suffer" (Ribeiro, 1986a, p. 77). These characteristics derived from two pernicious influences inherited from Europe: racism and lack of self-confidence.

Racism emerged as a potent tool in the ideological arsenal of colonial dominance, flourishing remarkably once transplanted to the colonies (Ribeiro, 1986a). In Brazil, racial divisions were primarily entrenched through slavery, deeply shaping the nation's social fabric and intertwining with its socioeconomic structure, laying the groundwork for the emergence of a dominant class. The exploitative system of slavery profoundly influenced the stratification of Brazilian society, establishing a framework in which power, wealth, and privilege often concentrate within specific groups. Brazil's path toward citizenry formation through education and other public policies faltered as the European-descended elite, remaining in power post-colonization, prioritized maintaining their historical influence. At the base of the social pyramid, lay a large mass of oppressed classes inhabiting marginalized areas, predominantly comprised of Black and mixed-race individuals residing in city outskirts and favelas. Their historical aspiration to integrate into the system seemed impractical due to the inherent oppression entrenched within this class. Consequently, class and race have become intertwined in Brazil, complicating the understanding of where one form of oppression starts and the other ends.

The lack of self-confidence also stemmed from European colonization in Latin America. The creation of a divide between colonized peoples and colonizers reinforced the notion of the

unique quality of Western civilization and discoveries, steeped in Europeanity. This not only eroded the self-esteem of peoples who considered themselves of lesser importance but also shaped Latin Americans' perspectives on their history and future. In light of this context and acknowledging extensive research on Brazilians and their origins, Ribeiro (1995) highlights the absence of a comprehensive theory to comprehend Brazil. Traditional Eurocentric frameworks led to scientific theories attributing Latin America's, and consequently Brazil's, underdevelopment to local populations, promoting the idea that prosperity would only come through capitalist advancement and prudent financial management. Consequently, public welfare, health, and education were neglected, perpetuating an unequal social order and linking backwardness to miscegenation. Simultaneously, these countries persist in seeking externally crafted solutions, neglecting the pursuit of local alternatives better suited to address the needs of their populations (Ribeiro, 1986a, 1995).

Contrary to these narratives, Ribeiro presented an alternative perspective to understand Latin America: the "ugly, poor, and ignorant" were not at fault, but rather the "rich, beautiful, and well-educated" (Ribeiro, 1986a, p. 75). Colonizers established economies and societies benefiting themselves, reducing Latin Americans to the external proletariat of wealthy nations and essentially disregarding them as colonized and dependent individuals. Latin Americans were born into a capitalist framework, their stories dictated by Europe's developmental, colonial, and exploitative timeline. Despite the formal departure of colonizers, dominant classes perpetuated exploitative policies benefiting "developed" nations (Ribeiro, 1986a, p. 76). This scenario suggests that the development project proposed by affluent nations aims not at liberation but at maintaining an asymmetrical order founded on ethnocide, exploiting cheap labor and goods. The responsibility for creating a new, dignified human civilization falls upon Latin American peoples

(Ribeiro, 1986a).

For Brazil, forging this new reality would entail reforming the state, historically grounded in the maintenance of elite privilege, and creating its own path of development (Ribeiro, 1990c, 1995). Writing amidst societal changes following a civil-military dictatorship, Ribeiro emphasized the need for Brazil's "modernization" through education, highlighting the state's obligation to provide quality education and healthcare for urban youth (Ribeiro, 1995, p. 200). These recommendations mirrored Ribeiro's aspirations for the state to address the needs of the lower classes, evident in his efforts through the CIEPs. Ribeiro underscored in his academic work on Brazilian schools the idea that they perpetuated an unequal and unjust order based on racism and a distorted image of the public school child. In the next section, I analyze Ribeiro's perspectives on the stereotypes created historically about public schools and their students and how the educator conceived the real causes that make schooling in Brazil a failure.

Reframing Causal Stories: Brazil's Antipopular Schooling System and Educational Failure

Ribeiro's influence was central in igniting crucial debates on the pressing need for educational policy reform in Brazil. His advocacy efforts led to the establishment of institutions and policies that continue to shape Brazilian education, notably the UnB, the National Indigenous Peoples Foundation (*Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas* [FUNAI]), and the National Education Plan (*Plano Nacional de Educação*). As a policymaker, Ribeiro addressed the educational needs of Indigenous and marginalized communities, recognizing and tailoring policies to the country's diverse cultural contexts. Beyond his impactful role as a doer, Ribeiro contributed significantly to the scholarship on Brazilian public schools. His written works delved

into curriculum content, necessary infrastructure, and, most significantly, emphasized the role of schools in fostering the well-being of children and their communities.

One of his main concerns was to understand how Brazilian public education got to the dire situation it was in, with schools offering low-quality instruction and permeated by disengaged students and high levels of drop out. Contradicting the traditional narratives that put the responsibility on children's ability and will to learn, or the idea that students coming from a specific social strata or racial group are not interested in learning, he saw the main issue in the way schools were structured historically. According to his interpretation, the lack of schools would not be the explanatory reason for low-quality education in Brazil; instead, schooling's failures would stem from dominant classes' attitudes, which dominated education policymaking since the country was founded, toward Brazilian people. Therefore, Brazil's education disaster has historical causes. While the country was a Portuguese colony, elites and policymakers opted for making schools available solely to those who would occupy positions within colonial bureaucracies: White men of European descent. Educating the people was not a priority during the empire nor the republic. As such, the dire state of public education cannot be attributed to pedagogical practices but rather to the attitude of the Brazilian ruling classes toward the people (Ribeiro, 1986c).

Ribeiro (2018) attributed the failure of the Brazilian educational system to the elites, who consistently provided the best education for their children, whether in Brazil or abroad, while offering the cheapest opportunities to the poor, unconcerned about education quality. His work in anthropology and sociology underscored the notion that the dominant classes have constructed an unequal order that prioritizes their economic and political interests over people's basic needs

(Ribeiro, 1984, 1986b, 1995, 2014). This understanding formed the backdrop for his analysis of the public education system's failure. He posits that the dire state of education is not a failure but rather the deliberate success of the ruling class, intending to distance education from the masses. Ribeiro (1990b) observed that the Brazilian ruling classes, uninterested in sociocultural changes, intentionally obstructed the creation of what he terms an "honest school," one aligned with the desires and needs of the people (p. 4). This neglect stems from a persistent societal illness: The disregard for its most deprived citizens, historically seen by dominant classes as mere labor forces, rather than individuals with aspirations and needs (Ribeiro, 1986b).

Educational challenges in Brazil are deeply rooted in the historical legacy of slavery, which persisted longer in comparison to other nations in the Western hemisphere. This enduring legacy manifests in the country's social dynamics and is reflected within Brazil's educational framework (Ribeiro, 1986b). Throughout the era of enslavement, marginalized populations were compelled to adopt the language and lifestyle imposed by their oppressors. Ribeiro draws a parallel, suggesting that underserved children face a similar imposition within education systems that perpetuate their disadvantage and reinforce a hierarchical structure upholding elite privileges. Ribeiro (1986b) presents a striking analogy, comparing Brazilian society to a hypothetical scenario in the United States where the South emerged victorious in the Civil War. He argues that remnants of slavery persist in Brazil through descendants of slave masters who assumed leadership roles in the republic. Given the persistent presence of inequality and racism, policies aimed at enhancing lives of the Black population are likely to face obstacles. Ongoing societal issues connected to racism serve as evidence that privileged Brazilian groups continue to retain their advantage (Ribeiro, 1986b).

In the field of education policy in Brazil, there exists a need to challenge and break away from entrenched mentalities reminiscent of a time marked by slavery. Ruled by descendants of slavers, this ailing elite carries the dark legacy of those who devalued human lives. To this ruling class, individuals of African descent, whether enslaved or freed, are seen merely as a disposable workforce—a mere resource exploited in production. Even though formal slavery has ended, its associated mindset endures: "The slave has the dignity to fight for freedom, but what about the master? He fights for servitude" (Ribeiro, 1980, para. 3). Consequently, this perspective advocates for meager allocations of public services and resources to Afro-Brazilian communities. Such a viewpoint has resulted in a lack of priority for public schooling. Instead, it allowed the educational system to deteriorate, disregarding conscientious educators who raised concerns about this political shortsightedness and societal neglect (Ribeiro, 1986b, 1987, 1991). Furthermore, these dominant elite ideologies about education have been perpetuated and strengthened through collaboration with other influential political entities, including policymakers, disengaged educators, and the media.

Examining the historical trajectory of education in Brazil, Ribeiro (1990a) highlighted a consistent lack of prioritization by the country's leadership. From the colonial era through independence and the empire, education remained a secondary concern. Even progressive figures like Emperor Dom Pedro II focused primarily on building institutes for specific disabilities, disregarding broader educational needs (Ribeiro, 1990a). Popular education was not on the agenda. Political elites viewed the populace as either enslaved, freed Black individuals, or idle mixed-race individuals, deeming them all unfit for education. Remarkably, amidst a global expansion of universities, Brazilian policymakers failed to establish higher education institutions.

Transitioning to the republic, political discourse emphasized education but lacked substantive action. It was not until the 1930s, with the Manifesto of the Pioneers, that discussions on popular education gained traction (Ribeiro, 1990a). Despite these shifts, education remained a peripheral concern in political agendas. This negligence is echoed in the perspectives of other political actors, particularly educators influencing pedagogy and curriculum development in the country.

Ribeiro (1986c) highlighted the influence of "alienated educators" who tended to attribute the lack of education among the poor to deficiencies within their homes (p. 6). He criticized this perspective, indicating that certain misguided educators, entrenched in distorted pedagogy, blamed the academic shortcomings of underprivileged children on their familial backgrounds (Ribeiro, 1986c). Moreover, some echoed the belief that effective public education could only proliferate once general prosperity and a participatory democratic society were fully realized in Brazil. Remarkably, a few went so far as to suggest that high-quality schools attuned to people's needs should emerge post the implementation of socialism (Ribeiro, 1990b). Ribeiro underscored that teachers were not supporters of these perspectives but rather victims within the educational predicament. This situation stemmed from an antipopular educational policy that consistently failed to equip both public school teachers and students with the necessary resources crucial for effective teaching and learning (Ribeiro, 1986c). According to Ribeiro (2018), to cater to the educational needs of Brazilian children, educators needed to reflect on their roles as implementers of policies that inadequately educated underprivileged students.

In Ribeiro's vision, the prevalent means of communication in Brazil contributed to diminishing the significance of popular education. Radio and television swiftly permeated the Brazilian population, and, following the demise of the dictatorship, the emerging elite class

predominantly controlled the radio stations and television networks and the messages these communication channels propagated. Historically, the media aligned with the interests of the dominant classes and political elites, sidelining the importance of popular education (Ribeiro, 1990b). Operating primarily for profit, they shirked responsibility for shaping education and ethics and fostering solidarity between Brazilians. This shift underscored the need to evaluate the media's role in societal development and for a comprehensive approach to education that transcended profit-driven motives (Ribeiro, 1990c).

Because of the growing influence of the elites, Ribeiro (1984a, 1986b, 1989) referred to the country's educational system as dishonest, since Brazil still lacked an authentic public school system that adequately meets the needs of its population. The country's public primary schools admit a small percentage of children from diverse backgrounds thus continuing to exclude the vast majority of children from less privileged sectors. This elitist trend begins early in education. This separation creates an unequal environment within the education system, as those with the financial means can pay for a quality private education, while those without financial means are forced to suffer in inadequate public schools. Ribeiro (1986b, 1989) emphasized the importance of public education, prioritizing proximity to its target audience and focusing on meeting the needs of the popular child, or the typical target population of public schools. The following section explores Ribeiro's insights into the public school child and how education should be tailored to their interests.

Reframing Public Schools' Target Population: The "Popular Child"

Ribeiro's contributions sought to reformulate education policies to better accommodate and address the diverse needs of students in public schools. His insights revolved around

comprehending the essence of the public school child, dissecting the narratives and stereotypes influencing educational policies, and uncovering the intricacies embedded within these constructs. Consequently, his educational theories and practices were centered on defining the "popular child"—specifically, Black and economically disadvantaged children—who continued to form the central focus of public school service.

Throughout history, children from disadvantaged backgrounds have often found themselves in unequal education environments, leading some to abandon classrooms due to inadequate learning conditions that hinder their pursuit of citizenship and dignity through education. In Chapter 5, I examined the social constructs commonly used in Brazil to define Black and poor children, the target population of public schools, and highlighted government policies that perpetuated the myth of marginality, widening the educational gap between children in high and low-income families. This disparity becomes more pronounced when considering racial factors, although policymakers and the educational community have tended to address this aspect subtly. In Brazil, educational policies commonly reflected and reinforced this marginalization, fostering the widespread belief that children from impoverished backgrounds and of African descent lacked the capacity to learn (Ribeiro, 1997). This marginalization reached an extreme, effectively excluding the impoverished from being recognized as "persons," individuals entitled to rights (Pearlman, 2010, p. 316). These dynamics have significantly shaped educational opportunities and societal perceptions and are closely connected to how Brazilian policymakers continue to stereotype the public school child.

Traditional narratives often attributed the poor academic performance of underserved students to limited resources, both material and intellectual, perpetuating a deficit-focused

viewpoint (Patto, 1991). However, these narratives obscured the actual underlying reasons for educational disparities within the country's schooling system: the neglect of the population's needs within the educational agenda (Ribeiro, 1986b, p. 13). Throughout history, policymakers and educators have constructed public schooling from an elitist standpoint. The curriculum and structure of the schooling system were designed to cater to an idealized student: one from a privileged background, well-fed, and solely focused on learning (Ribeiro, 1986b, p. 14). By centering education around this ideal child, policymakers overlooked the needs of the majority of the population when formulating education laws and guidelines. Ribeiro (1986c) outlined the traits of this idealized student, emphasizing aspects that policymakers should not neglect when looking at most students in Brazilian public schools:

> Our public school is geared towards an ideal child, one who doesn't have to struggle every day to survive. A well-fed child, fluent in the language of the school, adept at using a pencil and interpreting graphical symbols. This child, stimulated at home by parents through all sorts of rewards and gratifications, is not the reality for the vast majority of Brazilian families. The school doesn't have the right to impose these criteria, valid for the middle class, onto its entire student body. Its task is to educate Brazilian children based on the real situation they are in. This primarily means that our school must adapt to the poor child, understanding that the school itself fails when it cannot educate the majority of its students. (p. 13)

This statement highlights a crucial discrepancy in how the Brazilian public schooling system continues to cater to different socioeconomic groups: public schools primarily serve underprivileged families, while wealthier families often opt to send their children to private

institutions. This disparity has created a disconnect between the public school system and the needs of the communities it aims to serve, making it feel inadequate and unsupportive for those who rely on it most (Ribeiro, 1986a). Hence, it is crucial for policymakers to recognize that the public school system's inability to adapt to its students' requirements plays a significant role in students' academic struggles. Ribeiro (1986a) delved into this notion, framing his understanding through sociological perspectives that considered Brazil's diverse population. His insights, complemented by statistical data from institutions like the IBGE, provided a comprehensive view of who typifies the popular child.

The popular child, as described by Ribeiro (1986b), often resided in precarious settings, like slums and impoverished neighborhoods on the outskirts, a reality widespread across Brazil. Their experiences sharply contrasted with those of more privileged children in affluent areas as they faced inadequate nutrition and limited access to food. These children endured stunted growth, and sometimes, physical impairments resulting from severe malnutrition at an early age. Their circumstances necessitated compensatory assistance due to family poverty and the lack of educational foundations, leaving them without literate relatives or conducive home environments for learning. Growing up in lower income backgrounds, these children assumed responsibilities beyond their years: self-survival, caretaking of younger siblings, and even work to contribute to family income. Notwithstanding their resilience, resourcefulness, and vibrant presence in street activities, these same children often struggled in school. In educational settings, they became withdrawn, passive, rebellious, or disruptive, realizing that the conventional school environment does not align with their realities. Despite all the hardships, Ribeiro (1990b) emphasized that all Brazilian children were capable of entering the world of letters to become a competent worker

and an enlightened citizen if they are given some fundamental help.

Ribeiro also emphasized the significance of another category of children that public schools should cater to: the abandoned child. Ribeiro (1992) highlighted the following:

> We seem to accept the most absurd situations as “natural.” For instance, in Brazil, do we find abandoned calves? Abandoned goats? Abandoned chickens? No. However, we do find abandoned children—those in need, abandoned, or simply neglected. Why don't we address this issue? Why do we believe it's not our concern that society doesn't tolerate abandoned calves or abandoned pigs, yet produces millions of abandoned minors, left in misery, dying of hunger, or being killed when they attempt to fight starvation? (p. 2)

The abandoned child, from Ribeiro’s viewpoint, essentially signifies a child devoid of education—something prevalent among the millions of abandoned children in Brazil. In essence, their lack of schooling equates to being abandoned, as only a comprehensive, full-time educational setting can prevent them from being susceptible to criminality and the cycle of neglect (Ribeiro, 1992). Ribeiro also believed that instituting full-time schools, offering multifaceted support, would transform this scenario, granting disadvantaged children access to quality primary and elementary education. Ribeiro (1984) advocated for the public school to catalyze what he termed the "little utopia" (*pequena utopia*): a society in which all citizens access meals, complete primary education, and secure employment (p. 8). To pursue this vision, he devised various strategies, which were a focus of the CIEPs, as detailed in Chapter 7.

6.3 Freire: Education as a Practice of Freedom

> Education is an act of love, therefore, an act of courage. It cannot fear debate. The analysis of reality. It cannot shy away from creative discussion, lest it becomes a farce (Freire, 1967, p. 95).

Paulo Reglus Neves Freire was born in Recife, Pernambuco, on September 19, 1921. Native to the Northeast of Brazil, an underserved and impoverished region in the country, he was the youngest son of a middle-class family that faced poverty and hunger. Despite this hard upbringing, Freire always had education at the center in his life. In a diary his mother kept about her son's development, she recounted that the "little Paulo" was very conscientious about his studies from a very young age (Araújo Freire, 1996). Freire had strong support from his parents to learn. They were the ones who taught him how to read and write under the shade of mango trees in their backyard, using words and phrases that were relevant to his experience as a child (Araújo Freire, 1996; Freire, 1994). When he entered school, his first Portuguese teacher, Eunice, guided the young Freire in developing his writing. She commonly asked him to write all the words he knew, and then both of them discussed their different meanings. Freire (1994) recalled that, through her teaching, Eunice did not aim to make him memorize grammar rules, but rather to develop a love for the mother tongue and its beauty. Through these initial experiences, his parents and teacher instilled in him an awareness that would become central in Freire's work as an educator and philosopher: knowledge must be linked to one's daily reality.

Due to an unfavorable financial situation connected to the Great Depression in Brazil, his family moved to a smaller town, Jaboatão dos Guararapes. Here, Freire experienced a new social and economic reality. He remembered that at that time, the transition was difficult, especially because he had to finish primary school amidst hunger. In his words, "I completed primary

school exactly during the toughest period of hunger. Not just hunger, I emphasize, but a hunger sufficient to disrupt learning" (Freire, 1985, p. 5). In the town's football fields, he interacted with the poorest layer of society, playing informal matches with peasant boys and children of workers who lived in hillsides and played near streams (Araújo Freire, 1996). Through this interaction, Freire discovered a different way of thinking and expressing himself: the colloquial language, which he consistently favored and later incorporated into his educational theories. Due to his father's death, when he was 13, Freire had to pause his studies, which would only be resumed 3 years later, in the city of Recife. He relied on a scholarship from a private institution to start high school at 16 years old. Later in life, he remarked, "This was the age at which my classmates from wealthier families were already entering college" (Freire, 1985, p. 5).

Despite those hardships, Freire thrived as a student, completing his bachelor's degree in law. His passion, however, was teaching. After getting his undergraduate degree, the young Freire decided to follow a different path and became a Portuguese primary school teacher, in the very same private institution that had granted him a scholarship so he could finish high school. Through this experience, he put into practice what he discovered with his first mentor, Eunice: the process of teaching and learning is a collective endeavor in which teachers and students are partners in creating knowledge. Soon, Freire also became interested in policy planning and started working in public institutions to develop new strategies to educate those historically marginalized in education. His first assignment was at the Industry Social Service (*Serviço Social da Indústria* [SESI]) an organization that provided social services, education, health, and cultural activities primarily for industrial workers and their families. Freire (1991, 2014) interpreted working at SESI as his first opportunity to communicate with the working class, urban and rural and to start thinking about pedagogical practices having people's unique reality

as a point of departure. From this experience, he was convinced that his education theories should be rooted in practice.

In 1956, given his background at SESI, the mayor of Recife invited him to serve on the Advisory Council on Education; some years later, he was appointed director of culture and recreation in the same municipality. He also pursued an academic path in higher education, being nominated full professor at the faculty of philosophy, sciences, and letters at the University of Recife. He was one of the founders of the Capibaribe Institute, an organization focused on education, culture, and citizenship (Araújo Freire, 1996). As his career developed, he concentrated his efforts on education by targeting a particular group: illiterate workers. Freire initiated a critical approach to literacy, focusing on adult education and promoting the notion that "reading the world precedes reading the word" (Freire & Slover, 1983, p. 5). He then started working for the Pernambuco state government, spearheading innovative studies about the education of illiterate adults and other marginalized populations. Through this assignment, he continued developing the idea that literacy should be connected to students' daily lives and not be a mere memorization of letters, words, and phrases. The work should be done *with* students, neither *about* them nor *for* them. Education should not be imposed in a top-down manner, or through assistencialism, but connected to marginalized populations' knowledge and participation (Freire, 1976). His growing expertise on the topic granted him notoriety in Brazil, being the seed of all of his ethical-political-critical literature on education for transformation (Gadotti, 2014). In the 1960s, Freire then went on to conduct one of the most important experiments in his career, in the city of Angicos, in Rio Grande do Norte, another state in the impoverished Northeast.

In 1963, Freire’s experiment, 40 Hours of Angicos, was a landmark event in Brazilian education. The experiment originated from an invitation extended in 1962 by Calazans

Fernandes, secretary of education of the state of Rio Grande do Norte. It was a pioneering experiment in literacy education aimed at teaching 380 sugarcane workers to read and write in just 40 hours, using Freire's innovative and participatory educational methods. His approach was revolutionary for its time, as it diverged from traditional teaching methods. Freire utilized a dialogical method in which learners were actively engaged in the learning process, using their own experiences and contexts as a basis for education. This method encouraged critical thinking, empowering individuals to not only acquire literacy skills but also to question and understand the social and political realities that surrounded them. The success of the experiment was remarkable, showcasing that illiterate individuals could learn to read and write within a short time frame when provided with an education that connected with their lived experiences.

By helping those marginalized Brazilians to learn how to read and write, Freire was not only educating them but making them aware of literacy's transformative power in their own lives and communities. Freire was not just educating people; he was helping them become citizens because the Brazilian Constitution of 1946 stated that the illiterate were not citizens and could not participate in elections. He aimed at empowering those individuals to become voters and influential actors in local and national politics. In the informal graduation that followed the experiment, and had as guest of honor President João Goulart, one of the students, Antônio da Paz, stated, "Thirty years ago, President Getúlio Vargas came here to alleviate hunger in the belly. Today, Your Excellency arrives to alleviate hunger in the mind" (Homsi, 1963, para. 3).

The impact of this experiment reverberated throughout Brazil and internationally, inspiring further literacy campaigns and educational reforms based on popular education principles. It also inspired President Goulart to invite Freire to spearhead one of the most ambitious national literacy programs for adults: The National Adult Literacy Plan. This program

would be Freire's chance to reproduce his successful 40 Hours of Angicos experiment on a much larger scale (Araújo Freire, 1996; Kohan, 2021). However, in 1964, a civil-military coup overthrew Goulart. The new government identified Freire as subversive and forced him into 16 years of exile. When the dictatorship ousted President Goulart, the new regime persecuted his allies and the intellectuals connected to his government and ideals. Freire was one of them.

Shortly after Goulart left power, Freire was imprisoned for 70 days and exiled under the charges of being a "crypto-communist veiled in the guise of a literacy educator" and "one of the main contributors to the immediate subversion of the less privileged" (Haddad, 2019, p. 30). Alongside his family, he left Brazil. While exiled, he started a peregrination and had the chance to teach his innovative pedagogy in Latin America, the United States, and Europe and formulate educational policies in recently independent African nations. During his time away from his homeland, Freire wrote his masterpiece, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and became personally involved with intellectuals, such as Albert Memmi, Amilcar Cabral, and Myles Horton who shared the same goal of freedom and social justice for the world (Gadotti, 1996). The dictatorial regime wanted to impose a gag on Freire; however, inadvertently, they helped him spread his ideas and transformative pedagogy to the four corners of the world and become one of the most relevant educators of all time (Cortina & Winter, 2021).

Upon Freire's return to Brazil in 1979, he not only resumed his commitment to education but also played a pivotal role in shaping the political landscape. As a founder of the PT, Freire embraced a vision of social change rooted in education and political activism. His dedication to transformative education led him to serve as the secretary of education in São Paulo, where he implemented progressive policies. Mayor Luiza Erundina (2021) recalled that Freire was the first person she invited to join her government. He was the most logical choice to lead the Secretariat,

as his perspectives on education and democracy symbolized the educational change that the PT proposed for São Paulo's population. While in office, Freire displayed versatility, engaging in extensive discussions about the epistemological foundations of the new educational model he aimed to implement. Simultaneously, he visited schools, listened to staff and parents, and even interacted with children about the joys and efforts involved in learning (Gadotti & Jacobi, 2016). Although in a climate ripe for change and optimism, unfortunately, Freire encountered numerous challenges that were thoroughly examined in this dissertation.

6.4 Foundations of Freirean Pedagogy: Key Principles and Practices

> Now I know that I am a cultured man. And I asked, "Why?" He looked at me and said, "Well! (as if to say, is this even a question?) Because I work, and by working, I transform the world." I was so moved by it. Another peasant, discussing the same issue, said, "Now I realize there is no world without man. And there is no man without the world." And the educator said, "Very well. Now let's suppose that at this moment, all men and women died, but the Andes mountain range remained, along with all the animals and trees. Would that be a world?" And the old peasant, possibly in a position that we might now, academically, call subjectivist, replied, "No." And the educator asked, "Why?" And he said, "Because there would be no one to say, ‘This is the world.’" (Freire, 1981, p. 19)

Freire's profound influence on Brazilian education is undeniable, evident in his transformative contributions to pedagogy and social theory. Moreover, as the passage above indicates, his aim was to transform individuals' realities by empowering them as active agents in their own existence. Against the backdrop of persistent inequalities and social injustices within the Brazilian education system, Freire's ideas become even more crucial. His emphasis on dialogue and participatory learning directly confronted the specific challenges faced by

marginalized communities. Freire envisioned education as a dynamic force for liberation, breaking individuals free from oppressive structures and nurturing agency and critical thinking. His impact extends beyond shaping educational practices; it resonates in broader discussions on democracy, citizenship, and social change in Brazil and beyond. To address the research questions posed in this chapter, I explored Freire's overarching ideas about education. I delved into his insights regarding the causal stories surrounding education failures in Brazil and his perspective on the public school child, providing understanding of the depth and breadth of his contributions to education and societal transformation.

During the 1960s, Freire produced some of his most influential and groundbreaking works, which laid the foundation for his renowned pedagogical theories. One of his key works from this period was *Education as the Practice of Freedom* first published in Portuguese in 1967. In this book, Freire explores his ideas about education as a transformative practice, emphasizing the importance of critical consciousness and participatory learning. It serves as a precursor to his more widely known work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first published in Spanish in 1968. At the core of this book is the concept of *conscientização*,[12] a critical approach to reality that favors education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 1979a). The process of conscientização brings together human consciousness and the world, perceived as an object for critical reflection and change. Conscientização is, above all, the recognition that individuals can take possession of their reality and become engaged in the task of transforming it permanently (Freire, 1979a). Freire proposed that critical education promotes conscientização, through which learners become aware of the objective reality that produces oppression. Still, teaching and learning must be

[12] In his book *Conscientização*, Freire (1979a) clarified that he was not the one who invented the term. It was coined by scholars at the Advanced Institute of Brazilian Studies (*Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros* [ISEB]), a center devoted to the study of Brazil's development problems. Upon hearing the word for the first time and realizing the depth of its meaning, Freire understood that it should be central to his ideas about education.

closely linked to a liberating praxis based on action and reflection directed at the structures to be transformed (Freire, 2000) to activate empowered human beings who can identify their role in transforming an unjust world.

Context is central in Freire's work since "there is no education outside human society and there is no man in a void" (Freire, 1967, p. 35). When considering that traditional forms of education have contributed to colonization of peoples and minds, reinforcing practices that encourage learners to become passive and acritical, Freire's pedagogy posited that transforming education emerges as an urgent matter. The traditional forms of education brought by the colonizer need to be transformed to create practices that favor change and liberation. Adopting new approaches connected to the reality of each society will undergird the replacement of education for domestication and alienation with education practices for freedom. The only option for a society that aspires to break free from the colonial mentality is to transform its people into subjects in their own history, to promote education for the person-subject rather than the person-object (Freire, 1976). The idea of freedom is central to his pedagogy, since every time freedom is suppressed, individuals become adapted to adjustments imposed upon them without the right to discuss their reality, sacrificing the creative capacity to change their world. Human beings are products of historical and cultural settings, and through a constant critical attitude, can be active in the transformation of reality. A pedagogy based on conscientização and praxis favors learning and teaching that translate into forces of change and liberation (Freire, 1976).

Freire's (2000) most influential work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, deepens the discussions offered in *Education as the Practice of Freedom*. In this book, he proposes that only through individuals' reflection and action upon the world to transform it, that is, the authentic praxis, will the oppressor-oppressed contradiction be resolved. The pedagogy of the oppressed

happens in two stages. In the first, individuals unveil the world of oppression to which they have been historically subjected, and they commit, through praxis, to its transformation. After the reality of the oppression has already been transformed, in the second stage, this pedagogy is no longer exclusively related to the oppressed: It becomes a tool for all people toward their permanent liberation (Freire, 2000). Through conscientização and praxis, individuals dismantle the conditions that lead to oppression and construct a more just and equal reality for all people. A critical education leads to more conscientização and, through praxis, individuals insert themselves into history not as viewers but as actors and authors of their destinies (Freire, 1976). According to these notions, Freire developed a teaching and learning method[13] based on critical literacy.

Freire explained the core of this approach in his book *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*. Freire clarified that the organization of literacy programs should be based on what he calls the "word universe" of learners (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 35). By reading the students' world and identifying the most meaningful words in their existential experiences, educators come to recognize how they express their actual language, anxieties, fears, demands, and dreams (Freire & Macedo, 1987). The learning process happens through codifications (i.e., pictures) representing situations related to learners' daily lives (Freire, 1976; Freire & Macedo, 1987). Reading, or decoding, the images of concrete situations enables learners to reflect on their former interpretation of the world before going on to read words (Freire & Macedo, 1987). More than becoming literate, they learn to read situations of injustice to become agents of change; they

[13] While I employ the term "method" to characterize his pedagogical approaches, Freire did not perceive himself as formulating a traditional teaching method. In 1993, he stated, “I would prefer to say that I don't have a method. . . . What I tried to do, and continue to do today, was to have an understanding that I would call critical or dialectical of the educational practice, within which, necessarily, there is a certain methodology, a certain method, that I prefer to say is a method of understanding and not a method of teaching" (Freire, 2014, p. 14).

insert themselves in the world as capable of subverting a reality that is not favorable to them. These concepts represent just a fraction of Freire's numerous ideas aimed at advocating for an education centered around learners. Grounded in these principles, he further developed specific notions regarding Brazilian public schooling and its target population, which will be discussed in the following sections.

The Public School Paulo Freire Dreamt of and the Failures of Brazilian Education

Freire's vision for the Brazilian public school system was firmly grounded in his critical pedagogy, challenging conventional educational paradigms and championing transformative, learner-centric methods. In his work *Pedagogy of the City* (Freire, 1993a), Freire delved into the experiences and obstacles he encountered during his tenure as the secretary of public education in São Paulo. Within the pages of this book, he articulated his aspirations, outlining the contours of the public school he envisioned:

> The public school I desire is one where there is great emphasis on the critical apprehension of meaningful knowledge through the dialogical relation. It is the school that stimulates the student to ask questions, to critique, to create; it is the school that seeks the collective knowledge by articulating critical scientific knowledge through world experiences. (Freire, 1993a, p. 77)

In a letter written to the teachers that would work in public schools under his administration, Freire (1989a) added the following:

> The quality of this school should be assessed not only based on the content transmitted and assimilated but also by the class solidarity it has built, offering the opportunity for all users of the school—including parents and the community—to utilize it as a space for the development of their culture. (p. 7)

Democratic participation in schools would be a fundamental aspect of a transformative and liberatory education from a Freirean perspective. However, the adoption of participatory and democratic practices becomes difficult in a schooling context marked by authoritarian models of education, especially toward the unfavored classes. In Freire's conception, the Brazilian public schooling system had been rooted in the perspectives of dominant classes about education. Hence, school failure was not an isolated phenomenon but a reflection of broader structural inequalities in society. The education system in Brazil often perpetuated and reinforced existing social hierarchies, reproducing the dynamics oppressed vs. oppressor, and therefore, promoting the dehumanization of public schools' target population: impoverished children and their families.

Freire (1979a, 2000) considered that recognizing the dehumanizing aspect of education was central to acknowledging this process as a historical reality, meaning that it is specific to a space and time and can be, therefore, changed through critical consciousness. Hence, through conscientization, education can help people inquire about another possibility–that of their humanization. The struggle for humanization, for free labor, for de-alienation, for the affirmation of humans as individuals, as beings for themselves, is only possible because dehumanization is the result of an unjust social order. Transforming this order can be achieved through a pedagogy based on dialogue as a foundational element of education. Traditional pedagogy approaches start from the selfish interests of oppressors, maintaining and embodying oppression as an instrument of dehumanization. For this reason, a liberatory critical pedagogy cannot be developed or practiced by the oppressors (Freire, 2000).

In fact, it would be naive to expect that the dominant classes would develop forms of education that allow the dominated classes to perceive social injustices critically (Freire, 1981).

Traditional forms of schooling have been, on the contrary, advocating for "neutral education," one that is synonymous with pure teaching or with the simple transmission of content. These strategies of educating pose that it is possible, for example, to discuss the "swelling" of Brazilian urban centers without addressing land reform and the reasons why discussion on the matter never gained traction in the country (Freire, 1981, p. 89). These practices are often "domesticating" students, regardless of whether educators are conscious of it or not and create a situation in which learners are passive objects of teachers' actions. In this manner, the learners, as passive beings, are to be "filled" with the words of educators instead of being invited to creatively participate in the process of their learning. In such educational practice, social structures are never discussed as a problem to be unveiled. Instead, they are mythologized by various strategies that reinforce the false consciousness of the learners (Freire, 1981, 2000).

The failure of Brazilian public education can be attributed to a notable absence of political determination to institute an emancipatory pedagogy (Freire, 1989a). The domesticating practices geared toward learners from impoverished classes are especially detrimental to children in primary education and make the democratization of public schools a more daunting task. Freire (1993a) considered,

> It is absolutely impossible to democratize our schools without transcending the preconceptions against the lower and subordinate classes, against the children who are called “poor,” without transcending our preconceptions against their language, their culture, and their preconceptions against the knowledge that these children bring to school. It is impossible to democratize schools without really opening them to the real participation of parents and the community in determining the school's destiny. (p. 124)

The Brazilian public school system faces challenges due to the disdain of the privileged

classes for public education and its association with the masses (Freire, 1993a). In this context, power dynamics, present in both society and the education system, act as barriers preventing underprivileged children from entering and staying in school. Their absence from school is not a voluntary choice but a result of exclusionary forces. As Freire (1993a) asserted, "There is no dropping out of school. There is expelling" (p. 46). To tailor public education to the needs of these children, understanding Freire's perspective on the public school child is essential. Freire's understanding of the public school child is also essential for adapting public schools to meet students' needs. The subsequent section delves into his perspectives on the intended beneficiaries of public schools.

Diversity and Cultural Richness: Rethinking the Public School Child

Renowned for his transformative contributions to critical pedagogy and adult education, Freire's impact extends to primary education, although this facet of his work has not always fully acknowledged. While his most famous writings did not specifically address primary schools, his ideas transcend to this domain, reshaping the understanding of the popular child. Freire's work was driven by a commitment to challenging stereotypes, recognizing the rich cultural experiences of children from marginalized backgrounds. His aim was to dismantle biases, valuing the unique perspectives these children can bring to the learning process. At the core of his vision is the pivotal role teachers play in integrating the culture and knowledge of impoverished children into the dynamics of teaching and learning. From his perspective, educators must distance themselves from the authoritarian ideology that discriminates against the popular child and reinforces negative stereotypes about them:

> The child smells bad, the child lives in a shantytown, the child is at large, the child is not educated, has no manners, has no good behavior. Even worse, the child doesn't know

> anything! When in reality, we know that the child knows a lot: to know, one just needs to be alive. This discrimination, or this ideology that discriminates against the working class, obviously is based on the superiority of the dominant classes, their discourse, language, and syntax. (Freire, 1991, p. 8)

Freire contended that the stereotypes surrounding public school children originated directly from the socioeconomic and intellectual elite's perceptions of individuals from lower social classes. In his initial interview upon returning from exile, Freire (1979b) recollected his surprise during the early days of his teaching career when individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds approached him, expressing sentiments like, "I want to learn to read and write to stop being a shadow of others" (para. 31). He ascribed his astonishment in response to this answer to an elitist mindset rooted in the profound ignorance of the Brazilian people and the untapped wisdom within them. While Freire demonstrated a capacity to reassess his preconceived notions about impoverished populations, he remained convinced that those in positions of power harbor a belief in the almost inherent incapacity of the common people, who are deemed incapable of thinking correctly, abstracting, knowing, creating, and actively participating in the ongoing reinvention of society (Freire, 1989c). Considering how the elites shape the social images of the impoverished and marginalized, Freire (1993a) remarked,

> It is interesting to observe how those who live the good life tend to consider those who simply survive as incapable, uncultured, envious, dangerous, and marginal and to consider what in the city is beautiful and well cared for as their own property. For them, those who survive make the city ugly. (p. 36)

Negative stereotypes continue to permeate the treatment of students, preventing children from lower classes from receiving an education that is intertwined with their culture and

experiences in Brazilian public schools. The dominant classes propagate the notion that the population lacks culture and knowledge while shaping the educational system based on their elitist perceptions of the ideal public school child. Consequently, the evaluation criteria employed by schools favored students from privileged social classes, putting boys and girls from popular backgrounds at a disadvantage (Freire, 1993a). Traditional schooling methods aimed to domesticate children from popular classes, disregarding their understanding of the world across various dimensions of their social practice. This neglect encompassed their speech, narrative styles, calculation methods, and knowledge about the so-called other world and religiosity (Freire, 1992). The existing schooling paradigm conveyed to the popular child that education is alien to their world, creating a sense of non-belonging within the school walls. Brazilian popular children were expelled from school due to the societal structure that generates a complex web of challenges, impeding their access to education and hindering their ability to stay and complete their rightful educational journey (Freire, 1993a, 1993b). Teachers played a pivotal role in changing this scenario by challenging the prevailing structures and advocating for transformative educational paradigms that recognize and integrate the rich cultural wealth and knowledge that popular children bring to the classroom.

The progressive and conscientious educator must not succumb to the hypothesis that, due to their impoverished status, poor children are inherently incapable of learning. Similarly, they must not adopt a paternalistic or demeaning attitude toward popular children. Educators must comprehend the intricacies of the world these students navigate—the realm of their dreams and the language they adeptly employ to confront the aggressiveness of their surroundings. This understanding should extend to what they know and how they know it, independent of their experiences within school (Freire, 1993b). At the same time, teachers have to be mindful of the

real situation of students outside the classroom and the school environment. The school community cannot overlook the adverse material conditions experienced by many Brazilian students in schools on the outskirts of the city—the precariousness of their housing, the inadequacy of their nutrition, the absence in their daily lives of activities involving reading and school study, and their frequent exposure to violence and death. These factors are generally not adequately considered, not only in the primary schools these children attend but also in teacher training schools (Freire, 1993a, 1993b).

Contrary to inaccurate criticism, Paulo Freire did not propose that children from lower classes should refrain from learning the formal language. In fact, he recognized the importance of popular children acquiring proficiency in standard Portuguese within the education context. However, he emphasized that language issues always involve ideological questions and, along with them, issues of power: "If there is a 'standard language,' it is because there is another considered non-standard. Who defined the non-standard as such?" (Freire, 1993b, p. 67). When teaching children from popular backgrounds the standard language, teachers should underscore that their language is as rich and beautiful as that of those who speak the standard language, providing them with no reason to be ashamed of how they speak. Furthermore, it should be made clear that learning "formal" Portuguese can both help reduce disadvantages in the struggle for life and serve as a tool for the necessary fight against the injustices and discriminations they face. Beyond language, educators must address other forms of discrimination and stereotyping embedded in the education system, fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Freire (1993b) also argued that elitist perceptions about the public school child persist even among educators, who, blinded by their own class privileges, continue to promote stereotypes about these children. He recalled a situation in which he was approached by a group

of young educators completing their teaching course at a school in São Paulo. These middle-class youths with good living conditions expressed fear, almost as if they were being threatened, at the prospect of eventually teaching in a school on the outskirts of the city:

> "We went through our entire course without ever discussing what a favela is, or the children living in favelas. Our knowledge about these areas of the city, from television and newspapers, is that they are scenes of absolute violence, and the children quickly become delinquents," they said. The young individuals spoke about the favela as if it were a self-generated entity and not the result of the struggle for survival imposed by the unjust structures of society on those dismissed from life. They portrayed the favela as a haven of ethical deviation and a place of the lost. They spoke about the boys and girls from the favelas with almost no hope. (Freire, 1993b, pp. 70-71)

To confront these stereotypes, teachers need critical reflection on the conditioning factors that cultural context imposes on them and their ways of acting toward students from unprivileged classes. The theoretical and formative context of education should never become a context of pure doing but based on the integration of practice and theory (Freire, 1993b).

Freire's commitment to challenging long-standing stereotypes and fostering an inclusive learning environment was not confined to academic discourse but was actively translated into policy and practice. His role in the educational leadership as the secretary of education in São Paulo aimed to dismantle biases, recognizing the unique perspectives of students from marginalized backgrounds. He emphasized the crucial role of teachers in integrating cultural richness into the dynamics of teaching and learning.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter addressed three pivotal research questions pertaining to the perspectives of

Paulo Freire and Darcy Ribeiro on the public school child during Brazil's redemocratization process. The primary focus was on discerning how these educators viewed causal stories of school failure and their association with the target population of Brazilian public education. Additionally, the chapter explored the strategies employed by Ribeiro and Freire in their intellectual work to address negative stereotypes surrounding public school students.

The questions were answered in counterpoint to the discussion in Chapter 5, which delved into the historical development of stereotypes surrounding Brazilian public school children, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and of African descent. Ribeiro and Freire sought to dismantle these enduring ideas, attributing their origins to economic and political elites who, in their views, possessed limited knowledge of the Brazilian people. These elites, historically neglectful in the policy process, crafted policies toward a target population they often misunderstood. The theory of the social construction of target populations, as proposed by Schneider and Ingram (1993, 1997, 2008), suggests that policymakers tend to devise favorable policies for groups with positive constructions, while negatively constructed target populations may face neglect or punitive measures in the policy process. Although children are typically viewed positively, the dynamics of race and class introduce complexities. In a subtle yet impactful manner, political elites determine whose issues shape the policymaking dynamic and how policy design allocates burdens and benefits. The conventional approach for decision-makers is to opt for the safe road, as directing attention and resources to negatively constructed populations may impede policy feasibility and pose obstacles to ulterior motives such as reelection.

As evidenced by the cases presented in this chapter, Ribeiro and Freire intentionally departed from the conventional practices of political elites. Both members of the intellectual elite

of their time, they recognized the opportune moment of redemocratization and the optimistic outlook for the future as conducive to meaningful change. The transformations they envisioned for the Brazilian public school system needed to be translated into action. To achieve this, they critically examined and challenged stereotypes surrounding the public school child, along with the prevailing causal narratives that typically attributed school failure to impoverished students and their families.

Their examination of the failures within Brazilian public schools aligns with the framework proposed by Stone (1989) concerning complex causality. Freire's and Ribeiro's approaches reflect an understanding of intertwined historical and structural factors contributing to societal issues, particularly within the realm of education. Delving into layers of history, systemic structures, and socioeconomic disparities, they echoed Stone's framework, attempting to comprehend the intricate roots of Brazil's educational challenges. In their analyses, Ribeiro and Freire acknowledged the historical interpretation of social markers, particularly class and race, which had relegated poor and Black individuals to a position of neglect in education policymaking. While not outright rejecting all stereotypes, such as the correlation between lack of education and criminality, they emphasized the need to care for children to prevent them from falling into crime. In formulating their policies, they sought to overturn the prevailing logic that marginalized populations were solely responsible for their dire situation (Patto, 1991).

Paulo Freire and Darcy Ribeiro proposed new ways of thinking about and designing policies for Brazilian public schools and education and encountered challenges when trying to put their plans into practice. In Chapter 7, I analyze the factors and political actors that contributed to the challenges faced by these educators in designing and implementing their education reforms. Grounded in the theoretical framework, my focus lies in evaluating the

responses of political opposition, the media, public opinion, and various political actors engaged in shaping the societal perception of the Brazilian public school child. This examination aims to understand how these external forces reacted to the innovative proposals put forth by Ribeiro and Freire as well as the narrative frameworks they employed in their causal stories.

Chapter 7: From Design to Implementation: The Integrated Centers of Public Education (1983-1987) and the Democratic Administration of Public Popular Education (1989-1991)

What would happen if two of the most prominent Brazilian educators became policymakers and had the chance to implement schooling policies based on their theories and worldviews? Would their reforms succeed in establishing new ways of seeing public school students, usually neglected in the policy process, or would their ideas fail due to long-standing stereotypes about poor students in Brazil? Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire, education scholars and advocates of public schooling as a tool to foster democracy, tried to translate their pedagogical theories into practice while occupying distinguished positions in public administration, in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro respectively. Both were renowned educators, recognized nationally and internationally for their intellectual work. They proposed reforms when Brazil was transitioning to a democracy after more than 2 decades of military rule. Ribeiro and Freire had the academic credentials, experience in policymaking, and a window of opportunity in a moment conducive to change. However, their projects encountered different forms of resistance and, ultimately, both did not reach fruition.

In this chapter, I address the third and last research question of this study: What happened when Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire designed and implemented policies based on their perspectives about public schools' target population? More specifically, I sought to identify the obstacles Ribeiro and Freire encountered, and the extent to which those obstacles were related to the causal stories and the social constructions these educators aimed to challenge. This chapter

underscores the policy designs put forth by each educator, drawing on their perspectives on the public school child as discussed in Chapter 6. It seeks to identify the elements and political actors that influenced and contested their education reforms. In alignment with the theoretical framework, my objective was to evaluate the responses of political opposition, the media, public opinion, and other political actors engaged in the social construction of the public school child. This assessment focused on their reactions to the innovations proposed by Ribeiro and Freire along with the causal narratives they employed. Through this exploration, I sought to gain insights into the potential outcomes when policymakers opt for policies dedicated to expanding opportunities for students from lower class backgrounds and challenge prevailing social constructions of target populations (Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Stone, 1989).

The archival sources examined in this study included media outlet websites, publications, and programs; published interviews; and writings by Ribeiro and Freire. The analysis spanned periods before, during, and after their tenures as secretaries of education in the state of Rio de Janeiro and the city of São Paulo, respectively. Additionally, data collection involved interviews with political actors closely engaged in the design and implementation phases, providing firsthand insights into the challenges posed by critics of the proposed policies (see Appendices A, C and D). Secondary sources, including academic journal articles from the 1980s contemporaneous with the enactment and implementation of the projects as well as more recent interpretations of their policies also played a central role in the analysis. The selection of these sources aimed to amplify the voices of the actors involved in the CIEPs and the democratic administration of public popular education as well as those in opposition, so as to identify the reasons behind the projects' shortfalls.

After the discussion presented in Chapter 6, which addressed Ribeiro's and Freire's perspectives on the problems with and potential solutions to Brazil's education system, the primary objective of the discussion in this chapter is to understand the design and implementation of their policies. In the following sections, I briefly introduce some conceptual considerations about the policy process, discuss the policy content of each education reform, and highlight the main obstacles in the implementation phase. The chapter concludes by noting that, although resistance to change in both cases was related to Ribeiro's and Freire's challenge to social constructions of the public school child and their education, the obstacles manifested differently.

7.1 Brief Considerations on the Policy Process

Building upon the conceptual discussions outlined in Chapter 3, this chapter employs key aspects of social constructionist perspectives to analyze the policies crafted and executed by Ribeiro and Freire. As such, it becomes crucial to provide brief reflections on the differentiation between two phases in the policy process–policy design and implementation. These two stages are relevant since "policy designs shape the experience of target groups and send implicit messages about how important their problems are to the government and whether their participation is likely to be effective" (Schneider et al., 2014, p. 108). Furthermore, the "implementation of programs targeted at negatively constructed groups fails because policy choices, based on those constructions, introduce a problem into that process" (Nicholson-Crotty & Nicholson-Crotty, 2004, p. 243). Here, I aim to highlight key aspects of the policy process and their relevance to the research questions.

Drawing on various theoretical and methodological perspectives, policy studies illuminate how multiple political actors identify and assess social problems, emphasizing different facets of the policymaking process. From a social constructionist perspective, the policy process is more likely the result of subjective and value-driven processes (Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Stone, 1989). Due to cognitive and environmental constraints, complete rationality is rarely achievable. In the context of numerous social issues and policymakers' limited capacity to address all of them, specific problems are chosen, while others are neglected, shaping a particular vision of reality that guides policy priorities (Gilens & Page, 2014; Rochefort & Cobb, 1993). Thus, the public policy process is fluid, not strictly linear, acknowledging feedback loops at various points and overlapping stages, depending on the actors involved and their objectives of maintaining constancy or promoting change in the policy agenda (Baumgartner & Jones, 2009).

While policymaking is rarely linear, most policies follow well-defined stages: problem definition, policy design, enactment, and implementation (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2020). The first stage, problem definition, involves strategically representing situations. Challenging situations become problems when people perceive them as actionable. Before that, difficulties are viewed as naturally occurring events or accidents, seeming beyond intervention (Stone, 1989). Transforming difficulties into problems is crucial in determining government priorities. Once policy actors identify a problem, categorizing the problem's nature influences the likelihood of public action, shaping different outcomes to mitigate harm (Rochefort & Cobb, 1993). The definition of education inequalities as a problem, discussed in Chapter 6, exemplifies this stage.

After problem definition, policy design involves delineating policy objectives and the means to achieve them (Howlett, 2014). Examining this stage allows identification of who constructs policy issues and how they do so, influencing the acceptance of particular understandings by policy actors and the public as "real." It also underscores how constructions of groups, problems, and knowledge become institutionalized into policy, reinforcing and disseminating these constructions (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 73). Policy designs additionally mold institutions and the broader culture through the instrumental and symbolic effects of policy. Therefore, policy designs impact public opinion, the social construction of target groups, the distribution of political resources, and even the legitimacy of knowledge systems (Schneider et al., 2014). Education policies historically designed for underserved populations in Brazil not only perpetuated negative connotations about Black and poor students but also shaped public perceptions of public schools, as discussed in Chapter 5. Based on this understanding, the forthcoming sections aim to unveil the policy design—the content and objectives of policy—in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo under Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire, respectively.

During the enactment phase, the primary objective is to construct a winning coalition in favor of the policy. The legislative body or relevant authority formally adopts the policy, transforming it into law or official regulation (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2020). Subsequently, implementation entails translating the sanctioned policy into practical application. At this juncture, the emphasis shifts from the development of frameworks to their tangible application with the intended target population. Implementers, situated in diverse contexts and assuming various roles, confront myriad nuanced decisions as they interpret and execute policies. They wield significant influence in determining eligibility for services and shaping the design and

delivery mechanisms. Implementation is an intricate and multifaceted process involving diverse stakeholders, resources, and strategies (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2020; Theodoulou & Kofinis, 2004). In the analyzed case studies, I center my focus on this stage of the policy process. In the next section, I delve into the design of the policies proposed by Ribeiro and Freire.

7.2 Policy Design: The Content and Aims of Policy Change in Rio de Janeiro (1983-1987) and São Paulo (1989-1991)

Policy design, viewed through the social constructionist lens in policy studies, entails recognizing the creation and shaping of policies as a socially constructed endeavor. This perspective contends that policies are not objective or value-neutral outcomes but are shaped by the subjective interpretations, values, and beliefs of policymakers and society (Bell, 2021; Blanton & Jones, 2021). The social constructionist perspective perceives policy design as a dynamic activity wherein issues are framed, problems are defined, and solutions are identified through the interactions and negotiations among various actors. This perspective underscores the role of language, discourse, and shared meanings in influencing how policies are conceptualized and formulated, emphasizing that policies are products of human interpretation rather than purely rational or technical solutions (Schneider et al., 2014; Schneider & Sidney, 2009).

Building upon these premises, this section delves into the content of the policies crafted by Ribeiro and Freire during a period when the transfer of power and political openness seemed to present an opportunity for policies targeting underserved populations in Brazil. Applying this framework, it became evident that the policy processes took distinct paths for the CIEPs in Rio de Janeiro compared to the public schools in São Paulo. In Ribeiro's case, despite the desire for increased public participation, policy formulation remained predominantly centralized within the

domain of public officials, specialists, and other government members. This centralization limited substantive debates on policy content, affording Ribeiro significant latitude to imprint his ideas on the foundation of the policies he championed. Conversely, in Freire's case, policy design was more decentralized, nearly tailor-made for each school. Schools had the flexibility to accept, discard, or develop their own strategies based on government-developed policies. Subsequent sections will delve into the nuanced dynamics of their influence, revealing how these figures attempted to shape and articulate their education visions within the context of redemocratization in Brazil.

The Integrated Centers of Public Education (1983-1987)

The CIEPs were conceived as full-time schools strategically located in historically underserved, densely populated communities throughout the state of Rio de Janeiro. This project was part of a broader education initiative, the Special Program of Education (*Programa Especial de Educação* [PEE]), crafted with the intention of emphasizing the value of public education and ensuring the population's democratic right to a modern, restructured, and technologically equipped free education. The PEE encompassed various initiatives, including preschool care; the establishment of Community Cultural Centers; youth education classes; and the program Hands-on Work in Schools, introduced as a campaign to address infrastructural issues, commencing with the physical restoration of the traditional school network (Bomeny, 2008). Despite the PEE being more comprehensive than the CIEPs project, it became exclusively associated with the latter. This connection was mainly ascribed to the fact that CIEPs creator, Ribeiro, allocated almost all resources and intellectual endeavors to the new schools, which he believed could revolutionize education in Rio de Janeiro. The prominence of the project constrained the

acknowledgment of PEE in the eyes of both society and the school community (Faria & Silva, 2023).

Ribeiro criticized traditional education for attempting to domesticate underprivileged children, instilling in them a belief that they were not capable of learning. Instead, he advocated for public schools to impart the notion of worthiness upon these children (Ribeiro, 1984). Achieving this objective meant a radical overhaul of the entire public school system, especially in catering to the unique needs of students from impoverished families without prior schooling. This transformation aimed to eliminate shift-based schooling in which different student groups attended classes at varied times to accommodate space limitations or increase capacity (Ribeiro, 1990a). The schools created by Ribeiro would not merely provide full-time education, they would also offer a comprehensive education approach. This holistic perspective went beyond traditional teaching and learning activities, encompassing a wider range of education experiences. As recounted by Lúcia Velloso Mauricio, who collaborated closely with Ribeiro in crafting policies for the CIEPS,

> the goal was to eliminate prejudice and ensure that children felt welcomed. Specifically, in the case of the full-time school, the aim was to provide children with access to diverse experiences like those enjoyed by middle-class children outside of school, such as dance, theater, physical education, and more. Essentially, it aimed to broaden their horizons, including access to books and other resources. Thus, the concept of the integrated center was designed to grant children access to opportunities they had never experienced before.

During the day, each CIEP offered a 5-hour study program for a thousand students, a significant increase from the 3 hours typically spent in school. In the afternoon, activities focused

on culture or sports, or guided studies were provided for both teachers and children. Ribeiro argued that assigning homework to impoverished children was unjust, considering their lack of a conducive home learning environment and a family with completed schooling. In other words, families with limited education could not effectively guide their children's studies (Ribeiro, 1990b). Additionally, evening classes were made available for young adults who worked during the day and could not attend regular school hours (Ribeiro, 1986b).

In addressing the need for a large number of schools within a short timeframe, Ribeiro enlisted the renowned architect Oscar Niemeyer to design "an architectural module to provide education, joy, and happiness to half a million children" (Ribeiro, 1985, p. 2). Niemeyer, faced with the urgency of constructing numerous schools quickly, developed a system based on a simple kit of concrete parts, produced by a centralized factory for prefabrication known as the school factory (*Fábrica de Escolas*). This modern school project was a direct response to the enduring stereotype suggesting that "children living in shacks should study in schools resembling shacks" (Ribeiro, 1984, p. 23). The resulting buildings, dubbed Big Brizola (*Brizolão)* as a homage to the governor, adhered to a standardized design:

> The main building [has] three floors and 24 classrooms, an auditorium, and special rooms. It is interconnected by a central ramp that leads to a covered playground on the ground floor, where the lunchroom and the medical center are also located. Two other separate blocks are occupied by the library and the multipurpose hall, a covered sports gym with stands. On top of the library, a temporary residence for up to 12 children and a supervisor couple is also provided. . . .To facilitate and speed up construction, which lasted approximately six months, the elements, including the structure with round-corner

openings, were prefabricated. (ArqGuia Rio, 2015, paras. 3 and 4)

Angela Fernandes, a teacher and CIEP principal involved in designing policy for the new schools, recalled that initially, the pedagogical propositions took precedence and that Ribeiro focused on the pedagogical proposition first and then wanted a school building that aligned with that proposition. José Ronaldo Cunha, an architect who was part of Niemeyer's team and who was serving as the president of the Darcy Ribeiro Foundation at the time of his interview, argued, "[Ribeiro] didn't just aim to establish a model school; his vision was to create a school model that could be scaled up. Essentially, he was formulating a national project, a project for the entire country." The construction of buildings was a central part of that endeavor.

The academic program within the CIEPs was deeply rooted in a Freirean approach. Embracing critical pedagogy, teachers were encouraged to incorporate students' backgrounds into education projects, allowing them to become active contributors to diverse forms of knowledge creation alongside their peers. Dialogue and self-expression were pivotal within the CIEPs' pedagogy, fostering students' self-esteem and confidence. This pedagogical approach highlighted the importance of oral expression, aligning with the notion that learning to write is rooted in speaking. The emphasis was on utilizing children's knowledge, culture, and linguistic diversity as integral parts of the learning process. Even the instructional materials were designed to resonate with students' environments and experiences (Ribeiro, 1986b). Angela Fernandes reminisced about some of her experiences with student-centered learning, stating:

> One key aspect of the project was oral communication. So, before diving into any writing lesson, you had to have plenty of chats with your students. . . . . Sometimes, the students would say to each other, "Did you hear how beautifully the teacher speaks?" And their

eyes would light up, you know, like, "I want to talk like her too." That was crucial when you began introducing students to formal writing. It didn't make sense to start with a type of writing that felt so distant to them. They needed to feel included.

Additionally, students were encouraged to understand that language possesses the power to reshape the world, emphasizing that while formal language rules were taught, they were not considered absolute truths or values.

The school curriculum, inspired by Freire's concept of "reading the world before reading the word" (Freire, 1981, p. 9), emphasized the integration of diverse language forms, primarily using Portuguese as a tool to foster critical awareness of students' social realities (Ribeiro, 1986b). This approach aimed to elevate students' self-esteem, especially crucial for those who, due to their challenging circumstances, did not perceive themselves as worthy of a better life or education. Citizenship classes were implemented as a strategy to instill a sense of self-worth, urging students to view themselves as individuals capable of effecting change in their communities (Chambers & Haley, 2016). In these classes, students were encouraged to become actively engaged in their own lives, recognizing their ability to utilize critical thinking and social justice concepts as instruments for societal and personal transformation (Ribeiro, 1984, 1986b).

The CIEPs' physical structure also introduced innovations in utilizing space for social policies aimed at marginalized children. Each school had provisions to accommodate students from troubled families. These accommodations were temporary, meant to aid students until their home situations improved. Unlike a traditional boarding school setup, the intention was to facilitate learning for those enduring extreme conditions, particularly related to violence and destitution (Ribeiro, 1986b). The residential facilities within the CIEPs were managed by live-in

staff known as "social parents." They also offered crucial support and guidance to abandoned children who were without family guidance or a responsible adult overseeing their education and upbringing. For these children, residing at the CIEPs became their sole assurance of receiving education, access to sanitation, and necessary medical care (Sá Earp, 1998). This approach aimed to provide a supportive environment that transcended the limitations of troubled home lives, fostering a more conducive atmosphere for learning and growth among these vulnerable students. Other initiatives, such as culture and sports, also helped students develop their potential and different forms of knowledge.

Learning Outside the Classroom: Culture, Health, and Sports

The education vision of Ribeiro extended beyond conventional classroom learning. His concept embraced a holistic approach, integrating sports, health, and culture into the comprehensive education provided at CIEPs. By integrating nutritional support, hygiene facilities, and healthcare services into the schooling framework, the CIEPs sought to remove health-related barriers to learning. Recognizing the importance of a multifaceted education, sports were utilized not just for physical activity but also to reinforce lessons from other subjects like science and language classes. This emphasis on physical education garnered attention, drawing volunteers like the renowned footballer Zico to engage in sports activities at CIEPs. Additionally, cultural diversity was celebrated through activities like capoeira, which replaced traditional sports like judo in some schools.

The project placed significant emphasis on addressing health-related issues. To combat malnutrition, the initiative provided five nutritious meals daily and introduced hygiene practices like school showers, particularly beneficial for students lacking these facilities at home. On-site

health centers offered medical and dental care, not just for students but also for their families and the wider community. Preventive healthcare was a priority, involving sessions or workshops by health professionals to educate on maintaining good health, hygiene, and disease prevention. This proactive approach aimed to instill healthier habits within the community. Having health services available on-site eliminated barriers to healthcare access, especially for families facing financial constraints or lacking nearby healthcare facilities. This likely aided in early identification and treatment of health issues (Mota et al., 2017; Ribeiro, 1986b).

CIEPs' architecture was not just functional, it facilitated cultural and artistic initiatives, serving as a platform for local expression. After hours and on weekends, these spaces hosted art exhibitions, concerts, and dance performances, fostering the community's cultural identity. Cultural entertainers, largely from the community, organized various events like plays, which drew the attention and mentorship of renowned figures such as Augusto Boal, founder of the Theatre of the Oppressed. This inclusivity extended to involving parents and the community in school events, reflecting the democratic essence of CIEPs' education model. Lia Faria, coordinator of teacher training in the project, noted that the communities where the schools were situated participated in various projects and made use of the space for diverse activities. “The swimming pool, court, and library transformed into venues for 15th birthday celebrations, weddings, and a range of events. It was truly remarkable; they even held funerals there at times.” Teachers played a pivotal role in materializing these innovative education ideals.

The Role of Teachers

One of the cornerstones of the project lay in the cultivation of teacher training and active participation. Ribeiro, in his memoirs, emphasized that training educators was among the most

arduous tasks. They needed to comprehend conventional pedagogical theories while adapting to innovative approaches within a holistic education institution (Ribeiro, 1997). The engagement and commitment of teachers were crucial to legitimizing the core principles underlying his education strategy. Even prior to the existence of the CIEPs, the vice-governor initiated a survey in 1983 to gather the perspectives of the state's teaching body, seeking ideas for school reform. Subsequently, in November of that year, teacher delegations, along with Ribeiro and his advisors, convened in Mendes, a small town in Rio's hinterland, for an event known as the Mendes Encounter. Here, government officials and educators from diverse regions engaged in discussions to outline the blueprint for education reform (McCann, 2014). The conclusions drawn from these discussions became the guiding principles for education transformation across all public schools in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Angela Fernandes, a participant in the meeting, reminisced about her experience:

> From that point onward, the project's foundations were established, emphasizing a horizontal approach to school proposals, contrasting with the traditional top-down method . . . featuring ongoing training courses for teachers and the development of innovative teaching materials primarily tailored to students from poor backgrounds.

The training of young educators was rooted primarily in Ribeiro's pedagogical principles, effectively instilling his key philosophies. Encouraging a collegial approach to problem-solving, faculty members adopted the belief that education programs should holistically nurture students, necessitating a continuous process of evaluation and adaptation to align pedagogical strategies with student needs (Leonardos, 1991). Educators trained in accordance with CIEPs' guidelines were inclined to believe that their work could fundamentally impact students' self-perception and their ability to effect change in the world (Leonardos, 1991). Moreover, these teachers were

incentivized by the prospect of higher salaries due to longer working hours and increased expectations compared to traditional public schools (McCann, 2014). This combination served as a significant motivator for young teachers fresh out of college, fostering high levels of dedication and enthusiasm. In Fernandes' words, “It was an incredibly inspiring project, and there were no set working hours. Teachers just had this drive to keep doing, doing, doing." Lia Faria shared this perspective: “Everyone was truly committed. There were no strict arrival or departure times [for teachers’ shifts at schools]—just complete dedication.”

Through his multifaceted initiatives, Ribeiro sought to establish what he termed an "honest school" (Ribeiro, 1989, p. 1), specifically tailored to the needs of vulnerable and often overlooked communities within the state of Rio de Janeiro. His vision extended beyond mere education; he aimed to facilitate the integration of these children into a "literate civilization" (Ribeiro, 1990c, p. 1), fostering their citizenship and contributing to a more democratic Brazil. This aspiration paralleled the objectives of the figure discussed in the following section, Paulo Freire. Both Ribeiro and Freire shared the common goal of using education as a catalyst for societal transformation, seeking to empower marginalized communities and enhance the democratic fabric of the nation.

Democratic Administration of Public Popular Education (1989-1991)

> School must be a place that promotes popular culture, according to the community’s needs. . . . The son of the worker must find in this school the means of intellectual self-emancipation independently from the dominant class values (Freire, 1989a, pp. 8-9).

Despite often being labeled as a philosopher of education and occasionally seen as merely a theoretical thinker, Freire was also an implementer. While serving as secretary of

education, he did not primarily engage in theoretical reflections on power or the politicization of education; instead, he exercised power as a decision-maker (Gadotti & Jacobi, 2016). Promptly recognizing both quantitative and qualitative issues within São Paulo's public school network, including inadequate infrastructure and an outdated curriculum, Freire (1993a) swiftly addressed these concerns. His primary objective was to democratize the public school, focusing on internal structural changes, aiming to "change the face of schools" (Freire, 1993a, p. 18). To tackle these issues and fulfill his vision, Freire (1993a) outlined his main goal as the democratization of the public school's internal structure. For him, making public schools aesthetically pleasing was not just about refurbishing old and underfunded buildings; it was also about cultivating the beauty of "competent teaching, the joy of learning, and the imagination to create" (Freire, 1993a, p. 16). The proposal of the popular and democratic public school became the cornerstone of education policy for São Paulo's municipal education network when Freire assumed the position of education secretary for the city in 1989.

Luiza Erundina assumed the mayoralty of São Paulo in 1989, concluding a campaign that underscored the importance of democratizing power, promoting public engagement, and recognizing the influence of urban social movements on public policy. Throughout her campaign, Erundina prioritized decentralizing power, ensuring government accountability to autonomous social movements, and shifting priorities from elite groups to the impoverished and marginalized,[14] aligning with the PT's goals (Abers, 1996; Macaulay, 1996). Her victory came as a surprise, marking a significant win for the party in a crucial city and reflecting the people's desire for change (Singer, 1988). From the outset, the Erundina administration placed a strong emphasis on establishing popular councils to enhance citizen participation in shaping the city's

[14] The PT's strategy appeared to be successful in effectively communicating with its constituencies. Erundina secured a comfortable victory in neighborhoods where the working classes resided (Singer, 1988).

future. This initiative gained prominence as Brazil transitioned to a democracy, adopting a new constitution that emphasized social and political rights and called for increased opportunities for public engagement. Popular participation became a central strategy to broaden the administration's social and political base, bringing in new actors, including traditionally excluded and marginalized populations, into the decision-making process. This aspiration for change extended to the education sector, particularly due to the alarming conditions in primary schools. At the time of Erundina's election, nearly 60% of the city's children were not attending school, and the dropout rate stood at around 41% (*Sistema Estadual de Análise de Dados* [SEADE; State Data Analysis System], 1988). Furthermore, the municipal secretary of education (*Secretaria Municipal de Educação* [SME]) was described as "without a pedagogical approach, with demoralized teachers, and abandoned schools" ("Freire ameaça brigar", 1988, p. C10).

The PT and the mayor deemed Freire's education philosophy and policymaking experience as the most suitable for redirecting education to meet the needs of marginalized communities in the city (Erundina, 2021; Pinto, 1988). Within this perspective, Freire adopted four main approaches to public education in São Paulo: the democratization of access to schools, the democratization of school management, the offer of a new quality of education, and the movement for the literacy of youth and adults (Gadotti & Jacobi, 2016). The primary idea behind these goals was to integrate the popular sectors, the main users of public education, into the education experience, and to have students, staff, teachers, and parents engaged in planning and realizing democratic administration of schools. To achieve this, it was necessary to change the face of the schools; however, it was crucial that each school desired this transformation and, therefore, needed to be respected and consulted, becoming the subject of its own history (Saul, 2012). In advocating for a transformative approach to teaching and learning, Freire placed the

schools' target population at the forefront in the design of his school policies.

Democratic Administration: Centering on the Popular Child and the Community

The policies developed by Freire aimed to refocus primary education toward its primary target population: the children of the working poor[15] (Freire, 1993a). The definition of the target population was central in the booklets used in teacher professional development and other communications aimed at the school community. In such a booklet directed at physical education teachers, the emphasis on the intended recipients of the policy was evident:

> Who is the popular child? . . . in addition to various answers, they may have also used various names for this child. Culturally deprived, culturally marginalized, malnourished child, abandoned minor, repeating grades, mentally disabled, disabled, etc. Thus, the legitimate reference to be adopted would be to think that, above all, we talk about the child called popular solely based on their social origin. . . . (SME, 1989, pp. 16-17)

The strategies devised by the secretary of education, as depicted in materials designed for teachers, aimed to promote a democratic decision-making process rooted in the needs of popular children and their communities. Central to a more democratic process was the act of listening to students' and families' voices. The education department's team conducted a survey to uncover the dreams and aspirations of the population, not only as a means of connecting with the target population of public education but also to raise educators' awareness of their students' and communities' needs (Freire, 1989b). The team posed three questions across the school network: What do you appreciate about your school? What aspects do you find unfavorable? What

[15] Unlike Ribeiro, Freire did not focus extensively on race in his writings and practice during his time as the secretary of education. Some critics have argued that this neglect demonstrates a shortsightedness in Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* concerning race and racism (e.g., Haymes, 2002). Freire defended himself against such accusations, stating, "When I wrote the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* . . . I was extremely more preoccupied with the oppressed as a social class. But this, in my view, does not at all mean that I was ignoring the racial oppression that I have denounced always and struggled against even as a child" (Freire & Macedo, 1995, pp. 397-398).

changes are needed for your school to be more engaging for you? Teachers were surprised to learn that, in many cases, children shared similar criticisms of the school as the teachers themselves did (Arelaro, 2021).[16] Establishing a connection with the students and their families was a method of creating a space for popular education, intertwined with their lived experiences and perspectives on life. Consequently, the school would not be confined to a site for knowledge transfer detached from people's interests but, on the contrary, would be a space fostering critical thinking and a democratic society (Freire, 1989a).

In accordance with the principle that the community should not merely be summoned to passively receive school instructions in a top-down manner but to actively engage in the construction of a school aligned with their goals and needs (Freire, 1989a), the Freire administration implemented structural reforms within the education department. These reforms were designed to foster a more democratic and autonomous decision-making process, encouraging the involvement of parents, students, teachers, and other community members through the establishment of councils and committees. To realize this objective, SME divided the city into 10 Nuclei of Educational Action (*Núcleo de Ação Educativa* [NAE]), each tasked with overseeing the schools in its designated area. Additionally, the administration created the Directorate of Technical Orientation (*Diretoria de Orientação Técnica* [DOT]), which coordinated the development of education programs proposed by the SME. Coordinators from NAEs, along with DOT members, participated in committees alongside the secretary and his team to deliberate on administrative and pedagogical matters. The composition of SME also underwent significant changes. In previous administrations, career bureaucrats were primarily

[16] Other strategies were devised to bring students back to school or prevent them from dropping out. One of these strategies was to engage social and popular movements working with education and select a young leader from the community to persuade children that it would be worthwhile to return to school (Arelaro, 2021).

responsible for shaping public school policies. However, under Freire's leadership, the responsibility for reimagining education policies shifted to teachers and school administrators (Wong, 1995).

Simultaneously, the Councils of Schools provided a platform for parents, students, and teachers to contribute to decisions regarding individual schools. By 1991, the decisions concerning public education in the city of São Paulo were shaped not solely by the administration but by 9,206 members of the school community who convened regularly to discuss school-related issues and propose alternatives for their resolution (SME, 1990b). Olga Figueiredo, a coordinator at NAE, reflected on her experiences:

> The meetings took place weekly and were always highly collaborative. Everything done in the Secretariat was discussed beforehand with the school community—educators, families, and students. As a result, we always left these gatherings with valuable exchanges but also a significant amount of work. Even the construction of school spaces—where they should be situated, what should be present in the classrooms, and so on—was deliberated with active participation from the school community.

Freire aimed to establish a public school that was truly participatory—a school in which the entire community played an active role, contributing to the construction of an institution that genuinely responded to the interests of the population. More than this, he was interested in building a school that creates the solution for its problems from within, based on the community's collective construction of knowledge (SME, 1990a). His tenure as the secretary of education in the city of São Paulo was marked by a strong commitment to improving the quality of education and ensuring that all students had access to the resources they needed to succeed. This commitment was also evident in another critical aspect of his policy framework: the

emphasis on teacher training and curriculum reform, which will be explored in more detail in the following discussion.

Teacher Professional Development and Curriculum Reform

Continuous professional development for the teaching staff was a paramount focus of the Freire administration. The policies spearheaded by the secretary of education recognized the importance of providing teachers with professional development opportunities and implementing new methodologies to improve the quality of teaching. Freire emphasized the vital need for educators to undergo ongoing training, contending that they needed to practice a rigorous and proficient political-pedagogical project. This practice should effectively address the evolving nature of the school that the administration sought to establish (Freire, 1993a). The continuous training of educators primarily unfolded through introductory seminars, a format that brought together teachers, the SME, and experts from universities to discuss the practices applied to the classroom. These meetings provided the opportunity to integrate the theoretical knowledge taught in higher education institutions with the practical insights derived from the experiences of teachers and administrators immersed in the daily reality of schools. This close alignment with pedagogical theories aimed to implement the concept that "teaching demands research. There is no teaching without research and no research without teaching" (Freire, 2002, p. 14). Meyri Chieffi, a director at the DOT, reflected on her experiences in these meetings:

> We collaborated with universities and university faculty. Initially, those of us from the school system would listen. We organized seminars, and they [faculty] would speak, speak, speak. Feeling somewhat naive and ignorant, we remained silent, thinking, “Well, I came from public school and have nothing to offer.” [After a few meetings] I initiated the conversation, and the university faculty began to speak. Then, I declared, “Today's

meeting will be different. You will listen; you won't be able to say anything unless I authorize it." They were wide-eyed because they were discussing education without knowledge of school practice. They talked about public schools, but they didn't understand them. From that moment on, it became a process of mutual learning.

Efforts to reshape teachers' attitudes and behaviors involved the creation of continued teacher education groups. These gatherings provided teachers with regular opportunities for dialogue, enabling them to develop their own theories about school issues and connect these theories with their classroom practices (Wong, 1995). The discussions were enriched by integrating new theories and practices as required, forming a continuous cycle of action, reflection, and subsequent action. Additionally, ongoing professional development aimed to enhance collegiality among teachers and cultivate an awareness of their responsibility in transforming education based on their students' needs (Saul, 2012; Weller, 2000). In 1990, there were 288 active groups, consisting of 4,191 educators from São Paulo public schools (SME, 1990b). These groups received significant support from NAEs and DOT directors, and teachers were allocated 10 paid hours of meeting time per week (Wong, 1995).

Teacher professional development became the cornerstone of curriculum reform. As Chieffi expressed it, "Teacher professional development and curriculum reform were two sides of the same coin"—neither could exist without the other. Under Freire's tenure, the city introduced a groundbreaking approach to curriculum design, prioritizing the cultivation of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in students. The foundational aspects of this curriculum were deliberated with a group of specialists, predominantly comprising university teachers. The administration's objective was to foster "a profound and interdisciplinary critical comprehension" of educational practice (Freire, 1993a, p. 19). Drawing on their ideas for the

future of education in São Paulo, the secretary of education initiated an inclusive dialogue with principals, coordinators, supervisors, teachers, janitors, cooks, students, parents, and community leaders to address the primary challenges in school content. Following these initiatives, the Curricular Reorientation Movement was set in motion, providing schools with the option to either formulate their own projects or adopt the Pedagogical Action in School Through Interdisciplinarity project proposed by the administration's experts (CPF, 2023; SME, 1990a).

Among the various actions arising from this broad curricular reorientation movement, the development of individual pedagogical projects by schools stood out, materializing the principle of autonomy. Leveraging teachers' knowledge and experience, each school had the flexibility to design classes and other pedagogical initiatives tailored to their students' social and critical learning (Saul, 2012), avoiding the pitfalls of one-size-fits-all solutions. Central to this project was an exploration of teachers' practices and their key challenges. The intention was to glean insights from their experiences and construct curricula intricately linked to the authentic needs of teaching and learning (Freire, 1989b). This pedagogical innovation involved the construction of interdisciplinary projects through which teachers in different subject areas defined the curriculum reform they wanted to see in their schools (SME, 1990b). The education secretary's office provided technical and financial support for these projects and monitored their progress.

Over 1,500 projects were crafted by schools, tailored to their specific contexts, and based on a study of reality in each community. This study's data collection included demographic information, family surveys, observations in the community, and interviews with local business owners, to identify significant community issues (Wong, 1995). These issues would be later transformed into "generative themes," a "minimum thematic universe" (Freire, 1967, p. 55) through which students and teachers would develop questions to be answered according to the

knowledge offered by each discipline. The structuring of knowledge and its practical application would contribute to the students' growth toward becoming informed and engaged citizens. Figure 2 summarizes the main stages in this process:

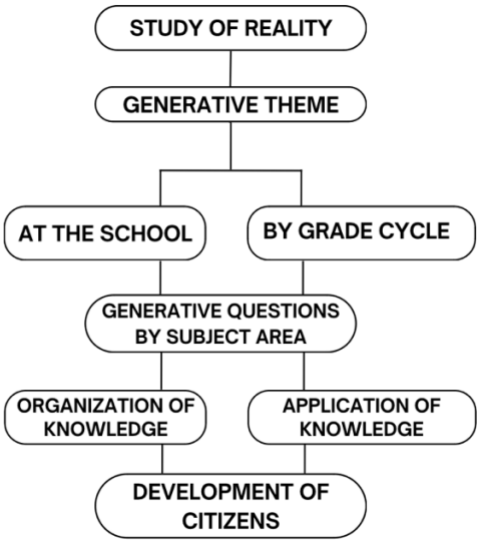

Figure 2: The Generative Theme in the Development of Citizens

Note. Adapted trom "Constructing a Public Popular Education in São Paulo, Brazil," by P. L. Wong, 1995, *Comparative Education Review*, *39*(1), p. 127 (http://www.jstor.org/stable/1188985). Copyright 1995 by Comparative and International Education Society.

Freire's vision was to create a public school characterized by genuine community participation. In this model, the entire community actively contributed to shaping an institution that truly reflected the interests of the population. Moreover, he aimed to establish a school that could internally generate solutions to its challenges, drawing from the collective knowledge

construction within the community (SME, 1990a). His visionary leadership and dedication to the cause of education have left an indelible mark on the city's education and beyond.[17]

7.3 The Side Effects of Challenging Negative Social Constructions: The Implementation Process

Implementing policies targeted at negatively constructed groups poses numerous challenges. Empirical studies indicate that such programs often fail due to policy choices grounded in these negative constructions, undermining the implementation process (Nicholson-Crotty & Nicholson-Crotty, 2004). This aligns with social constructionist perspectives, emphasizing that policies are more likely to succeed when aimed at groups constructed as worthy and contributing to the general welfare (Schneider et al., 2014). Thus, policies congruent with positive social constructions prove more successful than those aimed at negatively constructed groups (Blanton & Jones, 2021; Huang & Han, 2022).

Efforts to implement policies benefiting individuals labeled as dependents or deviants face challenges with a limited window of opportunity, and long-term success is unlikely. Political gains, often linked to delivering advantages to privileged groups, dissuade officials from endorsing policies that benefit negatively constructed groups. This decision aligns with the perspective that, driven by anticipatory feedback, politicians tend to make choices aimed at maximizing the probability of re-election (Bell, 2020; Schneider & Sidney, 2009)–and supporting negatively constructed groups is not part of that strategy. The stigma associated with

[17] Various states and municipalities in Brazil, dedicated to popular administration, opted to forge curricular policies grounded in the Freirean principles witnessed in the Curricular Reorientation Movement in São Paulo. The predominant hallmark in shaping the policies of these administrations was the dynamic engagement of the community, manifested through ongoing dialogue among the key actors in educational practices (Saul, 2012).

these groups can erode trust and shape public opinion negatively, creating difficulties in garnering support for such policies and potentially resulting in electoral setbacks. In the next section, I explore the challenges encountered by Ribeiro and Freire during the implementation stage when designing policies for negatively constructed groups. These obstacles posed significant hurdles and impeded their efforts to effectively advocate for policy changes that could positively impact the public school child and their education in the long term.

What Went Wrong With the CIEPs?

The formulation and enactment of the PEE and the CIEPs encountered minimal controversy within the political institutions of the state of Rio de Janeiro, such as the Legislative Assembly Council and the State Education Council, and among public opinion. During these initial stages of the policy process, Ribeiro's ideas faced relatively little resistance (Maurício, 2004; Mignot, 1989). Despite the multifaceted nature of the CIEPs' policy design, encompassing aspects such as pedagogy, material resources, teacher and staff engagement, and notably a pioneering approach to public education, challenges to the project's continuity were anticipated. However, these challenges were overshadowed by those that surfaced during the policy implementation phase. As the schools commenced operations, CIEPs received mostly political criticism, with opposition to the project notably intensifying in the months leading up to the 1986 state government elections. Stakeholders with different political interests played a role in challenging the sustainability of the reform, reframing it into a mere political goal for national and local elections.

Political opposition swiftly identified CIEPs as a platform for Brizola's imminent candidacy in the election for president. This interpretation provided ample reason for parties

from both the right and left[18] to question the project from the very beginning of its implementation (Maurício, 2004). The PDT, Brizola's and Ribeiro's party, also essentialized the project in line with its political agenda. Analyzing the schools' opening dates, Mignot (1989) concluded that the government paid attention to the electoral calendar, strategically unveiling buildings based on voting logic, and many CIEPs were inaugurated when municipalities were holding elections for mayors. The party also instrumentalized CIEPs during the 1986 state ballot when the then-candidate Ribeiro was presented as Brizola's successor. To disprove its political enemies, the party spared no expense in advertising for the new schools and their revolutionary project, even promoting announcements in the foreign press, including *The New York Times* (Mignot, 2001). Commenting on the political usage of CIEPs, Cunha pointed out,

> The Special Education Program ended up becoming a piece of party campaign, something that, in a certain way, displeased Darcy [Ribeiro]. He believed that giving too much prominence to the partisan aspect could diminish and create obstacles for the institution [the CIEPs] and education.

Although primary schooling was a local concern, the debates around the CIEPs made education a central theme in state and national elections. In the 1986 gubernatorial debates, opposition viewed the CIEPs as the Achilles heel of the administration. Politicians from opposing parties contended that the investments in schools were the reason other sectors could not receive adequate resources (Mignot, 1989). The same rationale characterized the presidential

[18] Faria recalled, "There was considerable tension, conflict, and internal strife within leftist factions. The PT, in particular, strongly criticized Brizola, Darcy [Ribeiro], and squarely opposed the initiative. . . . Jealousy and a profound concern about the democratic transition intensified, especially regarding who would become the next president of the republic."

debates in 1989. Being a candidate in the dispute, Brizola reiterated the need to increase education investments and proposed that the CIEPs be adopted at the national level. The right-wing candidate Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a proponent of a market-based approach to schooling, ridiculed Brizola, saying that the project was costly and infeasible. The PDT front-runner replied, "keeping the people ignorant is costlier than building schools" (Antonio Claudio, 2020). This dialogue represents an example of how the CIEPs contributed to the advancement of the debates about the influence of public schools in the country's redemocratization process (Maurício, 2004).

Teacher unions also emerged as staunch critics of the CIEPs project, expressing opposition since the Mendes Encounter, which highlighted incompatible agendas, creating a divide between young and experienced teachers (Mignot, 2001). Despite the government's seeming genuine concern for teachers' demands, such as better salaries and resources, the CIEPs innovations took precedence, neglecting existing school models. Experienced teachers expressed dissatisfaction, emphasizing the abandonment of traditional schools and disparities in salaries and prestige. Ribeiro exacerbated tensions by dismissing these teachers as unsuitable for CIEPs due to their teaching vices (Faria, 2017; Moreira & Soares, 2019). This led to teacher unions becoming the core opposition to CIEPs.

The conflicts, as discerned from the gathered data, extended beyond mere political disputes; they symbolized resistance to the societal constructs surrounding schools, their role in Brazilian society, and particularly the historical perceptions linked to public school children. This opposition was notably pronounced in printed media and involved actors closely tied to schools, such as teacher unions. Importantly, these discourses highlighted a connection between

opposition to the project and its tendency to formulate policies favoring populations burdened with negative social constructions–specifically, children and families from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and Afro-descendant communities. These intricacies will be explored in greater detail in the following discussions.

When Policies Benefit Negatively Constructed Groups: The CIEPs in the Media Narratives

When discussing the primary challenges faced by Ribeiro in implementing his educational project in Rio de Janeiro, the interviewees in this study highlighted various factors contributing to the project's long-term impracticality. One unanimous observation was that media coverage significantly influenced public perceptions of the schools. Articles in mainstream media about the CIEPs also revealed how privileged groups, including the middle and upper classes, members of the governing elites, and the media itself, interpreted the project and its more visible objectives. Amid these discussions, minimal attention was given to the pedagogical ideas or the overarching goal of providing quality public education to Brazilian children. Ribeiro (1992) himself noted this lack of interest:

> The discourse surrounding CIEPs became entangled in trivialities, focusing on quantitative aspects such as the number constructed—whether it was 500 or not—or debating whether it functioned as a school or a restaurant. Unfortunately, these discussions failed to delve into the essential pedagogical distinctions of the CIEPs, leading to a lack of advocacy for their unique educational approach. (p. 7)

Considering the factors that contribute to the legitimacy of causal theories and social constructions, Stone (1989) emphasizes the importance of proponents having visibility and access to the media. However, this was not the case with the CIEPs. The press adopted arguments against the implementation of *Brizolões,* often highlighting the abandonment of traditional public education and condemning the project's political-electoral use (Mignot, 1989). Aligned with the social constructionist perspective, biased perceptions about public schools and their students were reinforced through selective attention to evidence, consistently emphasizing the negative aspects of the project, sometimes subtly and other times overtly. All interviewees pointed to *O Globo,* a newspaper that primarily covered news in the Rio de Janeiro state, as the main antagonist during the implementation phase. I conducted a thorough review of all articles published between 1983 and 1987 to comprehend the tone and content of its criticism and assess the extent to which it represented a response from those defending the status quo to the reevaluation of the public school child proposed by Ribeiro and the CIEPs project.

In the policy design phase (1983-1984), the newspaper published 28 articles mentioning the CIEPs. These reports primarily served an informative purpose, identifying the companies responsible for constructing the "big schools"[19] (“Escola na Passarela”, 1984; “Governador anuncia”, 1984; “Habilitadas empresas”, 1984), specifying the neighborhoods slated for them (“Escola na passarela”, 1984; “Niterói pode”, 1984), and highlighting the anticipated number of students who would experience the new educational initiative (“Escola na Passarela”, 1984;

[19] Faria highlighted that initially, the structures were commonly referred to as "big schools," a direct allusion to their size. Yet, as the project gained popularity, the community began affectionately calling the CIEPs "Brizolões." According to her, "that was a tragedy because that was when the fury [of those opposed to the project] increased."

“Rede escolar”, 1984). Additionally, they emphasized the joy of the populations benefiting from the project and its potential impact on the urbanization of their neighborhoods. For instance, in one article, the residents of Inhaúma and Irajá, two underserved communities in the city of Rio de Janeiro, celebrated being chosen as locations for some of the schools. In Acari, another neighborhood on the outskirts of the city, the population discussed the construction noise, expressing that it did not bother them; instead, it brought them happiness, as they recognized that the schools would serve their children (“Boa notícia”, 1984; “Obras a todo”, 1984). Across most reports, there was a distinct emphasis on the target population of these schools, with adjectives like "poor" and "marginalized" and expressions such as "favela residents" and "favela children" being common in the articles.

When the government opened the first CIEP schools in 1985, the media coverage significantly increased: In 1985, *O Globo* published 590 articles about the CIEPs. While the earlier analysis revealed the newspaper’s neutral and even optimistic tone, the subsequent articles became more critical of the project. This criticism often highlighted problems in the implementation process, such as the shortage of teachers and classrooms, delays in school inaugurations, and discrepancies between community expectations and government offerings (“Brizola cancela”, 1985; “Moradores de bairro”, 1985; “Quanto ao CIEP”, 1985). Some articles also pointed out pre-existing issues in state schools, such as high dropout rates, suggesting that this was common among the target population, for whom work held greater importance than education (“Passarela ainda”, 1985). In other accounts, the focus shifted to children and families, portraying positive aspects of the schools. For example, in some article parents spoke favorably about the extended school hours, emphasizing the convenience for those who had to work

throughout the day. The children themselves contributed to this narrative, stating that the experience was "the coolest, even if we have to stay at school all day" (Cabo, 1985, p. 5). In 1986, a state election year, the newspaper's coverage intensified, introducing new elements to the ongoing discussions. *O Globo* shifted its focus to highlight irregularities and corruption and discredit the project's core idea of assisting children in need in its articles. During this period, a notable increase in the number of articles citing the CIEPs occurred, with a total of 946 references, the majority of which portrayed the project in negative terms.

The newspaper's coverage consistently portrayed the schools as a political tool for Brizola's presidential ambitions. Pedagogical discussions were notably absent, with limited mention of or quotes from Ribeiro. The focus remained on condemning the establishment of a parallel school network, accusing the government of abandoning traditional schools. However, interviewees in this study disagreed with this perspective, asserting that the intention was to implement the CIEPs' pedagogical model in all neighborhoods, even if constructing Brizolões proved unfeasible. The main challenge stemmed from Ribeiro's and Brizola's anticipation of success, which they envisioned would secure a second term, a scenario that did not materialize. The schools faced growing prejudice and disdain, which had a detrimental impact on the implementation of a project that could have benefited the intended beneficiaries. *O Globo* played a pivotal role in linking the schools solely to electoral motives, amplifying the voices of the governor's opposition. In the next section, I delve into this opposition.

Public Opinion: Voices From Lower and Upper Classes in Rio de Janeiro

The social constructionist perspective in policy studies suggests that policies enjoying broader societal support are typically those catering to the larger population. Moreover, if the

causal stories underlying these policies entail a significant redistribution of power or wealth, their likelihood of success diminishes (Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Stone, 1989). Although the CIEPs did not exactly bring about a major change in power or wealth, their implicit ideas led to disapproval from the conservative middle and upper classes. The resistance from the elites was mainly rooted in Brizola's social policies, which empowered marginalized communities and gave them a voice, changing the dynamics between favela residents and policymakers (McCann, 2014), a shift that the establishment was not keen to support. Criticisms of the government and its social strategies were common in newspapers and TV news, the chosen outlets for privileged groups expressing dissatisfaction.

All interviewees unanimously contended that the project’s implementation faced significant prejudice from its inception, primarily driven by elite perceptions of the public school child. The resistance to the schools was rooted in the negative social constructions of their intended beneficiaries. According to the participants, discussions on pedagogical content and innovative teaching strategies were overshadowed by the idea that too much was being given to those deemed undeserving. The criticism focused on the perception that the CIEPs project was a lavish expenditure to support specific children, rather than providing benefits for all society. The schools, which provided students with five meals a day, were portrayed as more akin to a restaurant. Cunha recalled critics describing the CIEPs as "a place to make pigs get fatter," implying that the schools were seen as spaces where vulnerable populations were dependent on government support. Guimarães added that another label attached to the school was that its students were seen as criminals or more prone to criminality. According to him, "This made some people uncomfortable, and those from less privileged backgrounds hesitated to enroll their

children. In some cases, they preferred traditional schools, even if in poor condition, over CIEPs." Quotes in *O Globo*, from residents of neighborhoods where the project was implemented, reinforced negative stereotypes about the poor.

One of the primary forms of resistance to the CIEPs came from residents' associations in neighborhoods with a diverse population, including both poorer and wealthier families. Guimarães, tasked with selecting construction sites, explained it was hard to find land for the school structures. Consequently, the government opted to build them in central locations, including near parks and other underutilized land. Wealthier residents in neighborhoods like Ilha do Governador and Padre Miguel strongly opposed the chosen areas, as illustrated in a letter to the editor in which a woman expressed that the CIEP in Padre Miguel should not be built centrally but "near Favela do Vintém, where it would be better utilized" (Silva, 1985, p. 4). Another resident lamented,

> The establishment of a CIEP would be beneficial not only for the underprivileged population . . . but also for other children. However, building the school inside the park is not justified. . . . If it could be constructed in another location, it would be excellent for the needy community (Cabo, 1985b, p. 4).

Various residents' associations in the Southern Zone, an affluent area in the city, also opposed the construction of CIEPs in their region, expressing a preference for a bus terminal. Tensions escalated between affluent residents in Ipanema and Leblon, the upscale neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro, and the residents' association in the Favela of Cruzada, situated between the two areas. The government's suggestion to construct a CIEP inside Jardim de Alá, an unused park for the community, encountered opposition. While residents in affluent neighborhoods

opposed the construction of CIEPs, the vice president of the residents' association of the Favela of Cruzada argued that the school should be built in Jardim de Alá: "The argument of some residents of Ipanema and Leblon, suggesting that the construction of a Brizolão . . . would depreciate the area, is speculative, elitist, and may even have a racist content" ("Moradores de bairros", 1985, p. 17). Residents of Ipanema and Leblon continued to protest against the construction of a CIEP in their area, citing also aesthetic reasons–the modern building was deemed ugly–and recommending building the school in other areas more associated with "marginality" ("Contestada em oito", 1985, p. 9). After much controversy, Brizola decided to cancel the construction of the school. Rio de Janeiro's Mayor Marcelo de Alencar stated that the protests were because "they [wealthy residents] probably don't like the idea of having a large public school nearby that would serve hundreds of students from all social classes" ("Brizola cancela projeto", 1985, p. 15). For the president of the residents' association of Favela da Cruzada, "the pressures . . . were exerted due to the discrimination that exists against the residents of the favela. We are an enclave within the Southern Zone, and many people don't want to mix with us" ("Contestada em oito", 1985, p. 9).

Upper-class individuals began questioning the allocation of tax funds to projects perceived to benefit only a few. They accused the government of discrimination in favor of the poor. This sentiment was evident in the increasing frequency of letters to the editor in *O Globo*:

> It is interesting to note that the authorities who protest so much against discriminations of any kind are the first to practice them. This is the case with the CIEPs. According to the newspapers, their directors gave priority to enrolling poor children. . . . They forget that it is precisely the taxes paid by the suffering unprotected ones that sustain these visions.

> The middle class is already close to the precipitous descent toward the so-called protected class of the poor (Pereira, 1986, p. 4).

Another resident wrote,

> I would find it commendable if the government had an interest in solving the problem of the less privileged classes, and I believe there is not a single Brazilian in this country who does not cherish the dream of seeing the problem of the needy child resolved. However, it is essential to remember that the government represents not only one social class but the entire society. . . . It is the middle class, which, through its work, brings progress and development to our homeland. It is the population that has work and a home, which can, albeit with sacrifice, afford to pay for schools for their children, providing the government with the means to build schools, CIEPs, hospitals, and everything else needed by the less privileged classes (Carvalho, 1986, p. 5).

Reinforcing the stereotype associating impoverished populations with criminality, some residents believed that building CIEPs would contribute to reducing crime rates. In Irajá, a neighborhood of middle and lower middle classes in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro, residents were optimistic that the CIEP would be "directly linked to the reduction of the juvenile delinquency rate in the region" (“No Irajá”, 1985, p. 4). Others contended that higher crime rates were attributed to the exclusive allocation of government expenditure to the schools:

> I agree with the CIEPs to reduce future marginality. . . . The CIEPs and parallel measures aiming at today's childhood can reduce tomorrow's marginality, making the city safer. But what about today? . . . Why do we have to pay with the sacrifice of our families for a possible future tranquility? Don't we have the same right? . . . I didn't vote for you, and I never will, as I see in your government what I imagined would happen: disrespect for the

people of the city and total disregard for decent people in favor of marginality (Campos, 1985, p. 4).

Such negative sentiments expressed by the upper classes regarding the project and their discontent with Brizola's social policies contributed to a broader narrative that impacted voter perception and ultimately influenced the election results. Following Brizola's term, subsequent governments distanced themselves from the legacy of the CIEPs. Moreira Franco, the newly elected governor of Rio de Janeiro in 1987, opted to dismantle the pedagogical project and undermine full-time learning activities in public schools. His actions included budget cuts and bureaucratic obstacles, leading to the abandonment of construction sites in neighborhoods and favelas where CIEPs were in progress. Ribeiro (1990) lamented Franco's decision to discontinue the project, labeling the dismissal as an unforgivable crime against Brazilian children and education (CP, 2020). Changes in national education policies, particularly the constitutional shift in 1988, further contributed to the neglect of CIEPs, as public elementary schools became the responsibility of municipalities, rendering state-level initiatives impractical (Bomeny, 2007; Mignot, 2001). Freire and Erundina found similar issues when trying to implement their educational reforms in São Paulo 2 years later, as discussed further.

To Change the Schools in a City Resistant to Change: Paulo Freire's Challenges

When reassessing his experiences as the São Paulo Secretary of Education, Freire (1993) emphasized the considerable challenges encountered in implementing an education geared toward people's emancipation. The administration faced both material and ideological challenges. The material challenges were evident, exacerbated by the overarching governmental crisis inherited by Erundina, who assumed control amid the city's substantial budget deficit. The

nonpayment of suppliers, deteriorating public facilities, and an outdated bus fare system plagued by inflation created a multifaceted set of issues (Couto, 1994). The state of schools was so dire that even the secretary of education's team was unaware of the true situation. Cortella (2021), Freire's chief of cabinet, recounted the need to physically count the total number of schools, as there was no clarity about their correct number when Freire assumed office. The physical conditions of São Paulo's school buildings were even worse than the quality of education itself (Torres, 1994). At the outset, Freire discovered around 629 schools, most of them with classrooms dilapidated and unusable desks and chairs, providing low-quality municipal education to 720,000 students ("Secretaria interdita", 1989, p. C5). Another relevant issue was the number of children turned away due to a lack of infrastructure. To serve all the children, the city would need 546 new school buildings (Freire, 1993a). Moreover, the daunting task of managing 39,614 municipal education employees, including teachers, administrators, and support staff, posed a significant challenge to administrative and pedagogical innovation (Gadotti & Jacobi, 2016). Resistance to Freire's educational philosophy was also rooted in ideological differences.

Brazilian society's conservatism and authoritarianism also emerged as significant obstacles preventing the realization of Freire's educational perspectives. This conservatism manifested in preconceived notions about the role of public schools, viewing them as institutions meant to discipline the poor. According to Cileda Perrella, a teacher working during the Freire administration, the conventional viewpoint was that schools were expected to confine not only students' bodies but also their creativity and autonomy. This perspective aligns with the social constructionist view, asserting that societal constructions of target populations shape institutions and broader culture through both instrumental and symbolic policy effects. The shared

understanding of how institutions should function, whether to benefit or punish specific groups, shapes the perception of policy legitimacy among political actors (Schneider et al., 2014; Schneider & Sidney, 2009). Similar to the findings of other researchers (e.g., Gándara, 2020), this case study of the Freire administration uncovered an intricate connection between the social construction of students and the social construction of the school itself. The next section explores groups opposing Freire's proposed policies and their rationale for this opposition.

To assess the implementation phase, I analyzed newspaper articles referencing Freire, his education policies, and the secretary of education from 1988, when he was officially appointed to the office, to 1991, when he chose to resign for personal pursuits. I also relied on interviews with political actors directly engaged in the implementation phase. During this analysis, my aim was to determine the extent of the connection between the resistance to Freire's policies and the implicit or explicit social constructions and causal stories related to the public school child. Based on insights from educators closely involved in the implementation and newspaper articles, the analysis concluded that, while not as overt as in Ribeiro's case, opposition played a substantial role in undermining the legitimacy of the reforms proposed in São Paulo.

Ideological Differences: Political Actors Within and Outside the School

In addition to the challenges inherent in assuming control of an education network plagued by material and structural issues, Freire confronted difficulties in garnering widespread support for the implementation of his educational reforms during his tenure as secretary of education in São Paulo. The opposition to Freire's vision for transforming schools was spearheaded by political parties, the media, and elements within the school community. This resistance manifested through public criticism, media scrutiny, and internal opposition within educational institutions. Accounts from various newspapers illustrated how conservative groups

and political adversaries perceived Freire's pedagogical approach as a departure from traditional methods and a threat to established norms.

Media outlets with conservative leanings depicted Freire's educational reforms unfavorably, characterizing them as a menace to established educational norms and associating his pedagogical perspectives with a decline in education standards. One notable interview conveying this notion was among the first published right after Erundina confirmed Freire's appointment as the new secretary of education, in 1988. The headline, purposefully featuring a grammatical error, suggested that under Freire's leadership, such mistakes would no longer be deemed incorrect. Additionally, the article implied that the new secretary would criticize teachers for correcting children's grammar errors. In fact, in this piece, Freire emphasized the importance of respecting the knowledge students bring to the classroom. He asserted that a student would not face reprimand for not adhering to the standard form of the Portuguese language, but that this would not hinder the teacher from guiding them on effective communication in the "real world" ("Freire ameaça brigar", 1988, p. C10). The perspective that Freire would compromise education with his ideologies set the tone for his relationship with mainstream media, according to Meyri Chieffi. She added that "we [educators working with Freire] observed the press's intentions, as they were not inclined to allow us to clarify this matter or promote public understanding, despite their explicit statements [about Freire and his education proposals]." The notion that Freire promoted ignorance gained momentum in the subsequent years of his tenure as reflected in other articles published by traditional newspapers and their political pundits, such as Nunes (1989):

> Professor Paulo Freire asserts that the guidance is to honor the right to ignorance, grounded in the conviction that those facing social injustices often articulate themselves in a distinctive dialect. I am skeptical of this theory, stemming from the sacralization of

> poverty, as it appears undeniably elitist, rationalizing the confinement of millions of Brazilians to the realm of the illiterate. (p. 70)

As Chieffi described, the intention of the newspapers was clear since the beginning: They would pose challenges to the implementation of Freire's projects. This resistance was based on the fact that Freire was a secretary in a popular leftist government. In an editorial, *O Estado de S. Paulo* ("A graça de seduzir", 1988) made this perspective clear: "São Paulo will *necessarily* have to learn to coexist with a PT administration, led by a woman, who is not afraid to choose the name of Professor Paulo Freire, so reviled in the past, as her secretary of education" (p. 3).

The newspapers covering the city of São Paulo exhibited little concern for engaging with Freire's pedagogical ideas; rather, their focus was on constructing a narrative to discredit him and any initiatives he might lead. Various forms of criticism emerged, ranging from trivial matters such as mispronouncing a French word to more substantial claims like making a wrong turn during a school visit without consequences. Additionally, critiques highlighted the perceived antiquity of his ideas ("Paulo Freire apoia", 1989; "Prefeitura de SP", 1989). However, the most polemic accusation centered on the inclusion of two of his books in the bibliography of a public exam for teacher recruitment, leading to allegations of unethical behavior and exploiting the situation for book sales ("Bibliografia para concurso", 1990, p. C7). In an editorial, the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* ("O autoritatismo redivivo", 1990) drew a comparison between the military governments and Freire's democratic administration, highlighting that even the military did not impose the requirement of a single book, let alone one authored by themselves. The editorial stated that "Freire, on his own accord, arrogantly positioned himself as the messenger of Marx to the earth, all in the name of democracy" (p. 3).[20]

[20] In response to these criticisms, Freire chose to communicate with the press through written statements, expressing frustration over the distortion of his words in oral communication ("Paulo Freire decepciona", 1989).

Media coverage during Freire's tenure prominently showcased the tensions that unfolded between teachers, teacher unions, and the secretary of education. One focal point was the discontent among educators due to their salaries not keeping pace with inflation, adding financial strain to their lives (“Paulo Freire decepciona”, 1989). The implementation of a new curriculum proposed by Freire also proved challenging for teachers, as they grappled with adapting to and understanding the innovative educational ideas introduced by the administration. A key criticism centered on the fact that, despite the SME engaging in dialogues with teachers to develop the curriculum, the proposal lacked “teaching models, critiques of program content, and alternatives” (“Secretaria pede sugestões”, 1989, p. D8). Interviews with the educators closely connected to policy implementation provided a deeper understanding of these challenges, shedding light on the practical difficulties faced by educators on the ground.

Some of the resistance from teachers toward the interdisciplinary project and other new pedagogical initiatives stemmed from their lack of experience in collaborative teamwork and alternative teaching methods. However, following dialogues with the NAE and principals, they were willing to adopt a different approach, acknowledging that it enhanced the overall learning experience. One teacher expressed, "I learned to listen to the students, who have now improved their reading and writing habits" (Carvalho, 1990, p. 12). However, within this broader narrative of resistance, there was a subset of educators who, while not fully embracing Freire's policies, resisted change not because of personal opposition to his pedagogy or policies. Some educators believed in maintaining an authoritarian and undemocratic structure as the best strategy to conduct schools. Torres (1994), an education scholar and Freire's long-time collaborator, recalled that in a conversation about educators reluctant to adopt the democratic administration of schools, Freire recounted a dialogue with a principal who was unwilling to change:

> “Yes, yes, yes, I am authoritarian, and I will continue to be." Then Freire said to her, "Look, I know that you are authoritarian. I would like to ask you very lovingly to begin to be less authoritarian in this administration.” (p. 201)

Olga Figueiredo, a coordinator at NAE, also experienced this behavior firsthand. In her role advising principals and teachers on policy adaptation for their schools, she recalled the following:

> We had several problems in policy implementation from the beginning. I had to talk to many principals because of this authoritarian stance. And they were authoritarian not only with the students but with the staff. It was a process that was happening, a very radical process of change. So, I preferred to talk and guide them while observing. Of course, if there were recurrences, we would have to take other measures. There was no need because, in the end, people realized that we weren’t playing school. We were there running a serious government, and we wanted things to happen in the best possible way and for people to benefit as much as possible.

Angela Antunes, a former teacher and president of a school council, recounted that resistant teachers and principals often invoked the principles advocated by Freire to oppose the new proposals. At times, these educators adopted a somewhat stubborn stance:

> We faced conflicts in the school stemming from this mindset, particularly at the beginning. Paulo Freire's educational policy, grounded in principles like participation, democracy, and autonomy, led some colleagues to assert their right to refuse any deviation. They argued that, in line with Freire's advocacy for democracy and autonomy, saying, "No, we don't want to do this" should be acceptable, and Paulo Freire ought to acknowledge and respect that decision.

When questioned about the extent to which the resistance to change was linked to the shift toward a student- and community-centered school and curriculum, the study's interviewees concurred that it indeed played a significant role. They believed that the opposition also stemmed from the conventional stereotype portraying students as empty vessels to be filled with teachers' knowledge and worldview—a perspective aligned with Freire's concept of the banking model of education. In this context, students were perceived as devoid of any knowledge that could contribute to the school, and the same label was applied to parents and families. Education, then, should persist in its traditional role of disciplining students and exclusively preparing them for the demands of the workforce.

Regina Estima, a former director at DOT, upon reflecting on her experiences, offered the following:

> The school is not isolated from society, it's not an island. Everything that exists in society appears in the school: racism, discrimination with the poor, with different languages—everything is there, present. When we were discussing in schools, we perceived the positions regarding these things. . . . Even though all prejudices, to some extent, are present in schools, we must learn. That's why the teacher needs continuous training. The training aimed at reflection, and that's what had to be done in school.

According to Figueiredo, another study interviewee, teacher training played a pivotal role in dispelling enduring negative stereotypes. She recounted that, when confronted with the idea that student knowledge should be the focal point in the teaching and learning policies advocated by Freire, some teachers and principals responded with disdain:

> People [at the school] believed that the students wouldn't be able to learn. They wouldn't be able to learn, but even if they did, what's the point? Because they will end up, I don't

know, as janitors. They will become domestic workers. So, why give them attention? These students didn't aspire to have upward mobility in life. We heard things like that.

Influenced by traditional views on education, some parents voiced apprehensions about Freire's methods, expressing concerns that participatory education might undermine traditional academic standards. These concerns were evident in their perspectives on certain aspects, such as the volume of content written in their children's notebooks and the absence of textbooks. As Freire's pedagogy heavily relied on dialogue, these parents struggled to comprehend that knowledge construction was dynamic and also rooted in oral communication. Antunes recalled incidents in which parents protested about the perceived quality of education, focusing on the number of pages used in their children's notebooks:

> Parents also expressed concerns related to the perceived quality, which was closely tied to the adoption of the textbook. They associated the quality of education with the amount of material in the notebooks. Some parents were dissatisfied, pointing out that, for instance, in the second quarter, their children had filled only half of a notebook compared to three parts previously. This decline in perceived quality became a common issue, prompting parents to also voice their concerns about excessive talk in classrooms.

The framework introduced by the new administration, incorporating the school council, served as a means to address issues like these and involve parents in matters related to the functioning of schools and include them in actively participating in their children's education. Antunes believed that embracing this new perspective on education was essential for taking proactive measures to bridge the gap between schools and families:

> Through the school council, emphasizing the importance of fortifying these spaces for collective decision-making, we presented the issues. . . . And conducted numerous

meetings with parents. These sessions aimed to engage parents in discussions about how learning occurs, what should be learned, and their perceptions of their children's performance in various aspects of life.

Despite the overall trend of some schools embracing family involvement in school activities, this sentiment was not universal among all educators and principals. Estima recalled incidents in which principals subtly impeded family participation. For example, scheduling meetings in the middle of the week at 9 am, a time when parents are typically heading to work, was perceived as a hindrance. In her view, such scheduling amounted to a form of boycott: "How can you schedule a parent-teacher conference or council meeting at 9:00 in the morning on a Monday or Tuesday? No one will attend, right?" The interviewees perspective was that despite various obstacles, the outcomes were positive. According to Figueiredo, even parents with a more conservative and right-leaning perspective expressed a desire to engage in discussions. Despite initial hesitation toward a progressive initiative, they eventually embraced the debates, comprehended the proposals, and ultimately offered their support. Chieffi was moved, seeing this closeness with parents and community members as evidence that they were genuinely serving the community. Antunes echoed a similar sentiment, "Most of those who initially resisted but changed their minds expressed gratitude, acknowledging that it was a significant learning experience. This proved to be transformative for all of us. We felt alive."

The implementation of the policies faced resistance from political actors associated with education who raised concerns about the proposals being excessively politicized and reflecting a leftist ideology. This theme was frequently present in newspaper articles and in Freire's interviews. Responding to these critiques, the secretary consistently emphasized the following:

It is not a privilege of our pedagogical project in progress to possess explicit ideological

> and political character. Every pedagogical project is political and is imbued with ideology. The question is to know, in favor of what and for whom, against what and against whom education policies are made. (Freire, 1989d, p. 24)

Paulo Freire resigned as the secretary of education in 1991, due to a combination of factors, including political disagreements and challenges in implementing his educational vision. While Erundina and Freire shared a commitment to progressive social and educational policies, Freire's ambitious plans for educational reform faced resistance and constraints within the political landscape. The complexities of working within a bureaucratic structure, combined with differences in approach, contributed to his decision to step down from the role. Freire remained committed to his pedagogical principles, and his resignation signaled an acknowledgment of the challenges and limitations in translating these ideals into policy, especially within the context of the country's redemocratization and the perceived need for change.

7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored how Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire designed and implemented education policies for historically marginalized populations, specifically focusing on the public school child. I delved into the challenges and implications encountered during these processes, shedding light on the potentially transformative initiatives proposed by Ribeiro and Freire within the context of socially constructed negative perceptions. Through a scrutiny of their endeavors, this chapter aimed to provide insights into the intricate interplay between policy design, implementation, and the societal constructs that influenced the educational landscape for vulnerable populations in the state of Rio de Janeiro and the city of São Paulo.

Ribeiro and Freire aimed to revolutionize Brazilian public schooling through educational projects that valued diverse forms of knowledge and placed community needs at the core of

educational policies. In their quest to enhance educational opportunities for the lower classes, the educators argued that marginalized children, often labeled as deviants and undeserving groups (Stone, 1989), deserved the best possible education. This encompassed traditional subjects like reading, writing, and arithmetic, alongside innovative teaching methods involving culture, sports, and community engagement and fostering students' understanding of their role in shaping the world. These ideas encapsulated their views on schooling, causal theories contributing to perceived student failure, and crucially, the vision of public schooling beneficial to those in need. Through their writings and policies, Ribeiro and Freire advocated for a reframing of narratives surrounding disenfranchised groups, seeking to challenge the prevailing status quo. While encountering minimal resistance during policy design, the implementation phase faced distinct challenges, including resistance from political actors unwilling to accept change.

Various influential actors, including the media, elites, and political leaders, historically involved in perpetuating stereotypes about the public school child, significantly contributed to the demise of the projects led by Ribeiro and Freire (Stone, 1989). While external challenges influenced both the CIEPs project and the democratic administration of popular education, the resistance from powerful groups against policies benefiting marginalized populations played a pivotal role during the policy implementation phase. However, the extent to which this resistance was connected with the causal stories and the social constructions they sought to challenge varied, manifesting differently in each case.

The policies proposed by Ribeiro for Rio de Janeiro schools faced explicit resistance. Media criticism, exemplified by publications in *O Globo*, suggested that the schools resembled restaurants and insinuated that public safety was compromised due to funds being directed to a

project perceived as favoring an undeserving few. This highlighted a reluctance to endorse policies aimed at enhancing the citizenship of those considered societal deviants. For Freire, criticism was subtler, focusing on the schools, his pedagogy, and the challenge to the existing authoritarian and conservative educational structure. Interviews revealed that much of the resistance stemmed from educators unprepared to prioritize poor children and their families in the educational landscape and within the decisions made inside the school. This resistance stemmed from educators being unsure of how to implement the new school practices and believing that the public school should continue to serve as a means of disciplining students, who had nothing to offer in the educational experience. Despite the challenges faced by Ribeiro and Freire, their education projects, which critiqued public schools as elitist and geared toward teaching an idealized child, fell victim to the very elites and traditional political practices they aimed to challenge.

Nearly 40 years since the first CIEP opening, the enduring lesson remains the necessity to disentangle politics from educational policies to ensure the continuity of impactful projects. Many CIEP buildings, where public schools are housed, persist in preserving Ribeiro's philosophies, achieving commendable academic results (Cieglinski et al., 2012). The CIEP remains an ideal in discussions about Brazil's public school system, underlining the significance of full-time and holistic education in addressing the needs of underprivileged children and communities (Moreira & Soares, 2019). The concept of integral education remains relevant and is actively debated by educators across different regions of Brazil. The recent proposal by the current federal government, led by Luís Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers' Party, to adopt

integral education in the country's public schools emphasizes the enduring impact of Ribeiro's project.

Following Freire's tenure as the secretary of education in São Paulo, his legacy persisted, influencing educational policies and practices throughout Brazil. Freire's pioneering pedagogical approach, rooted in critical pedagogy and participatory education, maintained its sway over educators and policymakers alike. The focus of dialogue, empowerment, and social justice in education became entrenched in conversations surrounding educational reform. Despite encountering challenges and criticisms, Freire's legacy played a pivotal role in shaping a more inclusive and participatory educational system. The focal points of student engagement, critical thinking, and community involvement continued to exert a significant influence on educational initiatives, extending their impact not only in the city of São Paulo but also beyond.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

Chapter 8 offers a comprehensive synthesis of the dissertation's components, highlighting the main research findings and exploring the study's contributions to interdisciplinary education. The first section provides a detailed summary of each chapter, with particular emphasis on Chapters 5, 6, and 7, which directly addressed the research questions. Subsequently, the chapter delves into the contributions of the study, demonstrating how the intersection of policy studies, education, and history can collectively highlight issues of inequality, democracy, and social justice within public schools and broader societal contexts. Lastly, the chapter concludes by presenting recommendations for future investigations.

8.1 Summary of Key Points

The dissertation aimed to achieve two primary objectives. Firstly, it sought to unravel the origins of historical stereotypes surrounding the Brazilian public school child, particularly those associated with economically disadvantaged students of African descent. The focus was on better understanding how these preconceived notions and images played a role in shaping public policies tailored for this demographic. Secondly, the study aimed to explore the perspectives of esteemed education scholars, Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire, who advocated for public schooling as a catalyst for democracy. Specifically, the research delved into how these scholars interpreted the public school child within the realm of their intellectual work. Additionally, the investigation extended to understanding the outcomes when Ribeiro and Freire translated their theoretical ideas into policies during their tenures as policymakers. The dissertation was divided into the chapters described below.

Chapter 1 introduced the research problem, highlighting its relevance and purpose, and articulated my motivations for exploring policies concerning Brazilian public schools and their

students. It offered a concise overview of the research, outlining the literature review, methodologies employed, and the study's objectives. Within this chapter, I delved into the potential contributions of this research to the fields of policy studies and education, unveiling the research questions and case studies integral to the analysis. To provide context, the chapter identified the key political actors involved in shaping public policies in Brazil and elucidated how their perceptions influenced the establishment of public schools. Finally, the introduction succinctly outlined the remaining chapters of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 provided a historical overview of Brazilian education, exploring perspectives, policies, and influential actors that shaped the ideal student for public schools. It traced a historical narrative from the empire to the republic, emphasizing how the elite's influence often marginalized children. The analysis revealed that initial efforts to establish a national school system led to decentralization due to financial constraints and a lack of pedagogical direction. The chapter also highlighted a deteriorating scenario during the dictatorship in which education became secondary to issues tied to national security and economic development. This background briefly situates the reader about present-day trends in Brazil and illustrates the context Ribeiro and Freire encountered as policymakers in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, respectively.

Chapter 3, the literature review, offered an overview of previous research, examining its strengths and weaknesses, and elucidated how the findings could serve as theoretical and conceptual foundations for my study. Moreover, I aimed to present the significance of my dissertation within broader theoretical discussions in education and policy studies. The literature review delved into pertinent literature related to the research problem, encompassing concepts and theories informing the analysis. It began by outlining the topics discussed, clarifying how I

selected scholarly works for analysis. The discussions highlighted two frameworks within the social constructionist perspective: the social construction of target populations and the theory of causal stories. Through this process, I aimed to explore the origins of each theory and their empirical applications, analyzing and synthesizing them to derive insights for my research.

In Chapter 4, I explored the research methods utilized for the dissertation. The discussion covered the research setting, sample selection, data collection instruments and techniques, data analysis methods, and my approach to managing and interpreting the collected data. Additionally, this chapter addressed ethical considerations, including personal biases that may have influenced the research, strategies implemented to mitigate their impact, and measures taken to ensure the study's credibility and dependability.

Chapter 5 delved into addressing the first research question: How have Brazilian political actors historically used narratives and stereotypes to design, implement, and legitimize education policy according to their interpretations of public schools' target population? Additionally, it explored the following subquestion: How do the social constructions and causal stories about Brazilian public school students relate to their socioeconomic status and race? The primary data for analysis were drawn from archival sources, shedding light on the contributions of various political actors to the construction of stereotypes surrounding Brazilian public school children. The latter part of the chapter detailed interviews conducted with diverse actors involved in education policy design and implementation during Ribeiro's (1983-1987) and Freire's (1989-1991) time in government.

The findings indicated that policymakers, particularly the governing elites, employed distinct historical narratives to construct stereotypes and causal stories about impoverished Brazilians, who were mostly of Afro-descent. These portrayals often depicted them as

dangerous; linked to criminality; and burdened with stigmatizing labels related to vices, diseases, and lack of hygiene. Traditional policies targeting these populations were intricately tied to the assumption that impoverished Brazilians were destined to menial labor and that their education should prepare them for this limited future. This resulted in a subtle social construction perpetuating biases associated with enslaved populations, veiled beneath a colorblind perspective of "we are all Brazilians." However, this seemingly inclusive perspective did not shield Afro-descendants and other marginalized Brazilians from prejudice, exclusion, and racism.

The intersectionality of race and class further complicated the situation, maintaining these populations in subalternized positions across politics, the economy, society, and education. Political actors, especially governing elites shaping educational policy, incorporated these stereotypes when formulating policies. Students' race and class played a central role as they inherited the social constructions of their groups. Interviews with key figures in the education policy process aimed to unravel the contemporary role of stereotypes, revealing deeply ingrained biases tied to students' socioeconomic backgrounds and racial identities. These biases limit expectations for poor and Black students, discouraging, for instance, aspirations for higher education and perpetuating an unequal learning environment.

In Chapter 6, I answered the second research question in this study: How did Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Freire reinterpret the public school child during the redemocratization process in Brazil (1983-1991)? The analysis focused specifically on how these two prominent educators viewed the causal stories of school failure and their connection to the target population of Brazilian public education, and addressed the negative stereotypes surrounding public school students in their intellectual work. Prior to delving into the responses to these questions, this chapter provided a comprehensive exploration of the lives and work of Ribeiro and Freire. By

delving into the biographical aspects of Ribeiro and Freire, the chapter aimed to offer a contextual understanding of the philosophical underpinnings that influenced their intellectual work and views on education.

The analysis of their writings and archival documents preserved in institutions dedicated to their legacies unveiled that Ribeiro and Freire engaged in a rigorous examination and critique of stereotypes surrounding the public school child. They actively challenged prevailing causal narratives that often unfairly attributed school failure to impoverished students and their families. Delving into layers of history, systemic structures, and socioeconomic disparities, both scholars acknowledged the historical interpretation of social markers, particularly class and race, which marginalized poor and Black individuals in education policymaking. These perspectives were foundational in shaping their policies, through which they sought to overturn the prevailing notion that marginalized populations bore sole responsibility for their challenging circumstances.

Chapter 7 aimed to elucidate how Ribeiro and Freire translated their theoretical perspectives into practical policies, examining the outcomes when they confronted stereotypes about the public school child. The central objective was to address the final research question: What happened when Paulo Freire and Darcy Ribeiro designed and implemented policies based on their perspectives about public schools' target population? To answer this question, I differentiated the two phases of the policy process–design and implementation–to understand the outcomes of their policy choices. In this chapter, I also addressed the two following subquestions: What were the obstacles found? To what extent were those obstacles related to the causal stories and social constructions they aimed to challenge?

The findings indicated that while designing policies, Ribeiro and Freire encountered minimal controversy in defining their objectives and the means to achieve them. However,

during the implementation phase, significant hindrances emerged. Some obstacles were unrelated to their new perspectives on public schools, while others were directly linked to resistance from political actors like the media, elites, and public opinion, hesitant to accept changes to historically constructed social images and causal stories about public school students and their education.

Analyzing archives and interviews with individuals who participated in the design and implementation of their policies, the study highlighted diverse forms of resistance faced by CIEPs and the democratic administration of public schools. Proposed policies by Ribeiro for Rio de Janeiro schools faced explicit resistance, particularly from media outlets like *O Globo*. This criticism, for instance, depicted the schools as extravagant and raised concerns about compromised public safety, reflecting hesitancy to support policies benefiting societal deviants. Freire encountered subtler criticism focusing on schools, his teaching methods, and the challenge to the existing authoritarian educational structure. The interviews also revealed resistance from educators unprepared to prioritize poor children, rooted in uncertainty about changing their approach and a belief in the public school's role in disciplining students. Despite these challenges, Ribeiro and Freire's projects, critiquing public schools as elitist, predictably faced opposition from the very elites and traditional political practices they aimed to challenge.

Taken together, the findings of this dissertation illuminate the formidable challenge of altering stereotypes entrenched in society about negatively constructed populations, who most generally lack access to political power. Policies aimed at historically marginalized populations often falter, as evidenced by the theoretical framework employed in this study. Public opinion typically opposes the allocation of government resources benefiting social groups portrayed in unfavorable ways. The presented case studies are particularly intriguing, as policymakers

generally shy away from contentious strategies that risk jeopardizing the success of their policies and influencing their reelection prospects. Consequently, it is not surprising that neither Luiza Erundina nor Leonel Brizola failed to secure successors in the subsequent elections, since they proposed policies for the underserved during the redemocratization of Brazil.

Moreover, this study offers insightful conclusions regarding contemporary evidence of social constructions and causal stories. Similar to practices in the 19th century, today public schools in Brazil still interpret, students through the lens of stereotypes based on emotional and value-laded images and symbols rather than objective representations of reality. The enduring negative perceptions of these children, based on their social backgrounds and race, underscores the challenge of changing stereotypes shaped by groups with significant political power and material resources. The labels assigned to negatively constructed groups not only influence the formulation of rules, norms, identities, and institutions but also impact their self-esteem and contribute to self-fulfilling prophecies that hinder public school children's academic achievements and life perspectives.

8.2 Contributions to the Literature

This study sought to contribute to the literature in several key ways. Firstly, it aimed to bridge the gap between policy studies, education, and history. While recent studies have made strides in connecting education with the social constructionist perspective, the qualitative aspect remains underexplored. As such, this research endeavored to provide a more nuanced analysis of educational phenomena, considering the multifaceted factors that impact education policies. By incorporating history into this framework, the study ambitiously aimed to underscore that social constructions and causal stories are deeply rooted in historical evidence, highlighting their evolution over time and emphasizing their challenging, yet changeable, nature.

Additionally, I aspired to broaden the geographical applicability of the social constructionist framework. By centering its focus on Brazil, the study illustrated that social constructions and causal stories are deeply intertwined with the cultural and historical context in which they originate. This emphasis on the Brazilian context serves to underscore the idea that the typology proposed by Schneider and Ingram (1993) is context dependent, urging scholars and researchers not to treat it as a fixed or universal construct. The exploration of the geographical dimension in the study of social constructions highlights the significance of comprehending the specific contexts in which these narratives unfold. This approach aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of social constructions, recognizing the intricate interplay between context, culture, and history in shaping these narratives.

Furthermore, a central objective of this research was to bridge the gap between the intellectual work and policies developed by Ribeiro and Freire. Despite their status as contemporaries and friends, there has been a dearth of research exploring the intersection of their perspectives on education. This study aimed to fill this gap by delving into how their ideas manifested in policies and examining how their collective insights can enrich contemporary discussions on education. By shedding light on the connections between their intellectual contributions and policy initiatives, this research offers valuable insights into the practical implications of their educational philosophies. Through this exploration, the literature gains a deeper understanding of the impact of their ideas on educational practices and policymaking processes, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of education.

By striving to meet these objectives, this study aimed to contribute to our understanding of how stereotypes impacted (and continue to impact) public school students in Brazil. The insights derived from the research shed light on the complex dynamics at play and offer

recommendations for addressing the challenges posed by these stereotypes. The findings serve as a resource for educational stakeholders, providing them with a deeper understanding of the issues. Policymakers could potentially leverage these insights to formulate better informed strategies, and practitioners might incorporate them into their approaches to create a more inclusive and transformative educational environment. The ultimate goal was to foster an educational system in Brazil that not only recognizes and challenges stereotypes but also actively promotes inclusivity, creating a learning environment in which all students thrive, regardless of their background or identity.

8.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Upon reaching the conclusion of a project, it is customary to contemplate its future implications, given the insights garnered from the discussion of its outcomes. In this context, several research avenues emerged as promising paths for future inquiries into the intricate dynamics of social constructions and causal stories within educational policies. One area of potential exploration involves a more in-depth investigation into the perceptions of educational policy recipients—students, families, and communities. By discerning the impact of stereotypes on marginalized students' educational journeys and prospects, researchers can uncover insights that contribute to a more holistic understanding of the effects of policy decisions on diverse populations.

Another compelling avenue for future research lies in examining how school principals and teachers navigate stereotypes within their pedagogical practices. This line of inquiry holds the potential to unveil strategies employed by educators to challenge existing biases and create a more inclusive learning environment. By exploring the intricacies of the approaches of these educators, researchers can identify effective measures that contribute to breaking down societal

stereotypes and fostering a positive educational experience for all students. Understanding whether educators' perspectives are influenced by their own experiences as former public school children adds an additional layer of complexity to this research. It provides an opportunity to delve into the personal dimensions that shape educational practices, offering insights into the motivations and experiences that inform educators' efforts to create more equitable and empowering educational environments.

A third avenue of exploration centers around the intersections between social constructions, causal stories, and influential social movements, with a particular emphasis on antiracist initiatives led by Black educators in Brazil. Investigating the impact of such movements on shaping policies and challenging discriminatory narratives could provide lessons for fostering educational equity. Additionally, broadening the analytical scope beyond conventional areas like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo to investigate regional variations in preconceived notions about public school students across Brazil could offer insights into the diverse challenges faced in different areas of the country.

On an international scale, a comparative analysis across countries with similar historical backgrounds, such as the United States post-segregation, presents an opportunity to uncover parallels in social constructions and causal stories. By delving into the intricacies of historical factors like slavery and discrimination, researchers can discern the common threads that weave through different nations' pasts. Such a comparative exploration could provide insights into the shared legacies of systemic injustices and also shed light on the ways in which these historical factors continue to shape contemporary educational challenges. Understanding these parallels can contribute significantly to the literature in international and comparative education, offering a broader understanding of how social constructions influence educational policies across diverse

cultural contexts. This type of research has the potential to foster cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation, paving the way for better informed strategies to address systemic issues in education on a global scale.

In addition, the inclusion of gender as a social marker in the research agenda could provide a crucial perspective on the historical exclusionary practices toward girls in Brazilian schools. Examining the enduring impacts of these exclusions on girls' education and future prospects contributes a vital dimension to understanding the intersectionality of social markers within the educational landscape. This lens also connects to the broader issue of the feminization of teaching, in which teaching has been historically associated with femininity, contributing to the devaluation of the profession. Addressing the challenges faced by female educators, such as lower salaries and limited career advancement opportunities, is essential for dismantling gender stereotypes and fostering a more equitable educational environment.

Furthermore, extending research to explore stereotypes about other marginalized populations in Brazil would provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dynamics at play. Investigating how stereotypes affect diverse groups, considering factors such as race, socioeconomic status, and regional variations, could offer insights into the pervasive nature of social constructions and their impact on educational experiences. This approach aligns with the broader goal of creating inclusive and equitable educational policies that address the unique challenges faced by different marginalized populations in Brazil. This collective research effort has the potential to inform policies and practices that create a more inclusive, equitable, and democratic educational landscape for all.

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Appendix A: Interviewees for This Study

Participant	Description/Role	Protocol Applied	Research Question
Ângela Biz Antunes	Pedagogical director of Paulo Freire Insitute. Formerly a teacher in the municipal and state public school system of São Paulo, she holds a doctorate in education from the University of São Paulo (USP). She served as president of school council during Paulo Freire's tenure in the secretary of education.	Appendix D	3
Ângela Fernandes	She is an educator, teacher trainer, and doctor in Public Policies and Human Development from the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). She actively participated in the implementation of the CIEPs, attending the Meeting of Mendes, and serving as the director of CIEP Glauber Rocha, in Nova Friburgo.	Appendix C	3
Carlos Guimarães	Educator, leader of the PDT in the Chamber of Deputies during the government of Leonel Brizola (1983-1987). He played a role in the implementation of CIEPs in the interior of the state of Rio de Janeiro.	Appendix C	3
Cileda Perrella	Formerly a teacher in the municipal school system of São Paulo during Freire's tenure in the secretary of education, she holds a doctorate in education from the University of São Paulo (USP).	Appendix D	3
Cleuza Repulho	She was the municipal secretary of education in São Bernardo do Campo and Santo André, cities in the interior of the state of São Paulo. She specializes in the democratic management of public education.	Appendix B	1
Daniel Cara	Educator, political scientist, and politician. Professor at the School of Education at the University of São Paulo and member of the Directive Committee of the National Campaign for the Right to Education.	Appendix B	1
Glória Almeida	Expert in public policies with a focus on antiracist education.	Appendix B	1
Haydée Paixão	Expert in public policies with a focus on antiracist education.	Appendix B	1

Interviewee A	Professor of Education at a public university in São Paulo, specializing in the history of Brazilian education.	Appendix B	1
Isabelly Nascimento	Expert in public policies with a focus on antiracist education.	Appendix B	1
Janaína Barros	Pedagogical Coordinator of the State Education Network in Bahia. Also worked training teachers and technical teams of education secretariats in Brazil.	Appendix B	1
José Ronaldo Cunha	President of the Darcy Ribeiro Foundation (FUNDAR), he was one of the architects in Oscar Niemeyer's team, responsible for the construction of the CIEPs.	Appendix C	3
Lavini Castro	Public school teacher and founder-coordinator of the Antiracist Teachers Network.	Appendix B	1
Lia Faria	Retired full professor from the Faculty of Education at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). Held the position of general coordinator of personnel training in the initial phase of the CIEPs program (1985-1987) and actively participated in the project's implementation.	Appendix C	3
Lúcia Velloso	Professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). Council Member, Darcy Ribeiro Foundation (FUNDAR). Partipated in the policy design and implementation phases during Darcy Ribeiro's tenure in the secretary of education.	Appendix C	3
Maíra Mantovani	Public school teacher. Expert in antiracist education.	Appendix B	1
Márcia Lobosco	Public school teacher. Expert in antiracist education.	Appendix B	1
Meyri Chieffi	Former public school teacher, served as the director of the Technical Guidance Division for Primary and Secondary Schools at the Directorate of Technical Orientation (DOT) during Freire's tenure in the secretary of education.	Appendix D	3
Olga Figueiredo	Former public school teacher, served as a coordinator at one of the Nuclei of Educational Action (NAE) during Freire's tenure in the secretary of education.	Appendix D	3

Regina Estima	Former public school teacher, served as the director of Adult and Youth Education (EJA) at the Directorate of Technical Orientation (DOT) during Freire's tenure in the secretary of education.	Appendix D	3
Silvana Bezerra	Professor at the Federal Center for Technological Education-RJ, holds a doctorate in Education from the Federal Fluminense University (UFF). Focuses on social projects aimed at assisting children in vulnerable communities.	Appendix B	1
Suzana Veiga	Former public school teacher. Doctor in History from the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE).	Appendix B	1

Appendix B: Semistructured Interview Protocol for Research Question 1 – Stereotypes About the Public School Child

This semistructured interview protocol served as the basis for engaging participants with expertise in the social construction and causal narratives surrounding the public school child. Interviews were conducted in Portuguese, utilizing a Portuguese version of the protocol. Prior to commencing the interviews, I reiterated certain points outlined in the consent form and provided a brief overview of the research, addressing any questions they may have had.

Questions

1. First, I would like to ask you to introduce yourself, briefly discussing your background and work.
2. In your opinion, how do stereotypes about students in public schools in Brazil typically manifest? Are there specific traits or characteristics commonly associated with them?
3. How does socioeconomic class intersect with the formation of stereotypes about students in public schools in Brazil? What are the main factors influencing this relationship?
4. In what ways do racial dynamics influence the formation of these stereotypes? Are there noticeable differences in the perception of students from public schools of different racial backgrounds?
5. What role do teachers play in the formation of these stereotypes? How is teaching impacted?
6. How do students from public schools internalize these stereotypes, and what is the impact on their self-esteem, aspirations, and overall educational experience?
7. How do personal experiences and the stories of individuals within the school contribute to the reinforcement of these stereotypes? Are there common narratives that people tend to believe without critically examining them?

8. What is the role of educational policies in perpetuating or challenging these stereotypes? How do disparities in educational resources contribute to the perception of students in public schools?

9. Can you identify historical factors that have contributed to the development and persistence of stereotypes about students in public schools in Brazil?

10. Could you explain the role of media and popular culture in the formation of these stereotypes? How do media representations contribute to the public perception of students in public schools?

11. Do you see efforts, both within the school and in society at large, to challenge and demystify these stereotypes? What strategies have been effective in countering these negative perceptions?

12. What measures can educators, parents, and policymakers take to promote a more accurate and fair representation of students in public schools, addressing both class and race biases?

13. What recommendations would you give to those who wish to actively contribute to demystifying these stereotypes and promoting a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for all students?

Appendix C: Semistructured Interview Protocol for Research Question 3 – Darcy Ribeiro's Policy Design and Implementation

This semistructured interview protocol served as the basis for engaging participants that worked with Darcy Ribeiro in the CIEPs' design and/or implementation. Interviews were conducted in Portuguese, utilizing a Portuguese version of the protocol. Prior to commencing the interviews, I reiterated certain points outlined in the consent form and provided a brief overview of the research, addressing any questions they may have had.

Questions

1. Could you please share a bit about your professional journey and its connection to Darcy Ribeiro and the CIEPs?

2. When the PEE was taking shape, what were the primary obstacles to implementation? Media, teachers, society?

3. One aspect that catches my attention when reading about the CIEPs is the significant attention it received in the media and academic discussions. Criticisms surfaced about the curriculum, classroom acoustics, and the selected locations for the schools. Why do you believe the project garnered such widespread attention?

4. Who were the children that the CIEPs aimed to educate?

5. Do you think all the criticism directed at the CIEPs is tied to the fact that these schools were intended for poor and black children?

6. Do you believe that the way Darcy and the Brizola government presented the school influenced how the public perceived the CIEPs?

7. How did the stereotype of a "school for poor children" impact the acceptance of the project by poor families, in your opinion?

8. I also wanted to inquire about the historical context. Would you say that Darcy Ribeiro believed that in a scenario of redemocratization, people would be receptive to a new public school project? Was there any indication in this regard (e.g., were people consulted)?

9. Would you say that the PEE also served as a platform to bolster the PDT?

10. In your opinion, what were the main missteps in the development and implementation of the PEE? What, in your view, could have been done differently?

11. How was the decision-making process for the construction of the CIEPs? How were the locations chosen, and what were the priorities for their construction?

12. In what ways did Darcy Ribeiro and the CIEPs influence the perception of children in public schools?

13. What is the enduring impact of Darcy's ideas on Brazilian education today?

Appendix D: Semistructured Interview Protocol for Research Question 3 – Paulo Freire's Policy Design and Implementation

This semistructured interview protocol served as the basis for engaging participants that worked with Paulo Freire in the design and/or implementation of his education policy during his tenure at the secretary of education in São Paulo. Interviews were conducted in Portuguese, utilizing a Portuguese version of the protocol. Prior to commencing the interviews, I reiterated certain points outlined in the consent form and provided a brief overview of the research, addressing any questions they may have had.

Questions

1. Could you share a bit about your professional trajectory and its connection to public education, please?
2. How does your trajectory relate to Paulo Freire's management? Could you talk about your involvement in the educational project he proposed in São Paulo?
3. In your opinion, what were the most innovative proposals?
4. Do you believe the goals, target populations, budget, etc., were feasible?
5. Luiza Erundina emphasized popular participation, aligning with Paulo Freire's philosophy. Do you think the educator proposed the policy in a context favorable to change?
6. What were the main challenges in implementing the policies?
7. Was there resistance from certain sectors of society because the proposals favored the less privileged classes?
8. Regarding educational projects, what were the main obstacles to implementation? Media, teachers, society?

9. Considering policy implementation, what were the main obstacles to making it a successful project?

10. In what way did Paulo Freire influence how the child in public school was perceived at that historical moment?

11. What is the legacy of Freire's thinking for public education even today?