

**Politics and Pedagogy: How Brazilian Teachers' Socio-Historical Perspectives Shape and  
are Shaped by Their Political-Pedagogical Commitments**

by

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## Abstract

This dissertation discusses the political role of education, focusing on the humanities curriculum and teaching. First, it delves into Brazilian history and the development of the education system with a post-colonial critical perspective to situate the current challenges and contentions regarding schools. Then, it develops a multiple case study with eight Brazilian humanities teachers to investigate the relationship between historical perspectives and pedagogical commitments and how their working contexts hinder or favour the fulfilment of these commitments. This study engages with scholarship on human agency, historical consciousness, and identity formation to construe participants' socio-historical perspectives and locate them in Brazil's post-colonial history. The research concluded that political and historical perspectives hinge on people's identities, founded on values, beliefs, and representations acquired throughout life. Such identities contain temporal and structural components, making some ideas incontrovertible even when confronted with contradictory information. Furthermore, identities are crucial in human adaptation because they provide psychic stability and group solidarity. With the emergence of modern states, nationalism became a central component of identity formation, and schools have played an essential role. However, this research indicates that core beliefs can change, and education has an important part in enabling students to go beyond the traditional narratives and have a broad historical perspective that acknowledges modernity as a generative and destructive force. Finally, this dissertation concludes that despite the progressive goals of the curriculum regarding the redress of historical injustices in Brazil, the ecologies of schools do not provide the necessary resources to enable teachers to enact these principles.

*Key Words:* Historical perspectives, pedagogical commitments, humanities teachers, teacher agency, historical consciousness.

## Preface

This thesis is an original work by Alexandre Weingrill Araujo. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Politics and pedagogy: how teachers’ historical understandings shape and are shaped by their political commitments,” No. 00106359, December 23, 2020. This study contains content that has been submitted as the article “How teachers’ historical understandings shape their pedagogical commitments?” and is under review for publication in the Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education.

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## Introduction

Growing up in Sao Paulo, I would see many homeless people searching for food in trash cans. Even worse was witnessing young children begging for money in traffic lights. In addition, several episodes I saw on the media made me question the country where I was born. In one of these events, a group of wealthy youth in the country's capital poured gasoline on a man sleeping on a bus stall and lit it with matches. The man, who had most of his body burned and died, happened to be an Indigenous person who had gone to the capital to join protests on the national day of Indigenous peoples. However, the boys later declared they did not know he was an Indigenous person (as if it made any difference!), and due to influential connections, they hardly faced any consequences. Another brutal event I witnessed in the media was the assassination of eight homeless people in Rio de Janeiro, one of whom was only eleven years old. Three police officers hired by local store owners committed the crime in retaliation to the problems these homeless people caused in the region, such as minor thefts, drug consumption, and prostitution. These are just some examples of a long list of events that have shown me that some people's lives in Brazil are considered by many to be dispensable (Brown & Prado, 1997).

At the same time, the privileges of being a white person born in the 'good' neighbourhoods of Sao Paulo afforded me a comfortable life and many opportunities to obtain adequate health care, education, and housing. These paradoxes instigated me to search for the roots of the social disparities evident in the media and daily experiences in a colossal Latin American metropolis. As a result, I decided to take a social sciences degree and learn more about the social formation and inequality processes. The course allowed me to become familiar with the most influential social scientists in the Western tradition: Max Weber, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Franz Boas, Margaret Mead and political scholars such as Niccolo Machiavelli, John

Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Later, I pursued a master's degree in education and investigated the intersections between high schools and their places in the urban fabric and how they impacted pupils' learning experiences.

These educational opportunities made me conversant with the main currents in Western thought (e.g., socialism, liberalism, and conservatism). Moreover, they led me to believe that Brazil's problems stemmed from its insufficient adhesion to the ideals of modernity, comprising an enlightened citizenry and a responsive state that safeguards all people's political, civil, and social rights.

Committed to these ideals of helping form these "good" citizens, I started working as a social studies teacher in public and private schools. A striking difference was that private institutions had much better infrastructure, working conditions, and higher wages. I also noticed how pupils from these places enjoyed many more opportunities to further their educational paths, such as remedial activities, extracurricular courses, and easy access to information.

Thus, my main goal in the private school was to show students that they should pay attention to social problems even if they did not affect them directly. For example, in an interdisciplinary project with grade 6 students, we examined the issue of slums in Latin America and actions that could deal with the problem. In public schools, my focus was to show students they had constitutional rights and should claim them. For instance, in one activity with grade 12 students, they wrote a letter to the governor of Sao Paulo to express their experiences in the public school, characterized by the scarcity of teachers and formative spaces (e.g., science labs, field trips).

Nonetheless, I still did not have a satisfactory answer to why the project of modernity (i.e., an enlightened citizenry and a state that safeguarded people's rights) had not been

successful in Brazil, at least for a vast contingent of the population. The general context of this dissertation addresses this question by analyzing the education system's development in Brazil and the role teachers play in it.

In this sense, Albisetti (2019) argues that the creation of education systems in different countries was concomitant to the formation of nation-states in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and responded to the need to form workers and forge social cohesion and political loyalty to the national community. Thus, education in contemporary societies has a strong relationship with national states. Furthermore, it is inseparable from politics because every educational effort aims to lead pupils to acquire specific skills that respond to personal and collective needs (e.g., Apple, 2008; Freire, 2005; Gramsci, 2000). Therefore, political commitments pervade school practices, even if they remain unnoticed.

Among school disciplines, social studies<sup>1</sup> have related to imparting values and knowledge among the younger generations to promote social stability and cohesion. Nation-states endeavour to create a link with previous generations by establishing a shared past, which opens the possibility for future collective missions (Laville, 2004; Seixas, 2012). In this process, nation-states distinguish those who are part of the community and those who are not, forging “an imagined “we”/ “our” that get storied in powerful emotive terms” (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011, p. 611)

Thus, traditionally, these disciplines supported a specific national image that inspires feelings of allegiance and patriotic zeal (e.g., Seixas, 2004; Wertsch, 2004). In this context, history teachers have been the “first among nationalists” (Willinsky, 1998, p. 119). Parkes

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<sup>1</sup> While in countries such as Canada and the USA, the discipline of social studies comprises subjects such as history, geography, sociology, and even philosophy, in Brazil they are distinct disciplines that constitute the humanities area. In this text, the terms ‘humanities’ and ‘social studies’ will be used interchangeably to facilitate the approximation of scholarship in these different places.

(2007) supports this idea, affirming that nationalism has “significantly shaped the construction and constitution of subjects such as geography, language, literature, and history” (p. 392).

Such narratives have considerable political repercussions because they entail “an interpretation of past actuality via a conception of temporal change that encompasses past, present and the expectation of future events” (Rusen, 2004, p. 67). Similarly, den Heyer (2018) contends that “the historicized past informs the present as a set of choices evaluated and possible future actions projected” (p. 243). Consequently, these narratives are instrumental in construing the motions of society throughout time and establishing the direction in which it is headed, and, in a sense, “who controls the past, controls the future” (Seixas, 2012, p. 12).

Although each nation has its own stock of stories, the modernity template prevails, portraying history as a straight line toward nation-states’ formation, considered the summit of collective existence (Mignolo, 2005). den Heyer and Abbott (2011) call this progressive national plotline grand narratives and argue that they constitute the default historical version because of their easy consumption due to their simplified depiction of the past and their ubiquitous and repetitive presence in public spaces. Thus, it constitutes the template that absorbs and shapes specific local narratives.

However, many scholars have argued that this traditional depiction of national history overlooks events that have had a dramatic and far-reaching impact on human rights and social justice (e.g., enslavement, Indigenous land displacement, racism, as well as urban and educational inequality). This neglect of critical historical episodes prevents their recognition and redressing, keeping intact the symbolic and material structures that generated them (e.g., Maldonado-Torres, 2010; Mollet, 2015; Mignolo, 2005; Quijano, 2000; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013).

Proposals to change the social studies curriculum have emerged from new historical paradigms, influenced by structuralist and post-structuralist thinkers. Nonetheless, because national narratives are typically closely tied to a collective identity project, critiques of them “are often taken to be attacks on the identity project itself” (Wertsch, 2012, p. 12). Consequently, recommendations to shift the humanities curriculum framework from the traditional template to other perspectives have provoked a backlash from conservative groups who see them as threats to their historical ideals founded on the modernity template (Parkes, 2007; Taylor, 2004). Therefore, at the core of these disputes is the issue of how “curriculum and instruction should be adjusted to accommodate social pluralism” (Thornton, 2017, p. 10).

Conservative groups (i.e., those who subscribe to the grand-narrative unilinear modernity framework) contend that the disciplines’ goal is to preserve and promote national unity and that teachers should present history and society as settled accounts (Taylor, 2004). Laville (2004), in this sense, argues that many teachers embrace the long-established ways of studying society based on the traditional tales of the nation-state because there is a sense of comfort in retelling well-known and likable narratives.

On the other hand, educators, scholars, and political groups who embrace critical perspectives of human studies have advocated the need for a curriculum that acknowledges the events that put specific groups in a subaltern position in the emergence of nation-states (e.g., Indigenous and black peoples). They also contest the conservative assertion that the humanities must be neutral (i.e., free from bias), claiming that every socio-historical narrative rests on paradigmatic templates such as liberalism, nationalism, patriotism, pragmatism, Marxism, and feminism. Thus, social narratives always entail philosophical, methodological, and political

positions by the authors (e.g., den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Freedman, 2015; Jenkins, 2004; Parkes, 2007).

It is possible to see that the studies of society have been the most contentious school subjects and suffered the sharpest swings in many different countries (e.g., Australia, Brazil, Chile, the USA) (e.g., Evans, 2010; Parkes, 2007; Taylor, 2020). These clashes happen over the kind of social cohesion to which education should commit. Some educators emphasize the need to help students fit into, preserve, and develop the current social order, while others stress the need to examine and disrupt the status quo (Knowles, 2018; Stanley, 2010; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Teachers occupy a pivotal position in these issues, as they are responsible for enacting the curriculum and promoting specific ideas about collective and individual identities embedded in historical narratives (Ross, 2006; Thornton, 2005). Emirbayer and Mische (1998), in this sense, contend that “the ways in which people understand their own relationship to the past, future, and present make a difference to their actions” (p. 973). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate how their representations of these topics shape their practice and aspirations. Hence, one of the questions this research will address is: *how do teachers’ historical perspectives of Brazil shape and are shaped by their political and pedagogical commitments?*

Historical perspective refers to “modes of emplotment” of different events to generate a narrative (White, 1997, p. 395). Epstein (1998) defines it as “the assumptions, knowledge, and values that shape historians’ and others’ judgments about the meaning and significance of historical actors, events, institutions, and processes” (p. 398). Therefore, in social and historical accounts, “a way of seeing is always a way of not seeing” (K. Burke in Gottesman, 2019, p. 66). Epstein (1998) corroborates this idea, arguing that they are not “only about the past but just as

much about a selection of only those aspects of the past that serve or agree with some group's present historical perspective—itsself a frame consisting of sociopolitical ideologies of contemporary societies” (p. 398).

As previously argued, nation-states have played a critical role in producing these narratives and are the most prevalent socio-political organization of our time (Anderson, 2006). Moreover, they also regulate the relationships between people within a territory and define civic, political, and social rights “against which achievement can be measured and towards which aspiration can be directed” (Marshall, 1950, p. 29). Finally, states are responsible for the educational policies (e.g., investment in school infrastructure, teacher certification) and constitute a central topic in the social studies curriculum. Thus, historical perspectives regarding the nation have a crucial political role because they are the parameters for construing its actuality and futurity regarding the lives of people in it. Education plays an essential part in this respect because it can circulate or disrupt stories.

In this regard, teachers occupy a central position in the circulation or disruption of these stories as enactors of the curriculum (Ross, 2006; Thornton, 2005). Hence, it is crucial to investigate teachers' historical consciousness because it renders “present actuality intelligible while fashioning its future perspectives” (Rusen, 2004, p. 67). Thus, it is instrumental in construing their activities and subjectivity and providing plausibility to their moral values (Rusen, 2004).

In the context of schools, the concrete situation of teachers' work (e.g., curriculum, school community, and infrastructure) constitute the environment that may act as a facilitator or constrainer to their commitments. Biesta et al. (2015) corroborate this perspective, arguing that it is “important not just to look at individuals and what they are able or not able to do but also at



the cultures, structures and relationships that shape the particular ‘ecologies’ within which teachers work” (p. 3). In this sense, education is a deeply situated practice, and a second question this research will address is: *what circumstances do teachers believe impact (as constraints and affordances) the fulfilment of their pedagogical commitments?* This question aims to address a perceived gap between the curricular goals in Brazil (e.g., promoting critical thinking and propelling human rights) and the structure of schools, as further discussed in chapter two. Hence, it is vital to investigate teachers’ perspectives to “uncover constraints that affect the approaches to and goals for social studies education” (Ross, 2006, p. 6).

This research involves a group of eight Brazilian humanities teachers who constitute instrumental case studies to increase our theoretical awareness of topics such as how historical perspectives inform political and pedagogical commitments, the elements that constitute educators’ historical consciousness, and the affordances and constraints present in the education system. The goal is not to dispute participants’ ideas or educate them on what I consider relevant but to identify what perspectives move them and what their concrete work experiences do to them. In other words, the goal is to identify their cognitive and affective resources, how they shape their pedagogical commitments, and how they manifest or are repressed in their practices.

A crucial component of human research credibility is making the inquiry process and interpretation accessible to others so they can judge their validity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In socio-historical narratives, it is essential to maintain the empirical integrity of the facts described (i.e., basing narratives on artifacts, such as documents, statistics, and interviews) and consciously recognize the “patterns of emphasis and omissions that derive from the author’s choice of frame” (Freedman, 2015, p. 360). White (1997) corroborates this perspective, arguing that “it is because

narratives are differently emplotted that discriminations among the plot types can be made” (p. 395).

Thus, in chapter one, I present my perspective of Brazilian history and society, which is instrumental in defining this research’s objective and establishing its relevance. This exposition allows the reader to identify how I “emplot” the facts and attribute a specific trajectory in the country’s development that needs close consideration. Chapter two presents a concise history of the Brazilian education system to contextualize participants’ working conditions. Chapter three brings the literature review on this research’s topics and indicates how the current study may contribute to these discussions. Chapter four details the methodological framework of this research. It presents the reasons behind the multiple case study approach and the rationale behind selecting eight Brazilian humanities teachers to participate. Moreover, it outlines the data collection and analytical framework and highlights the steps to provide this text with credibility.

Chapter five, in turn, explores participants’ life trajectories and the main characteristics of their historical stances. It examines the primary references (e.g., life experiences, authors) they use to construe social reality and frame their national historical narratives. Chapter six introduces participants’ interpretations of Brazilian history and society and indicates how they relate to their political lens and pedagogical commitments. Chapter seven delves into their interpretations of the country’s education system’s development and where they situate themselves in this process. Finally, chapter eight summarizes the study’s main findings, points out its limitations, and suggests topics for future research.

## **Chapter 1 – A Complicated Job: Navigating the Paradoxes in the Brazilian National Formation**

The introduction of this text briefly discussed how education and politics are intertwined, as every educational endeavour stems from assumptions about the desirable social goals and the most appropriate means to achieve them. Such assumptions entail an iterative dimension because they derive from past knowledge, values and habits, raising questions about whose knowledge and experiences count when formulating policies such as curriculum design and the institutional frameworks of schools (Apple, 2008; Stanley, 2012). Teachers, in turn, enact the curriculum based on their socio-historical perspectives, and it is necessary to investigate how these perspectives develop because they play a central role in establishing their political and pedagogical goals.

As previously discussed, representations about the nation-state, its past and destiny are crucial curricular topics and stem from philosophical, political, and methodological principles. In this sense, Wertsch (2012) argues that historical perspectives emerge from a tension between individuals and the narrative tools available in public discourses related to human agency, as developed in chapter three. Consequently, it is necessary to establish the socio-historical settings to understand better what cognitive tools and events constitute the background for participants' representations.

Therefore, in this chapter, I delve into Brazilian national history and present the perspective that defines the relevance of this study. I also ponder on a desirable future for the country and the path to achieving it. Thus, I establish the political commitments of this research and situate it into the broader field of scholarship on historical consciousness, post-colonial studies, and teacher agency.

## **1. The Formation of the Brazilian Nation-State: a Modern or Colonial Intent?**

In this section, I briefly explore the formation of the Brazilian nation-state stressing the processes that resulted in the glaring disparities that affect the life of specific groups. Then, beginning with the Portuguese arrival in 1500, this segment highlights decisive events in the constitution of Brazil as such.

### ***1.1. The Colonial Period (1492-1822)***

In 1992, when I was in grade 6, the school where I studied created a contest to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of America by Cristopher Columbus. We had to create a logo to celebrate the event, and the winner would have their drawing printed on a t-shirt that the school would sell to students. The idea that the Europeans ‘discovered’ Brazil is a taken-for-granted fact, and I continued subscribing to it in high school.

However, as Mignolo (2005) argues, “‘America’ was never a continent waiting to be discovered. Rather, ‘America’ as we know it, was an *invention* forged in the process of European colonial history and the consolidation and expansion of the Western world view and institutions” (p. 2, emphasis on the original). This forging of a new continent rested on assumptions of superiority of European culture, institutions and religion reified in the form of race. In this sense, racial identity became the instrument of social classification and denoted the distance between the ‘conquerors’ and ‘conquered.’ It also became an instrument to legitimize the relations of domination imposed by conquest (Quijano, 2000).

This colonial matrix based on racism was the foundation of economic relationships grounded on the forcible removal of Indigenous groups from their lands and their transformation into slaves or a peasant subclass. It also fuelled transatlantic slavery and transformed many Africans into commodities necessary to maintain a system based on extraction and large

plantations to export crops such as sugar cane and coffee. Between 1550 and 1850, an estimated 4.8 million human beings from Africa were trafficked as enslaved people in Brazil, the world's highest number (de Alencastro, 2018).

Therefore, coloniality meant the racialization of people, which emerged “at the intersection of faith, knowledge and skin colour” (Mignolo, 2010, p. 333). Such racialization entailed the distribution of human beings in a hierarchy, first on religious grounds (i.e., Christian versus non-Christian) and then on naturalist grounds (i.e., developed human, quasi-human, non-human) (Wynter, 2003). The concept of race had far-reaching impacts on the emergence of nation-states in America, such as their labour structure. Although waged labour became prevalent in European countries, it coexisted with involuntary serfdom and slavery of Indigenous and black people in many other parts of the world.

Colonialism also involved an epistemic imposition, erasing many people's histories, destroying their social structures, and belittling their ways of knowing and expression. Moreover, it disintegrated the kinship unity of these communities, impacting most heavily Indigenous and black women, who were outside of the symbolic protection destined for white women in the colonial family (Quijano, 2015). These elements constitute the colonial wounds that have profoundly impacted many people and forcibly placed them in a subaltern position (Mignolo, 2005). Niemeyer (1987) represented the colonial wound in Latin America in the sculpture *Mão* [Hand] displayed in the Latin American Memorial in Sao Paulo:

**Figure 1**

*Sculpture Mão (Niemeyer, 1987)*



*Note.* The text engraved by the author underneath the sculpture reads: "Sweat, blood and poverty marked the history of Latin America, so disjointed and oppressed! It is urgent to readjust it, unite it, and transform it into an unflinching monobloc to make it independent and happy."

These socio-economic dynamics consolidated the Eurocentric hegemony on the planet. On the one hand, extractivism and the production of crops for the world market without labourers' remuneration generated surplus revenues that made it possible for European states to invest in improved production techniques that culminated in the industrial revolution and capitalism. On the other hand, the colonial racial classification system also consolidated an epistemology in which different cultures and civilizations were placed at different developmental stages, with European nation-states at the summit. This classification justified the exploitation of African and Indigenous people imposing on them the duty to serve a supposedly "superior" race.

Although the European dominance on the world stage became possible by exploiting Indigenous and African peoples, including their invaluable knowledge about agriculture, mining, fishing, and hunting, they created "a mythology of these never existing prior to the European encounter" (Rose, 2019, p. 31). Quijano (2000) corroborates this idea, arguing that Europeans persuaded themselves that "in some way, they had auto produced themselves as a civilization" (p. 562). Thus, even though most American countries eventually became independent during the nineteenth century, this representation of European countries as self-made cases of success and bearers of civilization was predominant in many of them (Quijano, 2000).

### ***1.2 From the Independence to the New Republic (1822- 1930)***

Brazil's independence was more the result of the Napoleonic invasion of Portugal in 1807 than a local movement wanting to fight against exploitation from the metropolis, as was the case in the USA, Argentina, and Peru, for instance. To flee from the French invasion, Portugal's King escaped to Brazil and raised its status from a colony to a member of the United Kingdom of Portugal and the Algarves. At the end of the Napoleonic wars, the Portuguese King returned to

Europe but left his son. Soon after, the country declared independence in 1822, formally recognized by Portugal in 1824.

However, the country's independence did little to alter the matrix of social relations established in the colonial period, and the social hierarchy that had enslaved Africans and Indigenous peoples at the bottom remained intact. Mignolo (2005) summarizes this situation by stating that

The Creole [i.e., European descendants born in America] elite really missed the point. Instead of devoting themselves to the critical analysis of colonialism (in the same way as European intellectuals devoted themselves to the critical analysis of the monarchy and despotism, and the church that preceded and surrounded them), the Creole elites of the newly independent and emerging countries devoted themselves to emulating European intellectuals and imagining that their local histories could be redressed by following the example of France and England and hiding colonialism. (pp. 66-67)

Thus, although the elites admired European nation-states for their economic, political, and cultural foundations and aspired to build a similar state in Brazil, they ignored the harsh reality of coloniality that rested on ruthless exploitation of racialized labour and concentration of land and power in the hands of very few people. Moreover, the country kept slavery for 66 years after its independence until 1888, demonstrating its firm grip on the colonial matrix. Thus, the elites tended to see themselves as parts of the triumphant European history and bastions of modernity instead of heirs of the colonial system. Quijano (2000) explains the situation as follows:

The process of independence for Latin American states without decolonizing society could not have been, and it was not, a process toward the development of modern nation-



states, but was instead a re-articulation of the coloniality of power over new institutional bases. (p. 567)

Because this system rested on the non-waged labour of enslaved Africans and land dispossession and concentration among the elite, it undermined the formation of social and economic structures to generate a significant internal market. This structure, in turn, relegated the working classes to a situation of poverty and the elites to heavy dependence on external markets for obtaining profit and the ostentatious consumption of European commodities (Quijano, 2000).

Another example of the colonial legacy is the Land Law of 1850, which ruled that all land belonged to the Brazilian Crown and that the only means to obtain it would be through direct purchase and payment of taxes. Such a law epitomized the spirit of colonization in the newly formed country because it destined significant tracts of land to European settlers through private and provincial initiatives. Furthermore, it restricted land ownership by black and mestizo people and projected the removal and erasure of Indigenous societies who lived in these areas (Seyferth, 2002). Skidmore (2010) contends that this policy has had many significant implications for economic inequality in modern Brazil because it institutionalized the concentration of legal land ownership in a country where land was the principal source of wealth.

It consolidated a feudal system, especially in the country's North and Northeastern regions, whose warm and humid climate offered the ideal conditions for the plantation system. In this way, the communities of formerly enslaved people and Indigenous descendants along with Mestizos served as labourers in the large land tracts, which, in most cases, had been inherited by descendants of the Portuguese settlers. Nevertheless, despite their status as free labourers, the violence that had been ubiquitous since colonization persisted.

As they could not legally have the lands, the peasants had to pay a fee for living in the territory through labour, money, or part of their produce. Moreover, landowners, fearing peasants would claim proprietorship over their lived space, severely restricted them from planting subsistence crops. In this way, the only means for many peasants to get their maintenance was in improvised grocery stores on the farms and villages that would charge a higher price for essential goods. It was a situation of total dependence on the landowner, and, on many occasions, peasant families would face malnourishment and even starvation. Hence, peasant children would start working very young, and consequently, most would not learn to read and write or go to school (Targino et al., 2011).

Hence, landowners had substantial domain over the peasants, including physical and mental punishment of disobedient workers, demolition of their houses, destroying their crops, expulsion from the land without notice and even sexual exploitation (Targino et al., 2011). A Christian missionary who visited the rural regions in the northeast of Brazil claimed that peasants were completely submissive and faced these situations with a fatalistic attitude (Sister Tony in Mitidiero Jr., 2008).

It is important to note how witnessing these situations by Paulo Freire influenced his work, especially his most famous book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005). Freire grew up in Pernambuco, in the northeast of Brazil, where he had contact with many peasants who had been dispossessed and had nowhere to go but precarious places such as slums. With the intense rural exodus brought by oppressive relationships, slums became common in all Brazilian metropolises (Caldeira, 2000; Holston, 2008). Therefore, Brazil's colonial roots have been a deciding factor in the country's inequalities, dramatically impacting the lives of large contingents of people.

The republic proclamation in 1889 did little to alter this situation and stemmed from an alliance between oligarchs and the military to remove the King as a political actor. Although there were elections for different government levels, participation was restricted through education, possessions, gender, and age requirements to ensure that only those with “real stakes” in the country could participate in the electoral system (Holston, 2008, p. 96). These restrictions maintained the country’s oligarchic rule and prevented the adoption of fairer laws regarding land possession, such as the distribution or taxation of unproductive land (Skidmore, 2010). Thus, the republican period started amid the paradox of eliminating a non-elected power from the political sphere (the monarch) while imposing that only a small group of landowners and bureaucrats had stakes in the country.

In this way, Brazilian elites enthusiastically embraced European ideals of modernity, and ideologies such as conservatism, liberalism and even socialism gained traction among some sectors (Levine, 1999). However, as Mignolo (2005) points out, colonialism remained the undesirable ‘child’ of modernity, one that people preferred to ignore and deny that it existed. Consequently, it has remained invisible in public discourse and political action under the “blinding lights of the narratives promoting modernity: conversion, progress, and development” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 171).

### ***1.3 From the New Republic to the End of the Military Regime (1930-1984)***

In the 1930s, the push for industrialization and the economic decline of Brazilian crops (especially coffee) led the landowners’ oligarchic regime to collapse. This downfall gave way to populist governments that aimed to co-opt the emerging urban working class for support and curb the threat of disruptions to the developing industrial economy. In this context, the first labour laws were created, guaranteeing that workers would have rights, such as minimum wage,

paid vacation, maternity, and sick leave. Nonetheless, many people were left out of these initiatives, such as peasants and informal workers, to whom labour rights were not extended (Holston, 2008).

The government became increasingly involved in forging a national sentiment and forming a homogeneous social body, and it repressed initiatives by immigrant groups to maintain their mother tongues and culture. Such an initiative also impacted the groups allowed to immigrate, and there was an increasing preference for Italians, Portuguese, and Spaniards due to the religious and linguistic proximity to the desired national identity (Seyferth, 2002).

One of the pillars of this emerging national identity was the ideology of racial democracy and *mestiçagem* (race-mixing) to declare Brazil's exceptionalism. It was based on the "positive belief that Brazilians were one people forged from centuries of racial and cultural mixing" (Eakin, 2017, p. 221). Thus, this ideology adopted by the government contended that there was no racism in the country, visible in the vastly mixed population and the fact it never enforced segregation rules after slavery abolition, such as the Jim Crow Laws found in the southern United States or the Apartheid in South Africa. In addition, the government started promoting symbols of Afro-Brazilian culture, such as carnival and samba music, by sponsoring parades for the public and celebrating them on a three-day national holiday (Skidmore, 2010).

Nonetheless, these attempts failed to address the fact that miscegenation represented the path to 'civilize' non-whites by bringing them closer to the 'ideal' race members. Hence, there was a pervasive Brazilian aspiration for whitening and derision of blackness, embracing the idea that the former would eventually absorb the latter (Seyferth, 2002). Moreover, this idea also neglected that most impoverished classes were racialized and still suffered from discrimination, state violence, and omission (Eakin, 2017; Levine, 1999). Consequently, while these policies

tried to forge a sentiment of national unity, they did little to change the inequitable structure of labour, race, land distribution, and power set in motion during colonization.

Studies sponsored by UNESCO in the 1950s by influential Brazilian scholars debunked the myth of racial democracy by showing the inequality between white and black people concerning occupation, income, housing, and access to essential services like education (Eakin, 2017). In the 1960s, there were vigorous debates about the country's disparities, and urban and peasant movements defended a socialist turn. Amid the Cold War, the Brazilian Northeast attracted much concern regarding the appearance of a guerrilla movement like in Cuba and China. Influential intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre visited farms in the Northeast to support peasant movements, and *The New York Times* published a series of articles about them (Porfirio, 2015). To appease the situation, US Senator Edward Kennedy visited the area and gifted the peasants with a generator to carry out some of their activities, which is still there as a museum article (Mitidiero Jr., 2008).

However, significant segments of the middle and upper classes and the military opposed these movements and supported the status quo (Mitidieiro Jr., 2008). Backed by the United States, the armed forces mounted a coup d'état in 1964 and took over political, social, and cultural institutions, claiming they would finally place Brazil into modernity. Contestations of the status quo were brutally repressed, and there were several measures to arouse a nationalistic sentiment in the population, such as through curriculum design and the production of TV and radio programs. The government's motto - *Brazil – love it or leave it* - indicated the endeavour to promote a unified society with no space for dissension or contestation (Mazzei et al., 2017).

Despite massive investments in infrastructure and economic growth, social disparities remained unaddressed, and labour and peasant movements were quashed (Mitidieiro Jr., 2008).

Thus, many activists were arrested and tortured, and there was constant surveillance in education institutions. Consequently, a vast contingent of the population remained at the margins of society. The government firmly embraced the racial democracy and *mestiçagem* ideology and even removed questions about race from the census, arguing that the population “had moved beyond racial origins to become members of a Brazilian ‘meta-race’” (Eakin, 2017, p. 240).

At the end of the 1970s, this tight control slackened, and several social movements (e.g., students, labourers, peasants) started mobilizing again. There were massive demonstrations at the beginning of the 1980s to protest the dictatorship and reclaim civil and political rights, contributing to the demise of the military regime in 1984. After that, there were initiatives to safeguard social, civil, and political rights, which led to the preparation of a new federal constitution in 1988, known as the “citizen constitution” (Holston, 2008, p. 106). This process involved several social groups, such as dwellers of underdeveloped peripheral neighbourhoods and black movements, who intended to claim their rights as full state members (Caldeira, 2000; Da Costa, 2010; Holston, 2008).

The mobilization of black movements and scholarly production led the federal government to contemplate policies to address racial inequality in 1995 (Da Costa, 2010). In 1999, the government passed a *Lei das Cotas Raciais* (Law of Racial Quotas), which reserved a percentage of public services and university positions for black and brown people. In 2003, Labour Party’ President Lula da Silva created in the first year of his government the *Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial*, (Special Secretariat of Policy and Promotion of Racial Equality). It resulted in the promulgation of Federal Law 10,639/2003, making teaching African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture obligatory in public and private schools.

It is possible to see that the country's return to democracy in 1984 and the promulgation of a new constitution in 1988 opened an era in which the state finally started to recognize the deep divide left in the country by coloniality and consider measures to redress this issue. A pivotal component in this effort is curriculum design and education. However, as the following chapter explores, coloniality also dramatically impacted the development of Brazil's education system.

## **2. The Political and Theoretical Orientation of the Research**

In the previous sections of this chapter, I argued that the foundation of Brazil was built on a sharp distinction among people based on race and social class, strongly impacting many people's fundamental rights and access to material and intellectual resources. Although there were attempts to forge a national identity that construed the population as a meta-race or a 'melting pot,' it never addressed the substantive content of inequality (i.e., the fact that many people have had substandard living conditions and experienced state violence and neglect) (Da Costa, 2010; Eakin, 2017). This research considers that the Brazilian population still consists of "a large mass of low-income people, separated from a small, but quite rich, elite" (Medeiros et al., 2015, p. 2).

The intersection between race and social class is a critical component of the country's demographics. For example, statistics indicate that between 2008 and 2018, the number of homicides against non-black people fell 12.9%, while it rose 11.5% among black individuals, who have 2.7 more chances of being murdered (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA), 2020). Furthermore, in 2018, white people earned on average 73.9% more than black or brown persons and unemployment among the former was 4.6% less than among the latter (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), 2019). Additionally, black and brown

people have higher restrictions than white people in accessing the internet (23.9%), sanitation (44.5%), education (31.3%), housing (15.5%) and social protection (3.8%) (IBGE, 2019).

Finally, the average life expectancy in the wealthiest neighbourhood in Sao Paulo is twenty-two years more than in the poorest area, which is only twenty-three kilometres away (Rede Nossa Sao Paulo, 2020)!

Although the Brazilian state has endeavoured to create a symbolic national community, these data show that it has not democratized society; in other words, some lives remain more precious than others. In this regard, Holston (2008) identifies a paradox in the formation of the Brazilian nation-state. On the one hand, it imposed no restrictions on black (after slavery abolition) and Indigenous peoples as formal community members. Nevertheless, on the other hand, this recognition was accompanied by a massively unequal distribution of rights and the creation of informal tiers of citizens. Consequently, a considerable part of the population is disenfranchised from the political system (Eakin, 2017; Holston, 2008), and the country's recent political history cannot be explained at the margin of these determinations (Quijano, 2000).

Thus, this research stresses the need to recognize the country's historical legacy, which is alive:

in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects, we breathe coloniality all the time and every day. (Maldonado-Torres, 2010, p. 97)

This pervasiveness of coloniality is visible in the racialization “applied not only to people but to language, religions, knowledge, countries and continents as well” (Mignolo, 2005, p. 17).

However, as argued in the previous sections, there has been a tendency to normalize these events and consider them the inevitable outcome of the contact of European people with ‘less civilized’



societies (Quijano, 2015). As a result, the prevailing social-historical accounts in Brazil retain much of the modernity perspective, which considers that, after some historical mistakes (e.g., slavery that lasted for more than three hundred years), Brazil finally found its way to modernity by incorporating Afro-Brazilian elements into the national culture and formally extending social, political, and civil rights for everyone.

This viewpoint assumes that “from Socrates to Kant and from Hegel to Marx, reason marches in a straight line” (Fausto Reinaga in Mignolo, 2005, p. 51). Such a rectilinear historical horizon has pervaded debates about the formation of Brazil and involved the promotion of the racial democracy ideology, trying to aggregate blackness into national identity without addressing the sharp inequality among different social groups (Da Costa, 2010; Eakin, 2017).

Mignolo (2005) proposes replacing this colonialist rectilinear historiography with interpreting history as heterogeneous structural nodes to provide a perspective of local histories and languages instead of unilinear narratives. Mignolo (2005) explains the relevance of such an approach, arguing that it provides a space for:

Multiple and contesting perspectives and historical processes. We can then look at history as a set of historical-structural heterogeneities that result from a given set of events being cast and interpreted both from the rhetoric of modernity (progress, happiness, wealth) and from the constitutive logic of coloniality (stagnation, death, poverty). (p. 49)

Such a heterogeneous socio-historical perspective is essential to make sense of the glaring disparities that exist in the country and the consequent oppression of some communities. As argued in the introduction of this dissertation, historical disputes are much more than an intellectual argument about what version is right or wrong. They relate to how people construe society’s trajectory, including how its institutions (e.g., court system, parliament, education

system, police, health care, international relationships) should work. Thus, these narratives are instrumental for determining political priorities and commitments and the path to achieving them.

In this sense, curriculum and schools play a significant part in making available the cognitive tools to interpret the motions of collective life. In this regard, teachers enact the program of studies and have some latitude concerning the content and how they will present it. Thus, investigating their historical perspectives and how they are constituted and manifest or are repressed inside the schools is an essential topic of investigation that has significant political repercussions.

### **3. Chapter Summary**

The objective of this chapter was to present the theoretical, socio-historical, and political perspectives that underpin this research. I argued that coloniality pervaded the creation of the Brazilian nation-state, and its impacts are deeply felt to this day in the glaring inequalities that have had a significant racial component. Hence, I explored this study's iterative dimension by pointing out the interpretations of the past that define this work's scope and the future to which this paper aims to contribute. Such perspectives contrast with the pervasive unilinear grand narrative framework that is the default way of construing the country's history due to its ubiquity and easy consumption (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011).

Schools, in this sense, occupy a relevant position because they may make available to the public the cognitive tools with which they can construe social life. Teachers play a crucial role in this regard, as they enact the program of studies and have agency in how they will do it, contributing to social reproduction or transformation. However, as discussed in this dissertation's introduction, the material conditions of their work exert a strong influence on what they can or

cannot achieve. Thus, it is essential to consider the teachers' perspectives and the means available for educators to achieve these goals.

Consequently, the following chapter will investigate Brazil's educational system, including its conflicting history and goals. It will also delve into the disputes around the social studies curriculum. Thus, the next chapter will set the context for participants' historical perspectives, their political-pedagogical commitments and how their working environments impinge upon their fulfilment.

## **Chapter 2 – Situating the Education System in Brazilian History and Society**

The educational crisis in Brazil, about which so much is said, is not a crisis; it is a program. An ongoing program whose fruits will speak for themselves tomorrow.

(Ribeiro, 2019, p. 55)

In chapter one, I established the historical perspective that guides this work and shows its relevance. This chapter will explain how the education system, intimately connected to the state, constitutes a subset of the country's history and has suffered a strong influence from the colonial matrix of power. The relevance of this chapter is to review teachers' working context, which will help construe their pedagogical commitments and the affordances and constraints to their fulfilment. The first section will provide a historical overview of the education system's development and the contradictions and paradoxes in this process. In the sequence, I will focus on the social studies disputes and the tensions that permeate the work of educators. Thus, this chapter aims to explain participants' working contexts and the contentions around the social studies curriculum, reflecting the main contrasting historical perspectives in the country with significant political implications.

### **1. The Formation of the Education System in the Country in the Coloniality Matrix**

The previous chapter indicated that colonialism in America meant European occupation, imposing a structure to obtain profits from exploiting Native and African peoples. Hence, the ideological construct of these peoples as inferior races tasked them with executing unpaid labour. At the same time, there was the expectation that colonists and their descendants would occupy the top of the social hierarchy, which involved land possession and ruling positions in the colony and later in the nation-state administration.

The development of the education system in Brazil followed this division of labour logic. The first colonial schools in Brazil allowed only the white male children of Portuguese settlers to attend. It consequently left out all females, enslaved people, non-whites, and orphans (Saviani, 2013). In 1867, for example, the country had 1.2 million children of school age, but only 107,000 matriculated (Ferreira Jr., 2010).

In the colonial and monarchic period (1500-1888), only the children of landowners would attend elementary school and further their educational path. Moreover, there was only one high school in the country situated in Rio de Janeiro, then the capital of Brazil, illustrating the elitist character of secondary education. Consequently, only the affluent children would attend high school due to its exclusivity and associated high costs. Such pupils had the goal of pursuing a degree in law or medicine, which symbolized their high status to occupy the ruling posts in the country (e.g., president, governors, parliament members, and judges) (Ferreira Jr., 2010).

In the 1930s, the push for industrialization and the economic decline of Brazilian crops (especially coffee) led the landowners' oligarchic regime to collapse. Concomitant with urban growth, the number of elementary schools started increasing. To accompany the rapid urbanization of the population and industrial demand for semi-skilled labour, access to school increased. However, there were two streams in secondary education; one was propaedeutic and destined for pupils from the middle and upper classes; the other was professional and did not give pupils the chance to pursue higher education (Ferreira Jr., 2010).

Despite a modest expansion in the number of schools, the system was far from accessible to all. According to an education census done in 1959, for example, of all students who started in grade one, only 17% would reach the fourth grade, 8% would reach grade ten, and 1% would reach higher education (Veiga, 2017). Some of the reasons that would push students out were the

scarcity of secondary schools, a very high repetition rate, and the admission exams required for each educational cycle. (e.g., Saviani, 2002). Hence, only a few students would move on in their educational path, mainly from the affluent classes with higher cultural capital (Ferreira Jr., 2010). Thus, the system barred many children from achieving higher school levels, and the number of illiterate people in the country has always been considerable.<sup>2</sup>

This lack of access to education by large contingents of people had far-reaching consequences. As illiterate people were barred from voting until 1985, many adults could not participate in the electoral process. In 1960, for instance, the number of people not authorized to vote due to the literacy barrier was greater than those who could vote (Ferreira Jr., 2010). In the 1960s, there were many initiatives to expand literacy among disadvantaged groups, such as the Circles of Popular Culture created by Paulo Freire, who aimed to teach literacy to peasants based on their concrete experiences of labour and struggles (Ferreira Jr., 2010). Moreover, groups of scholars and students produced, in 1959, a manifest in defence of a public and universal education system. However, these initiatives encountered considerable resistance among conservative groups who saw them as a threat to the status quo and the infiltration of communism in the country. The culmination of these conflicts was the 1964 military coup d'état and the imposition of educational policies aligned with the precepts of the human capital theory that subsumed education into the productive realm (Ferreira Jr., 2010).

In this context, there was a strong push for the system's expansion, and between 1964 and 1973, enrolments grew 70.3% in primary education, 332% in junior high school, and 391% in high school (Saviani, 2008). Concomitantly, it became mandatory for secondary schools to include professional disciplines, and students would receive a certificate at the end (e.g., assistant

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<sup>2</sup> In 1955, for instance, the number of illiterate people was roughly 50% (Veiga, 2017). Currently, this number is 7% (IBGE, 2019).

accountant, laboratory assistant). Nevertheless, this development followed the economic logic of maximum results with minimum investment, and there was practically no increase in budget allocations for the education system despite its tremendous growth (Saviani, 2008). Among the consequences of this expansion model were a reduction in teachers' wages and an increase in their numbers of hours and students (Domingues et al., 2000).

Parallel to the expansion of public schools, there was also a strong lobby from conservative groups to support private institutions (Veiga, 2017). Observing the public system's deterioration, the upper and middle-class families began sending their children to private institutions to provide them with better-quality instruction and prepare them for university entrance exams (Zibas, 2005). This trend has consolidated the public-private dichotomy evident in contrasting infrastructure, working conditions, prestige, and university admission rates. Moreover, it has undermined the creation of a cohesive sense of citizenship to which public school systems are dedicated (Skidmore, 2010). Although the colonial period officially ended in 1822, the racialized class division wended its way through Brazilian history. It determined how the educational system expanded, and despite the virtual universalization of elementary and junior high schools in the past decades, many issues persist.

Data from the 2019 national education census, for example, reveal that only 31% of public schools have a library, 8% have a science lab, and 38% have a computer lab. Furthermore, only 54% have a broadband internet connection, and 61% have a printer (Qedu, 2020). In addition, many public schools operate in three shifts (from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.) and offer no cultural and remedial activities. These matters impact educators' working conditions. Currently, roughly 25% of teachers in public schools in Brazil work in two or more places and have more

than three hundred students (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira (INEP), 2019).

These issues affect the quality of education and students' learning. Data from *Prova Brasil* in 2018, for example, a national standardized math and Portuguese language test, reveals that, in grade 5, pupils who demonstrated adequate knowledge in the Portuguese language are 56% and in math, 44%. By grade 9, only 34% of students had learned the expected in Portuguese language and only 15% in math (Qedu, 2020).

These limitations become even more critical in high school (grades 10 to 12). Apart from the considerable number of teenagers between 15-17 years old (the age considered ideal) retained in previous grades (around 20%, or almost 2 million students), the number of dropouts in the same age cohort reaches a total of 13%, totalling 1.3 million youth who have abandoned school completely (IBGE, 2018). These data show that although schools in Brazil have been increasingly inclusive, admitting historically left-out groups, they have not adequately provided appropriate learning opportunities. Thus, although the general perspectives about schooling and curriculum have changed to redress the racial and class divide, the material conditions of public schools keep these goals far from becoming a reality, indicating a dichotomy between state intentions and practices.

The most recent educational policies and curriculum design have tried to rectify these issues as expressed in the 1988 new Federal Constitution promulgated after twenty years of authoritarian rule. The document asserted that there should be equal opportunities to access and remain in school, described as indispensable for pupils' preparation for work and full citizenship. Furthermore, it guaranteed that the federal government would invest at least 18% and the state and municipal governments at least 25% of tax revenues in education (Brasil, 1988). It declared



that the state had to determine education quality standards to calculate the minimum cost per student (Brasil, 1996). Curriculum design also aimed to remedy the inequalities and offered broader perspectives to discuss identities, communities, and historical events (Brasil, 1996, 2018).

For instance, the national curriculum rolled out in 2018, the parameter for all state and municipal curricula, acknowledges that the country grew accustomed to “educational inequalities concerning access to school, students’ permanence and learning.” It also states that “the enormous inequalities between the groups of students defined by race, sex and socio-economic status of their families are widely known” (Brasil, 2018, p. 16). Therefore, it champions “a clear commitment to reverse the situation of historical exclusion that marginalizes groups - such as Indigenous peoples and the populations of the remaining *Quilombos*<sup>3</sup> and other Afro-descendants - and people who were unable to study or complete their schooling at the appropriate age” (Brasil, 2018, p. 16). Similarly, the humanities curriculum advocates the need to “help students value human rights and promote the strengthening of social values, such as solidarity, the participation aimed at the common good and, above all, the concern with social inequalities” (Brasil, 2018, p. 16).

So, it is possible to see that the country’s re-democratization in the 1980s shifted the perspective on education and emphasized its character as a fundamental human right and essential to citizenship. However, the colonial power matrix has impacted the education system’s development by preventing literacy acquisition for many people for a long time, which constitutes an essential aspect for fully joining the social and political community on an equal footing. Habermas (2018) corroborates this idea arguing that “the vitality, the perceptiveness and

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<sup>3</sup> Quilombos were communities founded by runaway slaves in places of difficult access. Some of these communities still exist in the same place.

the level of public discourses depend to a large extent on the semantic potential, the depth, and the articulatory power of a political culture that shapes a population's imagination and sense of justice" (p. 101). Likewise, Freire (1987) contends that "language and reality are dynamically interconnected. The understanding attained by critical reading of a text implies perceiving the relationship between text and context" (p. 29).

Thus, such semantic potential is fundamental for developing historical consciousness, which requires narrative competence and linguistic resources (Gramsci, 2000; Rusen, 2004). Without these literary resources, there is a strong tendency to repeat the traditional grand narrative, which restricts people's perspectives and impinges upon their political agency. Therefore, it is essential to investigate social studies teachers' viewpoints because they occupy a crucial position on these issues.

## **2. The Humanities in Brazilian History**

Chapter one demonstrated how intense political disputes have shaped Brazilian society, including the military coup in 1964. As in many other South American countries (e.g., Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay), the military, supported by sectors of the middle and upper classes, has set a conservative direction for society. In other words, they have acted to quell groups that did not conform to the modernity unilinear historical paradigm (e.g., peasant and black movements) and imposed a political and economic model congruent with these conservative values.

After the coup d'état, the military used the curriculum to promote patriotism. They took control of different aspects of social, cultural, and political life and imposed strict censorship on institutions such as the media and the universities, which resulted in many artists and scholars going into exile (Lourenço, 2010). In 1971, the military regime drafted a new educational policy

and included civic and moral education, decreasing social studies classes in elementary and secondary schools. One of this discipline's goals was to teach students that the political and social institutions that ruled the country were well-established and undisputed. There was also the objective of instilling patriotic values among pupils, forging their identification with the national capitalist status quo (Lima, 2011).

Humanities teachers had to receive approval from the Political and Social Order Department, controlled by the military. It involved receiving a good conduct certificate, meaning they had no association with subversive ideologies (e.g., Marxism, anti-patriotism). In this context, schools would stage periodic patriotic manifestations (such as saluting the flag, commemorating national events, and singing the national anthem), and teachers who did not comply would be dismissed and even prosecuted (Lourenço, 2010).

In 1984, with massive demonstrations for democratic elections in many cities, the military regime collapsed. After that, there was an endeavour to redefine the relationship between the state and the people based on recognizing and protecting civil, political, and social rights. Such endeavours resulted in the promulgation of a new constitution in 1988. Based on the precepts of the new charter of rights, there was, in 1996, the development of a new educational policy that aimed at reinforcing the relationship between education and democracy. It emphasized teachers' role in co-creating the political-pedagogical policies at school and the importance of contextualizing curricular concepts according to students' lived experiences to replace rote learning. This policy also established that the study of Brazilian history and society had to address different cultures' contributions, particularly the Indigenous, African, and European influences (Brasil, 1996).

In 2002, the population elected President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, a former Steel Workers' Union president and a Labour Party (PT) member. His government (2003-2010) reinforced this trend toward humanities education that connected students to critical perspectives. For example, in 2003, the federal government mandated all schools to teach Africa's history, the continent's contribution to Brazilian history and culture, and the black struggles against enslavement, racism, and inequality. It also created a national holiday on November 20 to commemorate Black Consciousness, the birthdate of Zumbi dos Palmares, who escaped enslavement and organized a resistance community in the seventeenth century. In 2008, the government adopted a similar policy regarding Indigenous perspectives. Moreover, a federal law passed in 2009 required all high schools to offer sociology and philosophy. These measures reflect an endeavour to acknowledge the country's colonial past and its insidious consequences for many communities and foster critical thinking among pupils.

In 2013, there were massive demonstrations in many cities with divergent demands that ranged from objections to the FIFA World Cup and Summer Olympic Games that were to take place in Brazil in 2014 and 2016, respectively, to tougher anti-corruption actions and better public services. At some point, these protests, which happened for months, took a conservative turn and started demanding the impeachment of Labour Party's President Dilma Rouseff, blaming her for the country's economic crisis and corruption scandals. Consequently, the National Congress impeached her in 2015, and her vice-president took over with a neoliberal agenda.

During these events, neoconservative groups gained prominence with religious fundamentalist, anti-communist, nationalist, and libertarian ideals (Lima & Hypolito, 2019). The *Escola sem Partido* movement (School without Party) is an example of this trend and aimed at

curbing what they perceived as attempts to indoctrinate children into leftist ideas at schools. This movement gained momentum when they joined forces with religious activists who wanted to ban gender and sexuality discussions from classrooms (Lima & Hypolito, 2019).

These groups have had a robust online presence with channels on platforms such as YouTube and Facebook. Olavo de Carvalho has become a prominent advocate of the movement, proclaiming that the Western civilization's three pillars (Judeo-Christian morals, Roman law, and Greek philosophy) are under attack (Rosa et al., 2018). Taylor (2020) helps to understand these views, arguing that these neoconservative approaches to history have strong Christian influence and "unstinting regard for the achievements of the West, supporting a patriotic form of nationalism" (p. 5). For example, in a YouTube video, Olavo de Carvalho (2020) argues that slavery already existed in Africa before the European arrival and that the ones brought to America had a better fate than those who stayed there.

In this perspective, Africans and Indigenous peoples who forcibly entered this framework as a commodity and non-waged labour should feel fortunate that they had the opportunity to 'skip the line of history' and be placed on the modernity train by their white masters. Thus, they have criticized Black and Indigenous movements for their divisive and 'envious' rhetoric. Another constant target of the neoconservative movement is the left-wing parties, portrayed as communists who want to destroy families, morality, and individual initiative to exploit the people.

This ideological environment led to Jair Bolsonaro's presidential election in 2018. He is a former army captain who overtly expresses his admiration for the military period (1964-1984) and espouses many reactionary ideas. Rehashing the promise to place the country into modernity, he has embraced a neoliberal economic program and a conservative agenda,

promising to tackle the unprecedented levels of urban violence and corruption and facilitate gun access (Knijnik, 2020).

His inauguration speech guaranteed that schools would prepare students for the job market, not political militancy. Later, he also pledged to revoke Paulo Freire's honorary title as the patron of Brazilian education, calling him an idiot who had caused great harm to students (in Mazui, 2019). Furthermore, his educational policy included creating at least 216 military-civic schools in the country, whose goals are to “collaborate to the human and civic development of citizens” and contribute to “reduce the violence present in regular schools” (Ministério da Educação, 2019). Military reserve members are to manage these schools to oversee the fulfilment of these commitments. Additionally, Bolsonaro proposed changing textbooks to include more patriotic symbols and removing ‘ideological’ references. Finally, he appointed a neoconservative stalwart follower of Olavo de Carvalho as education minister, who claimed he was against funding humanities courses (such as sociology and philosophy) with public money, arguing they did not offer an immediate return to society, unlike medicine, engineering, or dentistry (in Rezende, 2020).

Jair Bolsonaro also vigorously contested policies to redress the pernicious effects of colonialism. He repeatedly criticized the demarcation of lands for Indigenous peoples and *Quilombolas*. Regarding Indigenous peoples, he said that “they do not want to own vast tracts of lands; they want to lease their lands to others, develop economically, have electricity, access to doctors, fly on airplanes” (in Resende, 2018). Regarding the *Quilombolas*, Bolsonaro mentioned that they “are useless, cannot even procreate anymore, and the country spends more than a billion per year on them” (in Congresso em Foco, 2017).

Jair Bolsonaro also derides anti-racist black movements, suggesting that they spread disunion and leftist propaganda. He appointed Sergio Camargo as president of the Palmares Foundation, an institution subordinate to the federal government responsible for promoting the black legacy in Brazil. Although Sergio Camargo is black, he heavily criticizes black movements, claiming they are a “group of ideological slaves of the political left and adepts of the victim mentality” (in Universo Online, 2020). Camargo also held a contest to substitute the logo of the Palmares Foundation, which were two axes representing an African Deity. He justified it by arguing that the Foundation must have a symbol representing all Brazilians and offered a substantial monetary prize for the winner (Globo, 2020).

Thus, the neoconservative wave that led Bolsonaro to power reclaims the legacy that led the military to power, seeing the nation-state as the apex of human development with no space for dissension. Moreover, they wholeheartedly adhere to the modernity ideal of a Christian nation-state and advocate the importance of the traditional family, civic values, and patriotism. Through the School without Party movement, they have engaged in a cultural war against teachers who promoted perceived political or ideological views in the classroom. They opened channels for students to denounce educators and introduced several municipal and state bills to punish ‘offending’ teachers. Many of these bills were found unconstitutional by the country’s Supreme Court. These events put into question aspects such as teacher identity and agency, curriculum, and education goals.

It is possible to see that many in the current ideological environment in Brazil want to compel teachers to subscribe to the paradigm of modernity of rectilinear history, considering that other interpretive paradigms (e.g., post-colonial critical theory) conceal the intent to indoctrinate the children and deviate the country from the path of progress and prosperity. Nevertheless, amid

these tensions and disputes, teachers are the ones who enact the curriculum in the classroom. Therefore, they play a relevant role in the social studies curriculum disputes and offer a first-hand account of the intricacies of historical interpretations and political-pedagogical commitments.

### **3. Chapter Summary**

This chapter demonstrated how the colonial matrix of power has governed education development in Brazil. Its marks are visible in the restrictions on a large part of the population and the disparities between public and private institutions. Despite the most recent reforms initiated with the country's re-democratization in the 1980s, the quality of public education is still low, visible in insufficient infrastructure, poor teacher remuneration and lack of support for student development. Consequently, learning levels among many students are low, and there is a considerable dropout rate, especially in high school.

It is possible to see that the divisive lines that separated different communities in the colonial period and refused access to education have transmuted into the dichotomy between public and private schools, as there is a vast difference between the resources and learning experiences they provide to pupils. Notwithstanding the pervasiveness of words such as citizenship and democracy in the most recent education policies, the concrete working experiences of teachers may give a different picture of what schools afford them and the students.

In addition, this chapter argued that the structural problems of the country's education system have significant political implications because they prevent learners from developing their historical consciousness, which is instrumental in construing the motions of society and establishing the goals for collective existence. Consequently, many people adhere to the default



unilinear modernity template that mystifies the country's structural problems and attribute them to individuals' choices.

Moreover, this chapter demonstrated that the curricular content and objectives of the humanities are an object of fierce contention between different groups in the country. Hence, it confirms the idea presented in the previous chapters that education and politics are inseparable and that each social-historical perspective stems from assumptions about individual and collective agency, historical processes, and the nature of the nation-state. Consequently, it shows the need to investigate how teachers construe national history and its relation to their pedagogical commitments. The next chapter will explore existing literature on the topics of this research to help better define the concepts presented in this text. Furthermore, it situates the current study into ongoing scholarly discussions and demonstrates its potential contributions to these debates.

### Chapter 3 – Literature Review: Teachers as Situated Agents

The previous chapters established the relevance of investigating the role of the education system and teachers in a country characterized by glaring social and educational disparities that are a legacy of coloniality. They demonstrated that many policies have tried to redress these issues in recent years and the pertinence of assessing their impacts on schools. In this sense, the activities of social studies teachers constitute a relevant entry point into these discussions and a critical aspect of consideration as they relate to the promotion of specific images and values of the nation-state (e.g., Knowles, 2018; Ross, 2006; Thornton, 2005).

I have used search engines such as Google Scholar, EBSCO and Scielo to carry out the literature review and used the keywords ‘social studies curriculum,’ ‘social studies teacher,’ ‘teachers’ ‘historical perspectives,’ ‘teachers’ historical consciousness,’ and ‘teachers’ pedagogical commitments’ in Portuguese, Spanish, and English. The goal was to find research on the relationship between teachers’ historical perspectives, political stances, and pedagogical commitments. Furthermore, I searched for academic material that discussed the relationship between teachers and their working environment and how it impacted their professional identity and perceived self-efficacy. Thus, I have also delved into literature around teacher agency, leading me to engage with broader scholarly debates around human agency, which constitutes a central concept in areas like sociology, history, philosophy, and psychology (e.g., Archer, 2002; den Heyer, 2018; Hodkinson, 2015).

I divided this chapter into two sections. The first section explores research that contributes to answering the first question of how historical perspectives relate to political-pedagogical commitments. I present the scholarship that discusses these topics, including human agency and historical consciousness. I also engage with large-scale surveys and case studies that

explored the concepts of this dissertation. The second section discusses how school structures impinge upon educators' agency to address this research's second question about how teachers' work circumstances enable or constrain the fulfilment of their political-pedagogical commitments.

This chapter, in this sense, explains the intellectual process of defining this research's scope and the academic texts that were instrumental in this purpose. Furthermore, it presents the theoretical and methodological insights provided by the literature review and places this investigation into broader scholarly debates. Hence, it aims to situate the reader in the research's conceptual space by presenting relevant nearby studies (Stake, 2010). It also presents how the literature review material offered relevant examples of "how some writers have integrated previously developed theories into their studies" (Saldaña, 2011, p. 76).

### **1. Discussions about Human Agency, Historical Consciousness and Political Commitments**

In this section, I will define the meaning of human agency and its connection to historical consciousness, which relates to the political character of social narratives. Archer (2002), for example, argues that self-awareness emerges from one's embodied practices in reality, which are essentially non-social in kind and shared among all animals. Thence, humans construe these embodied experiences with socially acquired categories (e.g., language and moral values) to develop a sense of self and identity. Wertsch (2012) calls these social categories cultural tools and maintains that there is an "irreducible tension" between an active agent and narrative tools (p. 11). Although Wertsch (2012) contends that agents do not merely replicate social representations, he acknowledges that such tools "can play such an active role that there is a sense in which they do some of our thinking, speaking, and remembering for us" (p. 11).

Interactions with these cultural tools (e.g., language, stories, moral values) develop throughout life, and people acquire a repertoire of representations that constitute their references for choices and actions (Pajares, 1992). Pajares (1992), in this sense, maintains that a person's core values and beliefs are instrumental in helping them "understand themselves and others and to adapt to the world and their place in it" (p. 319). This sense of identity provides meaning and stability to individuals and communities, reducing dissonance, confusion, and inconstancy (van Kessel et al., 2020). Moreover, Pajares (1992) argues that these crucial representations are essential for people to judge the validity of other viewpoints and are the most incontrovertible aspects of one's ideas.

Archer (2002) corroborates this perspective, arguing that "who we are is a matter of what we care about most. This is what makes us moral beings. It is only in the light of our 'ultimate concerns' that our actions are ultimately intelligible" (p. 11). Thus, this set of values, beliefs, and understandings constitute the elements with which people judge present circumstances and define possible courses of action. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) call this repertoire the iterative dimension of human agency, consisting of established ideas and habits. This iterative realm also creates the projective dimension, which Bandura (2001) defines as an anticipatory self-guidance that motivates behaviour toward projected goals and outcomes.

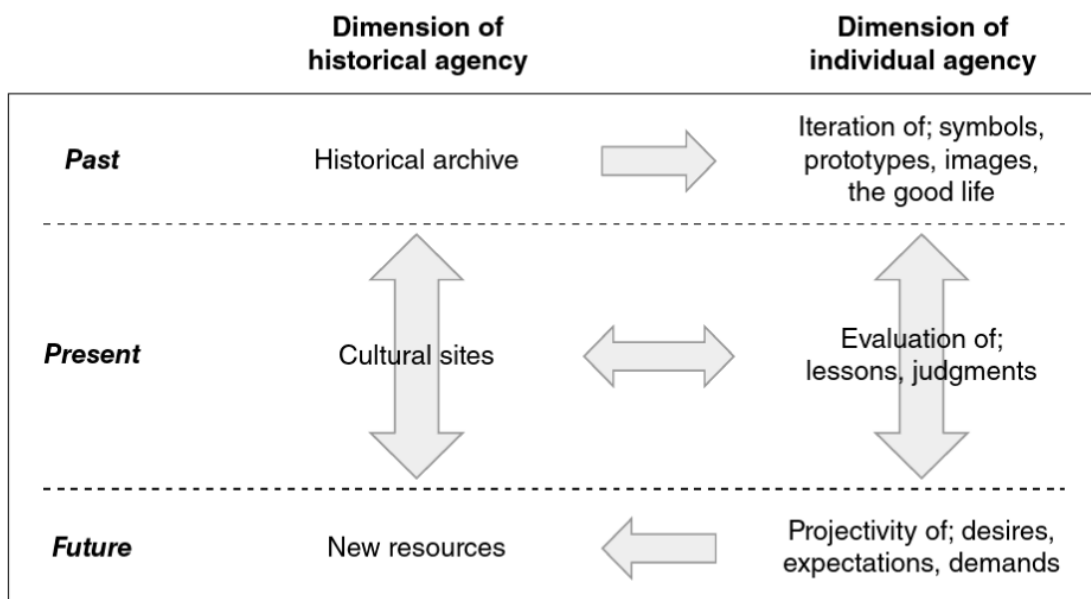
However, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) posit that agency also contains a dialogical component with current circumstances, allowing individuals to construe the events and re-evaluate their perspectives. Thus, agency relates to "the capacity to formulate possibilities for action, active consideration of such possibilities and the exercise of choice" (Biesta et al., 2015, p. 23). Similarly, den Heyer and Abbott (2011) define agency as the "imaginative capacity for shaping intentions, forming choices, and undertaking actions" (pp. 614-615).

As previously described, the individual capacity to make choices or define objectives relies on representations available in public discourses, which emerge from struggles among different groups over shared meanings (e.g., symbols, ideas, linguistic terms) (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011). Groups (e.g., conservative or antiracist movements) occupy a relevant position in providing people with the resources to think about reality, and individuals may engage or reject them based on their values. Such disputes are visible, for example, around the content of the humanities curriculum in many countries, as discussed before (e.g., Parkes, 2007; Taylor, 2004).

Human agency contains an iterative, practical, and projective dimension, and this research focuses on its political aspects, which “involves a projection of the me-ness that is a natural and inherent part of individual memory onto the collective plane to create a sort of ‘us-ness’” (Wertsch, 2012, p. 18). In other words, this dissertation focuses on how educators position themselves regarding the nation-states in terms of narratives (the iterative aspect), practices (the evaluative component) and commitments (the projective aspect) to explore what constitutes teachers’ historical perspectives and how they inform their pedagogical commitments. The picture diagram below illustrates the relationship between these different agentic realms:

**Figure 2**

*Dimensions of Individual and Historical Agencies (den Heyer, 2018, p. 244).*



The following section explores large-scale surveys that offered theoretical, methodological, and empirical findings relevant to this study.

### ***1.1 Large-Scale Surveys about Socio-Historical Perspectives and Pedagogical Commitments***

This section presents four relevant large-scale studies that delve into the relationship between educators' political stances and the pedagogical commitments that emerge from them. They explore how educators' political stances generate professional commitments and impact the strategies used in the classroom. Moreover, they provide theoretical and methodological insights that inform this study.

Pacievitch and Cerri (2016) investigated history teachers' political preferences and pedagogical strategies with 280 participants from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Paraguay. Each received a questionnaire asking whether they usually voted for left-wing, centre, or right-wing political parties and questions regarding their pedagogical approaches and commitments. Pacievitch and Cerri (2016) argued that these political distinctions are a heuristic and have limitations due to electoral preferences' fluid and ambiguous nature. The authors found a

significant preference among participants for left-wing parties, constituting 79% of respondents against 11% who claimed they usually voted for centre parties and 10% for right-wing parties. Pacievitch and Cerri (2016) then examined the relationships between these preferences and how often participants used a series of classroom activities.

They noted that educators with a right-wing inclination placed more importance on religion and often engaged in discussions about morality in specific historical events. Teachers in this group also showed more concern for preserving the values and traditions of society and worked less frequently with historical sources. It suggests that they placed more importance on events and their moral repercussions than on helping students engage in historical interpretation. On the other hand, teachers with leftist inclinations engaged pupils in discussing different explanations of past events more often. In addition, they showed more interest in exploring the lives of ordinary people than their rightist counterparts, who tended to emphasize the study of famous historical personalities.

Pacievitch and Cerri (2016) concluded that political preferences impact educators' approaches to history, especially concerning social values and traditions and engaging with historical sources and interpretations. They also indicated the need to delve further into the relationship between the preference for specific political parties and teachers' socio-historical perspectives.

Another study that provides theoretical and methodological insights into this research is Knowles's (2018) investigation of the relationship between teachers' representations and preferred instructional strategies. It involved 735 social studies secondary educators from Missouri in the USA. The author created a scale with three ideal types to identify the prominent characteristics of participants' understandings of history and society: the conservative, the

liberal, and the critical profile, each defined on a range of perspectives regarding the nation, the roles of the state and individuals, and skills considered essential for pupils to learn.

To analyze their instructional profile, Knowles (2018) established two ideal types: the collaborative-research based instruction, which indicated a focus on activities such as debates, student-led discussions and group projects and the teacher-text instruction type, expressing a preference for teacher-led lectures, individual completion of worksheets, and textbook assignments. Participants responded to a two-part survey by email with a series of questions using a five-point Likert scale. In the first part, they had to express agreement or disagreement with statements to establish the essential attributes of their socio-historical understandings; in part two, the prompts asked teachers to indicate how often they engaged in various instructional strategies.

After statistically examining the surveys, Knowles (2018) concluded that participants' socio-historical understandings (i.e., conservative, liberal, and critical) related to their instructional preferences. While conservatives tended to favour teacher-text instructions, critical and liberal educators frequently employed collaborative-research strategies. The author also suggested that contextual factors (e.g., the socio-economic status of where teachers worked) also impacted their instructional choices, with a higher incidence of collaborative-research approaches in non-rural areas and schools with a predominant non-white population.

Although a substantial number of participants (around 80%) indicated an emphasis on teacher-text instruction (especially textbook assignments), Knowles (2018) concluded that “any assertion of what social studies teachers do, or do not do, in regard to instruction should include teacher identity and contextual considerations” (p. 92). The author also acknowledged the



study's limitations, as it did not involve in-class observations that could provide more nuanced views of the topic.

Sampermans et al. (2021), in turn, studied the correlation between teachers' attitudes toward political participation (e.g., obeying the law, voting, promoting human rights) and their pedagogical approaches (i.e., the concerns and strategies that pervaded their practices). The study involved 1983 teachers from Flanders in Belgium who had to complete a two-part survey to respond to questions about their political activities and school practices.

Sampermans et al. (2021) began the article by discussing the literature around the classification of teachers' political and pedagogical inclinations and describe five characteristics they used to analyze the data. One of these categories is the duty-based citizen, concerned with maintaining order and promoting knowledge about the institutions of the nation-state. A second type is the engaged citizen, who has an active attitude toward the political community (e.g., joining protests, petitions) with less emphasis on knowledge about the political institutions (e.g., the parliament role). The third type is the all-around, which combines theoretical and practical political participation. The fourth is the skeptical type, who does not engage in politics out of distrust and only does so when it affects them; the last category is the subject, which restricts political participation to obeying the law and considers that politics is the duty of politicians, not ordinary people.

Sampermans et al. (2021) then developed two categories to identify teachers' pedagogical inclinations: the active and passive teaching styles. The authors concluded that the all-around teachers (i.e., those who emphasize political knowledge and practice) engage the most in activating and innovative styles. Therefore, a broader view of political participation tends to generate more meaningful teaching and learning.

Fouts and Lee (2005) investigated social studies teachers' representations of citizenship in the USA, Australia, England, China, and Russia. The authors argue that knowledge about this topic is significant because it hinges on "how each person answers certain philosophical questions that are central to the nature of humanity and society" (p. 22). Data collection consisted of a large-scale survey to determine participants' representations of a good citizen. Each teacher received a questionnaire with thirteen items defining citizenship and had to say how important they were using a seven-point Likert scale (e.g., knowledge of government, patriotism, concern for the welfare of others).

Fouts and Lee (2005) reported that the concept of citizenship had specific salient characteristics in each country. For example, while the concern for others appears as the most significant component in Australia and England, accepting assigned responsibilities was most prominent in Russia. Differences also appear regarding the aspects of citizenship that teachers consider the least important in each country. For example, participants answered that patriotism was the least relevant citizenship component in the USA, Australia, and England, whereas it was knowledge of global affairs in Russia.

Sampermans et al.'s (2021), Knowles's (2018), and Pacievitch and Cerri's (2016) papers indicated that political understandings do influence pedagogical commitments and that teachers' political stances usually generate specific pedagogical goals (e.g., the tendency among conservative teachers to focus on knowledge about the institutions of the nation-state). Moreover, they demonstrated the need to create categories to group, compare, and analyze different civic stances. They indicated that there are different ways to classify political inclinations (e.g., preferences for political parties, such as Pacievitch and Cerri (2016), or understandings about citizenship like Knowles (2018)). Thus, the texts in this section engaged in

substantial discussions regarding these categories based on theoretical and political principles, leading me to engage in a similar process detailed in chapter four. The following section presents case studies that investigated aspects such as teacher agency, historical perspectives, and pedagogical commitments.

### ***1.2 Case Studies about Socio-Historical Perspectives and Pedagogical Commitments***

The previous section presented large-scale studies that established the connection between political inclinations and pedagogical commitments. They offered relevant considerations about the classification of political orientations and demonstrated that they play a relevant role in shaping teachers' pedagogical commitments. This section, in turn, presents research that utilized the case study approach to investigate these topics and offered a closer view of the relationship between teachers' historical consciousness, political orientations, and pedagogical commitments.

For example, Faden's (2012) multiple-case study involved interviews with six social studies teachers from Ontario and seven from Maryland in the USA and aimed at understanding what type of citizenship they promoted in their classes. Faden (2012) used a three-part citizenship model developed by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) to analyze participants' ideas. The first is personally responsible citizenship, which emphasizes individual agency and relates to following the laws and voluntarily contributing to civic projects. The second one is participatory, relating to using civic institutions to promote positive social outcomes, such as petitioning the government and participating in democratic deliberations. Finally, the third type is justice-oriented, relating to understanding the causes of injustices and working towards institutional reform, such as participating in marches and engaging in the struggle for structural changes.

Faden (2012) transcribed and coded the interviews to define each participant's understanding of citizenship. Five teachers subscribed to the personally responsible citizen category as "they emphasized the need to appreciate one's own country, to behave morally and obey the laws, have a positive impact on society, and cause no harm" (p. 180). Four teachers expressed views that reflected the participatory citizen type, stressing the importance of "participating in democratic processes beyond voting, such as petitioning the government, lobbying and taking part in democratic deliberations" (p. 180). Finally, four teachers' views combined both types, and only one participant expressed the justice-oriented perspective, emphasizing cooperation over competition and depth of engagement with topics instead of breadth of coverage.

Faden (2012) noted that the USA teachers identified individual rights and the possibility of participating in society as important national values. They also considered that being well-informed was vital for this participation, which Faden interpreted as a reaction to the spread of fake news in the presidential election that had recently taken place. On the other hand, Canadian teachers indicated that defining Canada is an essential function of their discipline. The author related this tendency to the perceived challenge of distinguishing Canadian customs from British or USA culture. Four of the six participating Canadian teachers mentioned instilling national pride as an important educational goal, and many participants reiterated their commitment to promoting a multicultural, peacekeeping and justice-oriented nation. The only Canadian teacher who rejected the concept of national identity was the one who had a justice-oriented perspective, claiming that there were many prisms to seeing history and each region in the country had its own history. In this sense, Faden's (2012) comparative case study indicates that each society has its repertoire of images that play a relevant role in teachers' political-pedagogical commitments.

It also presents the idea that teachers have different perspectives on a central curricular topic, such as citizenship, although Faden (2012) does not explore the reasons for these differences.

Another piece of research that addressed some of the topics of this text is Garrido's (2013) multiple-case study of six humanities teachers who worked in impoverished neighbourhoods in Santiago de Chile in the context of profound curriculum reforms in Chile in 2009. The author presented the paradox of these reforms, arguing that although they emphasized the importance of teachers, they did not increase their possibilities of participation in schools' administrative, pedagogical, and political management. Therefore, Garrido (2013) called attention to the vast distance between what the new educational policy established and what took place inside schools and how such a distance had become normalized in Chilean society. In this context, Garrido (2013) aimed to explore the degree of agency and satisfaction of participating teachers through semi-structured interviews.

Garrido (2013) argued that fragmentation was the marked characteristic of these teachers' experiences at school. Although Chile also has a sharp economic inequality, most participants attributed the poverty of the school community to bad personal choices. Therefore, some teachers portrayed the pupils in terms of deficit and expressed having to start their pedagogical endeavours from scratch. The author also noted that, despite having received training on sociological, political, and historical concepts, participants would not employ them to comprehend the poverty context in which they worked (e.g., the relationship between urban inequality and education). Finally, Garrido (2013) noted that participants construed social studies teaching as monolithic and independent of context, which indicates a positivistic view of the area.

Ricci's (1998) article also offers a thought-provoking view of the interplay between teachers' historical consciousness and the chronological context of society. She investigated teachers' understandings of the history curriculum when Brazil went through the democratic transition after 20 years of the military regime. During the 1980s, there were initiatives in several states to redesign the history curriculum, and the author analyzed this process in São Paulo in 1987. In this period, in partnership with the University of São Paulo (USP), the state education board started an ample consultation with teachers to generate new history curriculum guidelines. Consequently, each regional education office organized meetings with local educators to contribute to the new history program of studies. Ricci (1998) analyzed each regional office's reports regarding the new curriculum.

Ricci (1998) notes various views and opinions in these reports, many with contrasting perspectives. In some of these reports, the author identified a great desire to overcome the military regime's educational tenets to help learners acquire critical conscience and bring about social change. In other reports, there was the concern that the new proposal would cause a "Marxification" of the curriculum and the transformation of history classes into indoctrination sessions. Most of these reports expressed the dichotomy between curriculum design and implementation that had been prominent during the military regime. In such a period, the government was responsible for creating the study program, and teachers were supposed to follow it strictly. Consequently, any attempt to add personal views or rearrange the curriculum content was unwarranted and curbed.

However, the new curriculum proposal of São Paulo aimed at having teachers as curriculum co-creators who planned and delivered lessons considering the context of their pupils (e.g., their experiences, socio-economic profiles). According to Ricci (1998), this aspect of the

proposal showed two crucial characteristics of teachers' socio-historical representations and their practices. The first was that many educators saw history as a unilinear phenomenon or, in other words, as an evolutionary chain of causes and effects that led to the present moment. Thus, many of the regional offices' reports expressed the concern that if teachers were required to add students' experiences into their classes, there might be some gaps in their historical knowledge, and their understandings of the past would be incomplete.

Another pivotal component of teachers' perspectives about the curriculum, according to Ricci (1998), was that knowledge should be academics' responsibility, expressing their inadequacy in participating as co-creators of the curriculum. In other words, many educators saw themselves as deliverers of content. Some credited this creativity inhibition to their university education during the military regime. Additionally, some claimed they did not have the time or resources to research and incorporate new insights into the study program, so it was more practical to reproduce the content elaborated by the curriculum designers.

Ricci (1998) concluded that the cognitive resources available in a determined period profoundly influence teachers' agency. She pointed to a mismatch between a democratic society's requirements expressed in the design of new curricula and teachers' capacity to adjust to these changes, which entailed altering customary practices. Ricci (1998) demonstrated that many who went to university during the military regime had rigid ideas about their jobs and discipline.

In turn, Yilmaz (2008) conducted a multiple case study in the USA with twelve experienced social studies teachers about their historical understandings, arguing that their "conceptions are instrumental in framing how they plan, implement, and evaluate curricula" (p. 158). The author created two categories to classify teachers' perspectives: those who saw history

as the past and those who viewed it as an interpretation of it. Teachers in the first group tended to see history as a description of events rather than an interpretation, taking a positivistic approach that prevented a more nuanced understanding of narratives. In other words, they did not recognize history's interpretive and culturally embedded nature. Consequently, it is possible to infer that their teaching focused on the transmission of dates, names, and events that constitute the unilinear monolithic aspect of the modernity grand narratives.

However, even participants who saw history as an interpretation of the past had difficulty recognizing that narratives stem from a perspective by their authors, which is embedded in cultural cognitive tools. Thus, rather than seeing the discipline as a field of knowledge, most participants perceived history as “a subject to teach” (p. 167). Moreover, according to Yilmaz (2008), their responses implied that:

because they were not researchers but teachers dealing with the practical world rather than the theoretical world, there is not much value in coping with theoretical questions.

Hence, some teachers did not seem to know even well-known theories in social sciences.  
(p. 167)

Yilmaz (2008) concluded the article by saying that these findings reveal a significant distance between history as an inquiry field, essential for political agency, and as a school subject. This gap is not conducive to students developing a critical perspective of historical narratives and constructing “a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the past on their own” (Yilmaz, p. 171).

The literature review indicated that some teachers' historical consciousness does not go beyond the traditional level, which construes history as the reproduction of the past and preservation of national values (Rusen, 2004). Therefore, many teachers have a monolithic



understanding of their areas, strongly influenced by positivistic ideas that lead them to present the subjects in an ahistorical manner (den Heyer, 2018). Thus, they miss valuable opportunities to help their students develop skills to enable them to interpret the past and its narratives critically, which is essential for more informed historical perspectives and political commitments.

Furthermore, the literature review showed that social studies teachers' representations have a significant relationship with their country's context and national identities (see also Reichert & Torney-Purta, 2019). This finding echoes Wertsch (2012) regarding how each society has a stock of stories that provide its members with cognitive tools to construe reality. So, educators' social and historical understandings constitute a central entry point to investigating national values and educational principles.

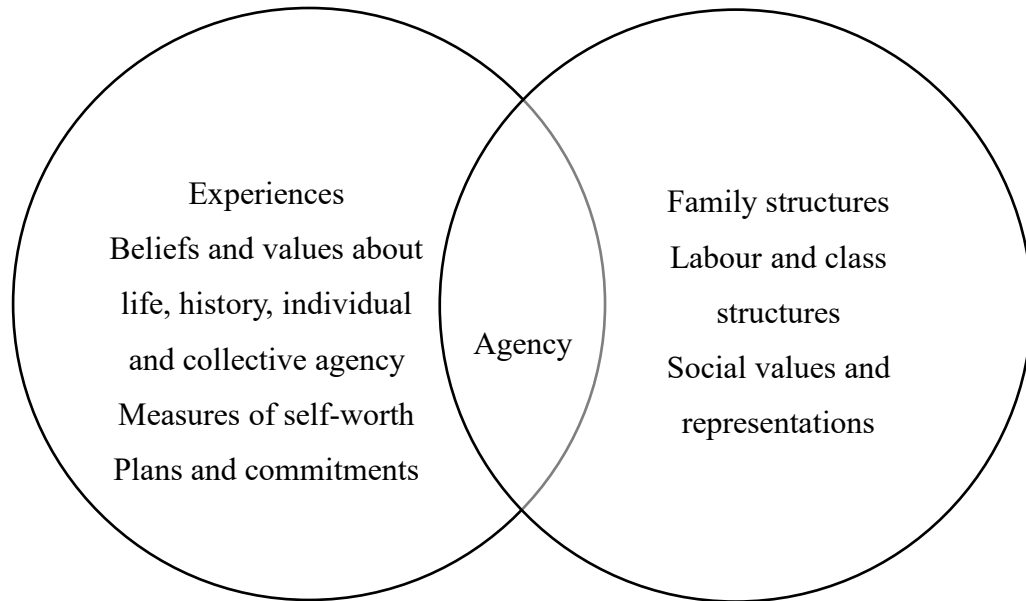
The literature review also suggested that many educators adhere to this monolithic historical perspective because they have not had enough opportunities to see their areas as disciplinary fields that offer sophisticated cognitive tools to construe reality. Consequently, their commitments mainly relate to procedure goals, such as covering the program of studies and keeping the class under control. Therefore, these studies indicate that in addition to access to cognitive tools, another essential element of human agency and historical agency is the opportunity to become familiar with them, study them, and ponder their purposes. Thus, it is possible to affirm that structural elements also impinge upon human agency. In other words, what the educational environment offers teachers impacts what they can achieve. The following section, in this sense, will explore scholarship that explores the structural aspect of human agency to address this research's second question.

## **2. The Structural Dimensions of Human Agency**

In this section, I explore the structural dimension of human agency and present one empirical study that focuses on the affordances and constraints to teacher agency that schools may offer. Archer (2002) contributes to this discussion, arguing that individuals and structures are irreducible to one another, each constituting a sui generis dimension. Nonetheless, agency is not an individual attribute or possession. Instead, it is something individuals achieve within their context, which may enable or constrain the fulfilment of their goals and commitments. In other words, “objective situations, as shaped by socio-cultural properties, are real; we cannot make what we will of them with impunity” (Archer, 2003, p. 139). Biesta et al. (2015) corroborate this perspective arguing that “actors always act by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment so that the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors” (p. 22). The figure below presents a diagram of the three essential components of human agency.

### **Figure 3**

*The Relationship between Individuals, Social Structure and Human Agency*



*Note.* Diagram created based on Archer (2003) and Emirbayer & Mische (1998)

This diagram demonstrates that “personal agency and social structure operate interdependently. Social structures are created by human activity, and sociostructural practices, in turn, impose constraints and provide enabling resources and opportunity structures for personal development and functioning” (Bandura, 2001, p. 15). Each action activates specific barriers or openings in an interplay between beliefs, goals, and social arrangements (Archer, 2003). Therefore, constraints and affordances emerge as responses to specific courses of action and what constitutes an affordance to a person’s goals may impede another’s. Consequently, compliance with social pressures is one possible action course, but there is also evasion, circumvention, or subversion, each with an attached cost (Archer, 2003). Thus, the context of teachers’ work impinges upon their pedagogical agency, defined as the capacity to act according to their belief systems and engage students in curricular experiences compatible with such (Campbell, 2012). So, they are crucial components in their perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001).

Biesta et al. (2015) offer insights into the structural component of teacher agency in a multiple case study with six teachers in three different schools in the context of the Curriculum for Excellence reform in Scotland in 2010. Such a reform aimed to raise teachers' positions as co-creators of the curriculum to replace the top-down accountability arrangements that had been in place before. Despite the significant changes that the curriculum reform proposed regarding the role of teachers, Biesta et al. (2015) found that many participants followed habitual patterns informed by their own educational experiences without considering alternatives. Biesta et al. (2015) attributed these limitations to the prevalence for a long time of accountability mechanisms that have "eroded teachers' capacity for agency and have taken away important resources and opportunities for the achievement of agency from their practice" (p. 125).

Consequently, most teacher decision-making responded to the commitment to maintain a 'normal desirable state' in the classroom, such as covering the curriculum content, delivering enjoyable lessons, and keeping students engaged and classes quiet and well behaved. Therefore, there was a scarcity of professional consideration among participants about the possibilities that education can open, which limited their achievement of agency. In other words, there was a dissociation between their role as citizens responsible for contributing to the civic and political community and their role as educators, reduced to knowledge deliverers.

However, Biesta et al. (2015) identified that the professional relationships within the school could result in higher levels of agency achievement. In one of the schools, professional relationships among educators were vertical, with few opportunities for cooperation. The situation was different in the other school that was part of the study. The authors identified strong relationships at the faculty level with high trust. The school management incentivized these horizontal relationships, giving participants a robust support network and increasing their

agentic possibilities. Biesta et al. (2015), in this sense, suggested that the school level contains the potential for change by fostering a culture of cooperation and trust, which could increase teachers' possibilities for taking risks and achieving agency. Furthermore, this network could promote a more robust pedagogical culture among teachers, allowing them to better situate themselves in the educational disputes related to its political character. Therefore, the literature review regarding the structural element of teacher agency indicated a tendency among educators to reproduce the patterns of education received, which only a concerted effort in the school community could revert.

### **3. Insights and Considerations about the Literature Review**

The previous sections presented several research pieces that contribute to this study. This section summarizes the contributions that these studies have provided regarding the conceptualization of central concerns in this dissertation. I also point to a gap in the literature that this text aims to address. I present these contributions in a list form to facilitate their visualization and comprehension:

- There is a relationship between teachers' conceptions of collective life and their pedagogical strategies and commitments (e.g., Faden, 2012; Knowles, 2018; Pacievitch & Cerri, 2016; Sampermans et al., 2021)
- Cognitive tools available in public discourses are instrumental in assisting individuals in forging their identities, defining their priorities, and making choices that relate to their agency. Public discourses vary from society to society (e.g., den Heyer, 2018; Faden, 2012; Fouts & Lee, 2005; Pajares, 1992; Wertsch, 2012).
- Humans rely on their repertoire of habits and representations to guide their actions and plans. However, they also engage with present circumstances dialogically, which

may lead them to re-evaluate their values and representations (e.g., Archer, 2003; Emyrbaier & Mische, 1998).

- The historical and sociological dimension of human agency refers to how individuals perceive themselves as part of the collectivity. Thus, historical consciousness deeply connects with politics because it relates to the interpretation of the motions of society and its destination. Different groups have bitter struggles regarding these representations (e.g., den Heyer, 2018; Rusen, 2004; Wertsch, 2012).
- Teachers tend to reproduce the patterns of education received, including traditional narratives that frame history in the unilinear modernity template. Many teachers are unaware of essential cognitive aspects of their field and present social studies as a list of events and dates (e.g., Biesta et al., 2015; Garrido, 2013; Ricci, 1998; Yilmaz, 2008).

This list summarizes the main findings obtained from the literature review. It indicates that the studies investigating teachers' pedagogical commitments tend to ignore the modernity-coloniality dyad, and this research aims to contribute to this research approach. Moreover, I did not find any study examining teachers' historical perspectives. Although Ricci's (1998) and Yilmaz's (2008) texts delved into how educators construed the history curriculum and their theoretical foundations, none of them inquired about how they interpreted society's past and how these interpretations generated political and pedagogical commitments. Moreover, although Biesta et al.'s (2015) text analyzed teachers' agency in the context of curriculum reform, including the affordances and constraints they faced at school, it did not investigate how they construed their pedagogical commitments and how they

related to society. Thus, the literature review allowed me to identify the contributions to scholarship this research can make.

#### **4. Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined this research's conceptual and historical space and the scholarly discussions it aims to contribute. It explored several theoretical and empirical studies and their contributions to this dissertation. The next chapter will introduce the methodological approach of this text, which this chapter contributed to developing. Thus, it indicates the strategies for participant selection, the data collection tools, the analytical framework and the steps to ensure the credibility of the findings.

## Chapter 4 – Methodological Framework

Chapter four details the interpretive framework, the participant selection criteria, the data collection tools and the steps to establish credibility and relevance for this paper. In the previous chapters, I indicated that the national state is a pivotal political, social, and cultural factor that profoundly influences education systems. Therefore, representations about countries and their histories bring about conflicts and disputes, and they may reveal or overlook facts that question their legitimacy (e.g., den Heyer, 2018; Stanley, 2012).

Although there have been significant initiatives in many places to reshape the way people understand society, including curriculum redesign, the literature review suggested the prevalence of monolithic historical representations in schools framed by the unilinear modernity perspective. Such approaches keep the invisibility of social injustices whose roots date back to coloniality (e.g., Mignolo, 2005; Quijano, 2000). Educators, in this sense, are immersed in this web of meanings “formed through reciprocal influences ... towards particular symbolic models, images, and shared values” (Farr & Moscovici, 1984, p. 151). Nevertheless, on the other hand, teachers may also generate other ways to understand society by approaching history from different perspectives and acknowledging facts that hugely impacted the lives of different groups (e.g., Indigenous communities). Emirbayer and Mische (1998) corroborate this perspective, arguing that people’s ideas about the past impact their engagement with present circumstances. Therefore, historical perspectives relate to agentic possibilities, which emerge in an interplay between individuals and their social milieu.

This chapter will detail the method to become acquainted with participants’ historical perspectives, which stem from their repertoire of stories, images, and ideas. Such perspectives inform their present engagements and expectations for the future (den Heyer, 2018). This



endeavour includes examining teachers' educational paths inside secondary and post-secondary education, which constitute a relevant element in construing their professional activities (e.g., Biesta et al., 2015; Knowles, 2018, Ricci, 1998).

Essential aspects to consider are the formative opportunities provided, such as the possibility of reflecting on socio-historical theories and accounts that impacted how they perceive themselves and their job. The investigation also analyzes participants' educational experiences outside formal institutions, such as religious practices, previous work experience, activism in social movements, and relevant online activity. Understanding participants' itineraries in formal and informal education provides a broader view of the prominent representations in their lives. It also helps identify the perspectives that shape how they see society, history, schools, and politics.

Such interpretations develop in a dialectical relationship with working contexts, involving a mediation between the institutional and curricular imperatives and the situated classroom practices (Aoki, 2004; Ross, 2006). Tardif (2013) corroborates this idea, arguing that teachers' knowledge stems from an epistemology of practice, and they reinterpret knowledge according to the specific needs of their work. Therefore, this study seeks to understand teachers' pedagogical and political commitments, which stem from their values, beliefs, and representations acquired throughout their lives and professional activities (e.g., Biesta et al., 2015).

Following the literature review findings (e.g., Faden, 2012; Fouts & Lee, 2004; Ricci, 1998; Sampermans et al., 2021), this research considers that the spatial and historical contexts influence the way teachers perceive themselves and their practice. Brazil's transition from a military to a democratic rule constitutes a pivotal point in the development of institutions, including schools and the curriculum. As discussed in chapter two, the re-emergence of

reactionary groups also impacts teachers' work with intense questioning viz-a-viz their credibility and goals (e.g., Rosa et al., 2018).

In addition to the intellectual, political, and ideological atmosphere, it is relevant to consider the concrete reality of participants' working conditions. The literature review demonstrated that the school context impacts educators and pupils and their relationship (e.g., Biesta et al., 2015; Garrido, 2013; Knowles, 2018). Aspects such as professional and community relationships play a decisive role in the expectations and attitudes regarding school. Therefore, the research analyzes participants' representations of their working conditions, such as infrastructure, wage, support, community, student body, and formative opportunities. It also assesses their level of satisfaction with the profession.

In what follows, I outline the research methodology and describe the investigation steps, including a rationale for its strategies and approach. I also present the participant selection method, data collection tools, data interpretation and presentation methods, ethical considerations, and verification strategies for credibility and quality.

## **1. The Methodological Approach**

Patton (2002) argues that any research design reflects some imperfect interplay of resources, possibilities, and personal judgment. Hence, there is no "recipe or formula for making method decisions" (p. 12). Patton (2002) also emphasizes that the credibility of the insights generated from qualitative inquiry has "more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size" (p. 245). Stake (2010) corroborates this consideration stating that "the range and completeness of the experience studied is not as important as picking experiences that can be said to be insightful revelations" (p. 57).

This study aims to contribute to scholarship on teacher agency and historical consciousness, and each participant, in this sense, constitutes an instrumental unit of inquiry to answer the research questions (Mills et al., 2010; Stake, 2005). I analyzed these cases jointly to draw inferences and conclusions by comparing them, following Stake's (2005) concept of multiple-case study. This approach rests on the principle that understanding these cases "will lead to better understanding and perhaps better theorizing about a still larger collection of cases" (Stake, 2005, p. 446).

Patton (2002), in turn, argues about the importance of analyzing each case in-depth so it may stand alone in the final report, "allowing the reader to understand the case as a unique, holistic entity" (p. 450). Therefore, I only made inferences and comparisons after exploring each case, which resulted in summaries and memos. Patton (2002) supports this approach claiming that "the credibility of the overall findings will depend on the quality of the individual cases" (p. 450).

### ***1.1 Sampling Procedures***

Patton (2002) argues that "there are purposeful strategies instead of methodological rules in qualitative inquiry. There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (p. 244). However, Patton (2002) recommends that the sample size consider a reasonable coverage of the phenomenon within the study's purpose. The crucial aspect is to fully describe the sampling procedures and decisions so readers can judge the sample appropriately.

This research combined the convenience sampling strategy with the heterogeneity approach (Patton, 2002). Thus, I contacted former university and work colleagues to request suggestions for possible participants. As I started receiving the contact information of potential research subjects, I made sure that the sample was heterogeneous enough to yield detailed

findings for documenting uniqueness and locating “shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity” (Patton, 2002, p. 235). As some teachers agreed to join, I targeted possible participants to ensure a heterogeneous sample regarding the workplace (i.e., public and private school), gender, discipline taught, and political inclination, with the concern of including at least one participant subscribing to neoconservatism. I have also aimed to have a racially diverse set of participants, as racialization emerged as a critical component in the formation of different social classes in Brazilian history (e.g., da Costa, 2010; Eakin, 2018). It is important to note that the selection stemmed from my perceptions, but I was careful not to ascribe a race to any teacher. Nonetheless, as the following chapters describe, several participants recognized race as an important aspect of their identities and experiences in a post-colonial society, confirming that it was a critical variable to consider in the sample selection.

Another sampling criterion was participants’ time in the profession. According to Huberman (2007), only after around eight years do teachers develop a pedagogical identity, and all participants have been working at schools for at least ten years. The table below summarizes the participants’ information.

**Table 1**

*Summary of Participants*

Participant	Main discipline taught	Number of years teaching	Places where the participant has worked
Ademir	History	23	Private schools
Esther	History	10	Public schools
Felix	Sociology	17	Private and public schools

Regina	Sociology	10	Private and public schools
Luciano	Geography	16	Private and public schools
Olga	Geography	23	Private and public schools
Ronaldo	Philosophy	16	Private and public schools
David	Philosophy	23	Public schools

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*Note.* Names are pseudonyms to preserve participants' anonymity.

### ***1.2 Data Collection Tools***

For Patton (2002), researchers must create “a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about the world, or that part of the world about which they are talking” (p. 21). This research investigated the relationship between teachers' socio-historical interpretations of Brazil and political-pedagogical commitments, and I selected data collection tools to capture participants' representations of these topics. Although this research subscribes to the post-colonial critical theoretical framework, there was the concern that participants could externalize their perspectives and not simply respond to the ideas I put forth. This approach involved interviews, completing an activity, and conversations to explore the activity.

According to Taylor et al. (2015), interviews allow subjects to develop new insights and understandings of their ideas and reflect on aspects or events the interviewer is interested in. Patton (2002) shares this perspective stating that interviews offer direct quotations from people about their experiences and opinions. There were two interviews with participants that took, on average, one hour each.

In the first conversation, I became familiar with the teacher's personal, educational, and professional paths (see Appendix A for the questions that guided the activity) to gain access to their constellations of beliefs and experiences, as they are “the sounding board against which the 'imports' of structural and cultural factors reverberate” (Archer, 2003, p. 143). Furthermore, they constitute the references that establish their political and pedagogical goals. Finally, transcribing and reading the first interview helped me recognize what I needed to explore further in the second one.

Consequently, I formulated new questions for each participant for the second interview based on the first. I focused on delving deeper into how participants see the country's social, political, educational, and economic status and history (see Appendix B for the activity participants were requested to do before the second interaction). They completed a mind map with the most remarkable characteristics of Brazilian society, politics, and education. They also listed the historical events they thought shaped these elements. Some teachers sent the completed mind map and list before the interview, while others did it orally during the interview.

We explored these activities with the retrospective think-aloud approach, appropriate for eliciting “the inner thoughts or cognitive processes that illuminate what's going on in a person's head during the performance of a task” (Patton, 2002, p. 385). For example, one participant wrote in the mind map that the humanities are devalued in the country, which led me to inquire how this devaluation manifested, how he experienced it in his daily practices, and what he thought the historical roots were. Hence, the mind map activity and think-aloud protocol allowed participants to elaborate their perspectives of Brazilian history and society and how they shaped and were shaped by their political-pedagogical commitments. It also allowed me to elicit their

positions in these narratives, including their interactions with social and educational structures, which constitute a fundamental agency aspect (e.g., Archer, 2003).

Duveen (2001), in this sense, argues that “knowledge is produced through interaction and communication and its expression is always linked to the human interests which are engaged” (p. 3). The interviews, thus, were not simply an exercise in externalizing ideas but an effort to elaborate on intricate and complex topics of national formation, political and educational structures, and where participants stand. They also allowed teachers to object to some of my interpretations of their ideas during the conversation (Brinkmann, 2014).

According to Patton (2002), there are different types of questions such as detailed-oriented questions), elaboration questions (e.g., could you say some more about that?), clarification questions (e.g., what do you mean with this phrase?), and contrasting questions (e.g., how do you think your narrative differs from that specific narrative?). This model guided me in formulating follow-up questions during the discussions, which helped deepen the answers and give the interviewees cues about the desired response level. Brinkmann (2014) corroborates this perspective, arguing that probes can generate knowledge-producing dialogues by giving leeway to follow up on whatever angles the interviewer deems necessary.

During the interviews, I took notes that helped me formulate new questions, write down insights produced, and facilitate later analysis, including locating important quotes from the dialogues (Patton, 2002). Since all participants were working remotely because of the Covid pandemic, they were familiar with Google Meet, and the interviews were recorded and transcribed with their authorization.

### ***1.3 Data Analysis Framework***

The interview transcriptions and notes offered raw data for the analysis, which involved the theoretical framework established in this text. They were the primary source for examining teachers' social-historical representations and commitments on their terms (Stake, 2010; Taylor et al., 2015). I have carefully explored the transcripts and acquired increasing familiarity with the data to notice important details and gain new insights about meanings. Patterns, categories, and relationships became more evident as I delved further into the database's subtleties (Saldaña, 2011). Therefore, the data interpretation involved taking the transcripts and making them more complex, drawing conceptual relationships by emphasizing, describing, judging, comparing, portraying, and evoking images (Guba & Lincoln in Merriam, 1998).

I have created codes to support the analysis, which “provide a way of storing data so that they are easily retrieved as the researcher works out analysis and later presents them with appropriate supporting material” (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 172). I also used them to capture the data's primary content and essence, and they ranged from a single word to a whole page (Saldaña, 2011). The code types stemmed from three categories that emerged as essential in the research design.

#### **1.3.1 Code Type One: Participants' Biographies and Ideological References**

The first code type relates to participants' biographical and ideological profiles. This category encompasses their family background, educational and professional paths, and the references prominent in their interpretation of Brazilian history and society (e.g., books, authors, teachers, media, religion). As previously explained, each teacher constitutes a case study, and the first code category is instrumental in capturing the essential aspects of their trajectories and



representations, as described in chapter five. This code category also outlines the affordances and constraints they face as teachers regarding fulfilling their political-pedagogical commitments.

### **1.3.2 Code Type Two: Participants' Historical Stances**

The literature review demonstrated the significance of creating categories to examine participants' political and pedagogical stances. Max Weber (1949), who is the precursor of the ideal type methodological strategy in social sciences, defined them as formed by:

the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct. (p. 90)

Such constructs, according to Weber (1949), allow us to judge the adequacy of our propositions against reality and are essential “for the scrutiny and systematic characterization of individual concrete patterns which are significant in their uniqueness” (pp. 99-100). Therefore, grouping different political and pedagogical positions must stem from careful reflections on the research's framework and a continuous dialogue with the data. Biesta (2005) corroborates this perspective, arguing that,

Language is not simply a mirror of reality .... Discursive practices delineate – and perhaps we can even say: constitute – what can be seen, what can be said, what can be known, what can be thought and, ultimately, what can be done. (p. 54)

In this study, it has been necessary to create categories that capture how participants construe the motions of society, which is the basis of historical consciousness (Rusen, 2004). As previously discussed, such chronological orientations tie “the past to the present in a manner that bestows on present actuality a future perspective ...., facilitating the direction of our intentions

within a temporal matrix” (Rusen, 2004, p. 67). Thus, this section outlines a framework for classifying teachers according to the commitments coming from their historical interpretations of Brazil. The discussions presented in previous chapters regarding the relationship between teachers’ political orientations and pedagogical strategies and the impact of coloniality on the country’s development were instrumental for this purpose (e.g., Pacievitch & Cerri, 2016; Quijano, 2000).

The first category of historical stances is the adherent or those who interpret the country’s past as something they need to preserve. Consequently, their pedagogical commitments revolve around the idea of helping pupils assimilate into the status quo. Following the studies cited in the literature review (e.g., Knowles, 2018; Sampermans et al., 2021; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), I infer that the participants in this category emphasize order and discipline in their classes and see no alternative to how the nation-state works, although they might consider it could improve by more adhesion to its tenets by the population.

The second category is the reformist, who considers that the country’s past brings some positive elements to collective life (e.g., the possibility to vote) but also some negative aspects (e.g., high criminality, inequality). Thus, their pedagogical commitments relate to raising pupils’ awareness about the importance of engaging in public debates and institutions, such as following the activities of elected members of congress. Based on the literature review, I infer that they promote activities to develop pupils’ deliberative skills, such as debates and group work.

Finally, the third type consists of the dissenters or those who construe the country’s past as significantly oppressive, leading them to identify the need to alter its trajectory. Therefore, they aim to raise pupils’ awareness about these injustices and how they can combat them. I hypothesize that these participants approach difficult topics (e.g., food insecurity faced by many

families) in their classes and exhort students to be mindful of the contradictions and injustices that characterize many people’s lives in contemporary society.

This framework is a heuristic and different from the categories other authors in the literature review employed (e.g., Knowles, 2018) because it includes a past perspective. This perspective is necessary because it contextualizes narratives within public discourses that have emerged in the foundation of nation-states and have served to legitimate or contest social relationships. In other words, this framework highlights the historicity of political stances and commitments and how they emerge from specific perspectives of the past. Such narratives play a pivotal political role because they determine what is emphasized or obscured and the desirable course of action in a society. The chart below summarizes the heuristics that will be instrumental in the data analysis.

**Table 2**

*Codes for Participants’ Historical Stances*

Adherent	Reformist	Dissenter
They emphasize the need to preserve the country’s historical trajectory because they consider it positive. Consequently, their pedagogical commitments relate to helping students assimilate into the status quo.	They identify positive and negative components in the country’s trajectory. Thus, they commit to assisting students in engaging in public debates and deliberations to maintain what is positive and bring about necessary changes.	They construe the country’s trajectory as mainly faulty and oppressive. Therefore, they commit to instilling values among students to compel them to act for social change.

*Note.* Categories elaborated by the author.

### **1.3.3 Code Type Three: Participants' Interpretations of Brazilian History.**

As described in previous sections, I requested teachers to complete a conceptual map regarding society and education in Brazil and list the events they considered that shaped the country most decisively. Then, I explored their activities to access their socio-historical conceptions and identify their paradigmatic interpretive templates. Thus, the third code type relates to their historical perspectives (i.e., what events they cited and how they relate to each other to create a narrative) (e.g., Epstein, 1998; den Heyer, 2018; White, 1997). This category also encompasses their interpretations of education struggles, including their situated practices and the circumstances that impact them. As stated in chapter one, this research employs post-colonial critical theory to construe Brazil's history. Therefore, an essential analytical consideration regarding participants' narratives was whether they recognized the colonial power matrix or not. Additionally, I sought to establish whether participants' historical narratives were coherent and contemplated their experiences as members of a society temporally and spatially situated in a specific context.

It is possible to see that these three coding categories constitute a framework that allowed me to explore participants' agentic potential by investigating their repertoire of experiences and beliefs (the iterative aspect), the professional commitments that stem from this repertoire (the projective dimension), and how they engage in the concrete situations of their practices. Furthermore, the heuristic served as a strategy to assess how their historical perspectives impinged upon their sense of agency and political stances. The following section describes the approach to ensure this study's credibility and quality.

## 2. Quality Considerations

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), “goodness criteria are themselves rooted in the assumptions of the paradigm for which they are designed” (p. 236). The literature review was instrumental in establishing this paper’s paradigm of human agency, which involves an iterative, practical, and projective element (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). In this sense, this study will explore participants’ repertoires of social representations and create situations in which they can articulate how these understandings influence their practices and commitments. For Guba and Lincoln (1989), what makes research dependable is clearly explaining the development of the inquiry process to make all decisions and interpretations accessible to others. Saldaña (2014) summarizes this point, arguing that “providing credibility to the writing is when we inform the reader of our research processes” (p. 605).

Another crucial component of research credibility is the principle of “isomorphism between constructed realities of respondents and the reconstructions attributed to them” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237) to mitigate the risk of projecting ideas into participants’ discourses. Hence, Guba and Lincoln (1989) advise doing constant member checks to verify that the authors’ constructions are those that participants have offered. Thus, I have followed Brinkmann’s (2014) suggestion that “the interpretation of the meanings of the phenomena described by the interviewee can favourably be built into the conversation itself” (p. 288). Moreover, I contacted some participants afterward to ensure I represented their ideas correctly. Finally, in chapter one, I have clarified my position on the research’s theme to establish the framework used for interpreting the data, as “values provide the basis for ascribing meaning and reaching understanding; and an interpretive, constructivist paradigm cannot do without them” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 102).

These steps aimed to ensure that “the data (constructions, assertions, facts, and so on) can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243). Moreover, I made available in this text as much “raw material” as possible, or, in other words, teachers’ direct quotes recorded during the interviews. In this sense, Taylor et al. (2015) point out that detailed descriptions are paramount to qualitative studies to convey a deep understanding of people’s representations. These descriptions must include illustrative quotations and accounts so that the final text is filled “with clear examples” (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 194).

These different steps aim to refine the research, seen more as a process than a product, as researchers must monitor their developing constructions to engage in progressive subjectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). While this research delves into a small sample, it may offer findings of broader significance, possible when “the context and experience of the case are richly described so the reader can recognize and connect with the events and the experiences portrayed” (Simons, 2014, p. 466). In this way, while this study does not mean to generalize its conclusions, it gives a detailed view of a sample so that readers may relate its findings to other sites. Simons (2014), in this sense, argues that “making inferences from cases with a qualitative data set arises from a process of interpretation in context, appealing to tacit and situated understanding for acceptance of their validity” (p. 466). Similarly, Patton (2002) argues that the research’s relevance lies in its substantive significance, which can be determined by how solid the evidence supporting the findings is, how it deepens understanding of the phenomenon studied, the extent to which the findings are consistent with other knowledge, and the extent to which it is useful for its intended purpose (p. 467).

A final quality consideration relates to the fact that the interviews and the final text are in a different language, and there might be the risk that some ideas get lost in translation. Therefore, I submitted several samples of the original interview transcript and my translation to a Brazilian professional with an English language degree, who confirmed that the translation was appropriate.

### **3. Ethical Considerations**

According to Traianou (2014), in most qualitative work, the danger of significant harm is low and unlikely to happen, which is the case with this study. However, as Patton (2002) reminds us, interviews are interventions that affect people and may lay open thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and experiences to the interviewer and the interviewee. Hence, neither the interviewer nor the interviewee can know in advance what an impact the interview will have on them. Therefore, the researcher must take some measures to minimize possible disruptions to participants.

An essential principle for ethics in research, in this sense, is respecting people's autonomy (Traianou, 2014, p. 65). Even though there were no foreseeable risks of serious harm from disclosing their socio-historical and political views, there was still a possibility that they might face some backlash from school administrators due to their positions. I used pseudonyms in this text to mitigate this risk and omitted anything that could lead to participant identification. Furthermore, they may experience negative feelings like humiliation and loss of trust. I engaged in open and honest conversations with the subjects with a heightened sense of caring and fairness to mitigate these risks (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 335).

As per the University of Alberta guidelines for participant information letter and consent, the form had lay terms, and the reading level was as low as possible. (Please, see Appendix C

and D for the English and Portuguese versions). In addition, I made sure participants understood the study's procedures and goals and were aware that they could withdraw their participation at any moment. The consent form clearly stated these principles. I also provided them with ample opportunities to ask questions and obtain clarifications they deemed necessary. Finally, the form made it clear that if participants chose to withdraw during the research, they could decide whether I could use the information they provided until that point. It also stated that they had up to two weeks after the interviews to withdraw their participation.

#### **4. Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the methodological framework of this research. It re-stated this study's theoretical basis and indicated the rationale behind participant selection, the data collection tools and the analytical framework. Furthermore, it explained the steps to ensure the credibility and quality of the findings and the measures to safeguard participants' anonymity and well-being. Based on these methodological principles, the next chapter develops the profile of participants and situates their commitments according to the heuristic presented in this chapter's section 1.3.



## Chapter 5 - Examining Participants' Values and Beliefs

As explained in the previous chapters, each participant in this research constitutes an instrumental case study or, in other words, an instance to address a broader question (Stake, 2005). This study explores the relationship between teachers' historical perspectives and their political-pedagogical commitments and what impacts the fulfilment of these commitments. I have argued in chapter three that human agency contains iterative and projective elements involving a temporal and structural dimension (Archer, 2003; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Therefore, historical perspectives are part of participants' iterative agentic dimension, as they relate to patterns of thought and action that give stability and order to their lives, sustaining identities, communities, and institutions over time (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

This chapter, in this sense, aims to identify participants' primary references regarding social life, as they constitute the basis on which they elaborate historical understandings and establish their political and pedagogical commitments. These references are present in public discourses (e.g., media, school, activist groups), and individuals rely on them in their sense-making activities (den Heyer, 2018). However, people also re-signify these representations, and, in this regard, although individuals may share similar ideas, each has a unique perspective of reality. Such specific perspectives stem from their life trajectories and embodied experiences that intimately relate to their cognitive and affective repertoire (e.g., Archer, 2003).

Consequently, it is possible to affirm that people's historical perspectives relate to their sense of identity and provide elements that inform how they situate themselves in time and space. As a result, emotions imbue these perspectives, and they are considerably resistant to the influences of external sources. Mansour (2008) corroborates this idea, arguing that "belief systems reduce dissonance and confusion, even when dissonance is logically justified by the

inconsistent beliefs held by an individual. This is one reason they acquire emotional dimensions and resist change” (p. 37).

Thus, this chapter aims to give a broad view of participants’ identities and the cognitive tools with which they construe social relationships. Accordingly, I construct a profile of each teacher and summarize their educational paths and professional trajectories. I also describe important events and ideas that have shaped their understandings of history and society, considering that they reflect how they construe reality (Archer, 2003). In other words, their narrations of critical events offer insights into their repertoires of ideas and values that frame their socio-historical understandings. Finally, this chapter also offers a preliminary classification of participants’ historical stances according to the heuristic presented in chapter four. Although these categories focus on specific aspects and synthesize diffuse viewpoints, they offer an exploratory path for making sense of intricate and sometimes messy perspectives and are an appropriate methodological tool, as indicated in the literature review.

### **1. Teacher David**

David was born in a working-class family and lived during part of his childhood and adolescence in a slum. At eighteen, he got involved with religious activities in the Catholic church and moved to a seminary. After a while, he left the seminary and started working as a teacher. His education career started in an NGO for adult education, whose objective “was to change the world through literacy,” according to him. He liked the humanities and did not identify many opportunities to work outside of education, so he became a teacher and has enjoyed the human connections in the profession.

He has been a teacher for 23 years and has been a tenured teacher in a school in a *periferia* of São Paulo for 12 years. Such a school is close to where he grew up, and he appeared

to have a deep connection with the community who attended it. He characterized the public that attends the place as poor and mentioned that he and some colleagues sometimes donate money to buy food for students' families in dire situations. He also said it is impossible to require that students buy books because most would not have the means and that many receive the *bolsa-familia*<sup>4</sup> for attending school. He mentioned that his job satisfaction is around seven or eight on a one-to-ten scale, stating that,

I have never had a late payment. I have the equipment to work in the classroom; I have a lot of freedom to work in the classroom, in fact, more freedom than I should have because in state schools, if you keep students in the classroom, you can do whatever you want, including doing nothing. (David, Interview 1)

During our conversations, David strongly emphasized the primacy of individuals over social structures. When I asked him about the ideas of scholars who associate educational inequalities with social disparities (e.g., Bourdieu, 2007; McLaren, 2015, Willis, 1977), he recognized that they play a role in shaping individuals' opportunities. However, he claimed this type of discourse was questionable because it exonerated individuals from responsibility and denied their agency.

Nonetheless, David did not deny that living in a deprived condition negatively impacted a person's possibilities in life. Instead, his most significant objection was against those who usually put forth such views in the school environment (e.g., teachers and union members) as they are often not committed to improving their practices to increase students' opportunities for self-improvement. David even cited the French philosopher Rousseau, arguing that, even though he wrote a beautiful treatise on the importance of allowing children to develop without undue

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<sup>4</sup> It is a monthly monetary benefit by the federal government to impoverished families who have school-aged children. Families must provide proof of school attendance to continue receiving the benefit.

social pressures, there are rumours that he sent his children to an orphanage to free himself of the burden of raising them. Thus, he concluded that these ideas “are beautiful but distant from reality.”

The same applies to students who blame social structures for their lack of opportunities in life. In these cases, he says it is essential to see whether the student is doing everything possible (e.g., borrowing books from the school library, doing all classroom assignments) to make progress; if so, he would accept such an argument otherwise not. He feels that such discourses are often excuses by people who do not want to take personal responsibility for their actions. He also argued that attempts to define a person by their social class are dangerous and repeatedly stated that each individual is a complex being and that, even though his students broadly came from the same impoverished socioeconomic background and neighbourhood, they were not uniform.

When I asked him whether a child born in extreme poverty had a fair chance in society, he said such a child may not have the ideal chances but can undoubtedly make advancement:

When you talk about improvement, there are many degrees of improvement. For a homeless person, renting a place and getting two meals per day is progress. I believe it is possible to improve, maybe not achieve an ideal situation, but the child can improve with effort. The problem is the generalization because the situations are very diverse. (David, Interview 2)

Hence, although he did recognize that social structures jeopardize impoverished students' chances of improving themselves, he insisted on the primacy of personal responsibility and initiative in human action. Thus, David feels capitalism works better because

It operates on something abundant in society: selfishness. I want to be better, have a better house, a better car, and a better family to be better than the people around me. Communism, Marxism, and socialism are beautiful on paper, but in practice, they depend on something that is not abundant in society: the initiative to work for the group, to work for the whole of humanity.... So, capitalism works because it relies on an abundant material in society, which is selfishness, the will to be better than others.... Our ability to think as a whole is very limited; it is much smaller than our selfishness. (David, Interview 1)

He appreciates John Locke's idea that humans are blank slates and that teaching them to work cooperatively for the common good is possible. As part of his interpretive framework that emphasized the primacy of individuals over social structures, David hinted that people who live in poverty are accommodated. For example, he described a meme on the internet that said that if you give a rich person money, this person will invest and make more money. However, if you do the same with a poor person, this person will spend the money immediately on something like an expensive phone. Thus, he shared a similar understanding with teachers who participated in Garrido's (2013) research and associated poverty with a deficit.

A significant reference for him was some of the teachers in his educational path in public schools, who had been well-read, dedicated, and not militant or radical leftists or rightists. On several moments, he suggested that if everyone were more committed to ethical principles and fulfilling their duties, just as his teachers were, there would be dramatic improvements in society. Such a concept of individual primacy permeates his understandings of Brazilian history and society.

## **2. Teacher Ronaldo**

Ronaldo has worked as a philosophy teacher in public schools for 16 years, 13 of which as a tenured teacher. He was a seminarist, and when he left, he decided to pursue a degree and enrolled in a preparatory course. There, Ronaldo contacted many instructors who also taught in secondary schools and inspired him in his career. After that, he decided to study philosophy and enrolled in a Catholic university.

Ronaldo is dissatisfied with some aspects of the profession, such as wages, the current career plan, lack of support, and violence inside schools. In addition, he says indiscipline and student disinterest are significant daily obstacles, and sometimes these aspects make teaching difficult. However, Ronaldo likes the profession in general as it allows him to contact students, get to know their stories and contribute to their growth. He compares pupils to seedlings that need to be cultivated and cared for to develop. Hence, every new year raises his hopes and expectations that the students will learn more than in previous ones, making him passionate about his job.

Ronaldo attended high school sometime after the end of the military regime, but its influence was still present. He feels it trained him to fit into a model with “students sitting in rows, raising their hands to speak, asking for permission to go in and outside the classroom.” These habits stem from a military framework, including respect for national symbols, hierarchy, and discipline. Ronaldo recognizes that this model has profoundly influenced his and many teachers’ views of education. However, he feels that it was excessive and inadequate. Despite recognizing that indiscipline is a significant obstacle to his work as a teacher, he thinks it is absurd to bring this framework back because discipline should come from respect for other people’s right to learn, not indoctrination and imposition.

A significant reference for Ronaldo is Hannah Arendt, who helps him think about “human beings, a more tolerant and just society... It is a scholar I like to discuss in high school.” He explores excerpts from the book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Arendt, 1963) in his classes because

It is an account of the banality of evil in which she says that when human beings act automatically, without thinking, they can bring about the greatest barbarities ever, which is to kill people on a large scale. (Ronaldo, Interview 1)

This appreciation indicates his concern with fostering critical thinking skills among students to avoid extremist positions that could stem from blind adherence to the ideas of specific groups. Another author cited by Ronaldo is Jean-Paul Sartre, who claims that

Humans are condemned to be free, and I usually say that to my students. You can do whatever you want, but freedom comes with responsibility. So education needs to provide this responsible freedom for pupils to give them the power to think for themselves and make their own choices without constraints. (Ronaldo, Interview 2)

Sartre’s and Arendt’s ‘concepts underpin his view that individual and collective life consists of choices. The more informed and infused with solidarity these choices are, the better life will be.

Ronaldo also mentioned a school principal he met in the library when he was in high school. He had to write a paper on Karl Marx, and she offered assistance. She had a history degree, was an active member of the teachers’ union, and helped him “think history with Marxist lenses, which opened new possibilities to see it. It was very enriching.” These concepts helped him think differently, look for new education paths, and reflect on “social and human issues.” He said they are still friends, and he visits her sometimes. Although the relationship involves some disagreements because “not everything in the political left or right is correct,” Ronaldo says

different opinions do not cause enmity because discussions “allow us to dialogue in different forms, walk on different paths, but it teaches us to respect other people’s perspectives.”

Another person who influenced Ronaldo’s views on education was a professor he had at university. Although he was a Catholic priest and firmly embraced the church’s doctrine, he was “very open to dialogue.” He used to “provoke students to have a healthy debate and encourage thinking, very interesting.” He also would frequently say that “reflection is my tool,” which became a motto for Ronaldo.

He mentioned that although the school principal had leftist views and the professor had rightist views, they helped him find his path. These references contribute to Ronaldo’s opinion that education can play a crucial role in helping learners acquire critical thinking skills to make conscious choices and achieve freedom. For him, people’s immersion in conventional beliefs leads them to accept a destiny imposed by their social circumstances and prevents them from finding their path.

### **3. Teacher Felix**

Felix has worked as a sociology teacher since 2003 in public and private schools. Many of his relatives obtained a trade certification in high school, and his father had a small metalwork shop. However, Felix decided to pursue a social sciences degree because he liked to write and communicate, as he had experienced as a missionary in the Christian church he and his family attended. Nonetheless, after some time in the university, he quit attending church because he felt it no longer made sense.

He keeps four blogs: one with his poems, two to talk about racism and experiences of prejudice he suffered as a black person, and one to share links to sociology books (e.g., Max Weber’s biography). He also has a YouTube channel that discusses issues with a sociological



lens (e.g., the covid pandemic and inequality in Brazil). He allowed me to share excerpts from his blogs in this research. For example, in one of his posts, entitled Black Drama, he tells the following story:

In 2001, I was in Porto Alegre with the religious group I was part of. I had just started the social sciences course and was very happy. So, as a good freshman, I bought a faculty T-shirt to celebrate it, and I wore it on my trip. One night, we were having dinner at a steakhouse, commenting on aspects of university life, and an acquaintance who did not participate in the conversation made the following observation: Do you study at Universidade de Sao Paulo (USP)? Wow! When I saw you wearing the USP t-shirt, I thought: Who gave him that shirt? (Felix's Blog, December 1, 2008)

As he needed to support himself during his studies, he started working in a community preparatory course as a history teacher and later as the pedagogical coordinator. This experience led him to work in several NGOs that focused on activities like building libraries and playgrounds in impoverished places. It also inspired him to take a course in public management. However, after a while, he became disillusioned with these NGOs because he felt their goal should be to stop existing after fulfilling their purposes, but they tend to become bureaucratic apparatuses searching for funds to support themselves and do not bring about social change.

In 2013, Felix passed a public test and became a tenured sociology teacher in a state school. However, he defines his professional life as full of ruptures, and the average time he spends in each school is two years. When I contacted him in December of 2020, he had just been fired from an elite private school where he had worked for two years.

Felix obtained a master's degree in education and wrote his dissertation about the repression of teacher subjectivity within contemporary schools and its relation to professional

dissatisfaction and career desertion. He is interested in psychoanalysis and wants to research how the school routine leads teachers to a malaise in a doctoral course. Felix mentioned he is tired, and the teaching profession, “which has become increasingly precarious,” suffered another blow related to educators’ loss of autonomy in the classroom with the rise of neoconservative movements. During our conversations, it became evident his concern with the glaring disparities in the country, as visible in an excerpt of a story entitled *Outcome* that he wrote and posted on his blog,

Mechanization, automation, and artificial intelligence advanced in such a way as to make the workforce of billions unnecessary, leading them to roam the streets without anyone to offer their work. Like Lazarus in the parable, they ate the remains, crumbs and bones that fell literally and metaphorically from the table of the rich. Paramilitary groups oversaw the extermination of the “undesirables,” and medical teams promoted the sterilization of the poor, who insisted on existing, resisting and disturbing the landscape, occupying important tourist spots. (Felix’s Blog, August 11, 2021)

He drew a parallel between Nazi Germany in the 1930s and the current moment in Brazil with Jair Bolsonaro. For him, a war or a revolution is preferable to waiting for the 2022 election because the current president poses a severe risk to democracy and human rights. He also referenced authors such as Paulo Freire, Pierre Bourdieu, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and the Frankfurt School to critique the pervasiveness of instrumental reason in society and how it suppresses subjectivity.

Thus, Felix emphasized how the quest for capital accumulation and the struggles among different classes shape history and impact personal and collective development. For him, many teachers do not see themselves as working-class members and become subservient. However, if

teachers acquired class consciousness, “we would rule this country as there are five million of us.” He also highlighted the importance of strengthening the state’s role in providing essential services for the population (e.g., health care) because it had the best resources and purposes (in opposition to the private sector).

#### **4. Teacher Regina**

Regina got a sociology degree in 2010 and has worked as a sociology teacher in public schools ever since. Before obtaining her degree, she worked in a factory and a store as a salesperson. Currently, she works in a state high school in the metropolitan region of São Paulo. She is very dissatisfied with her job and seriously considers quitting because of the “low wages, overcrowded classrooms, authoritarian managers, and scarcity of development opportunities” (Interview 1). She is currently pursuing a teaching degree that will enable her to get a permanent position. However, not having such a degree has never been a problem because there are plenty of sociology teaching positions available due to teacher scarcity.

She decided to pursue a sociology degree to learn about issues of significance to her, such as social inequality, racism, and feminism, but she was somewhat disappointed in it in the end:

I thought I would learn a lot more about issues that were meaningful to me. About racism, I hardly read any black authors; we barely talked about this topic. We talked more about racial democracy, so in that sense, it disappointed me. They did not talk about feminism, none of that. We discussed none of these current agendas at university; I did not learn about them there. (Regina, Interview 1)

When I asked what interested her in these topics, Regina mentioned that it was her life experience.

I have thought about the issue of social inequality and racism since high school because I am black, live in the *periferia* and am a girl, the daughter of working-class parents, so these social issues have always affected me, and that is what led me to think more about these things, then doing sociology to try to understand a little bit of it all. (Regina, Interview 2)

Nonetheless, Regina half-jokingly said she was not fully satisfied with her career option “because sociology students want to save the world. However, they soon discover they cannot do it on their own, and they try to save themselves, but it is too late (laughs)” (Interview 1). She recognized that sociology was an essentially conflictive discipline and said, “during my sociology course, I went to lectures that made me want to slit my wrists because they left me so depressed... Sociology brings discomfort; it surely does.”

She is currently pursuing an education degree to obtain a tenured position and is taking an online course. However, she is very dissatisfied with the program, claiming it relies on memorization. Regina is doing it “to obtain the diploma, but it is awful; the instructors are not well prepared.” Consequently, Regina mentioned not knowing the educational laws and policies very well and that most of her views on the field stem from her sociological background and experiences as a teacher.

Marx’s framework occupies a prominent position in how she construes social reality. She mentioned, for example, the importance of raising class consciousness among workers to bring about change. However, Regina also said that the superstructure of society was committed to favouring the interests of the ruling classes. They would do that by directing political decisions to their interests with the strength of their wealth because “it is necessary to spend big money to win an election.” Furthermore, she argued that the media played a role in the superstructure by

instilling the idea that leftists are radicals, like what they did in 1964 (the year of the military coup) when they spread the panic that “communists eat babies.”

She also mentioned the influence of black lawyer, intellectual and online activist Silvio Almeida, who argued that there are “many mechanisms that are not always overt or conscious, but they do negatively impact the lives of black and brown people.” Another essential reference in her social representations was the feminist movement in Brazil. She said that around five years ago, she started reading online texts on platforms like Twitter and Facebook and cited the black feminist intellectual Djamila Ribeiro as significant to understanding the country’s massive gender violence. When I asked her what she would do if she could change the world, she replied, “the world would be communist, wonderful! (laughs). People would work just a bit and then paint, dance, or do any art. Alternatively, if they did not want to do art, they could sleep. A Marxist paradise!”

## **5. Teacher Ademir**

Ademir was born in Chile and moved to Brazil at five years old when his father decided to look for better job opportunities. Because he never obtained Brazilian citizenship, he could not become a tenured teacher in public schools, and his whole career has been in private institutions. He has been enthralled by history since he was small. He had a devout Catholic aunt who would tell him Bible stories that fascinated him. He also liked movies such as *Quo Vadis* (Leroy & Mann, 1951) and *Ben-Hur* (Wyler, 1959), which would excite his imagination about ancient civilizations, like the Hebrews and Romans.

Ademir also said there was a political culture at home as he would hear his mother complaining about Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. In addition, although there was still much military influence in the education system, he had a high school teacher who brought different

thinkers' ideas for discussions, such as Trotsky and the anarchists. All these elements led him to appreciate the humanities and especially history.

Ademir mentioned that it took some time to realize the prejudices that exist in the country. He had no accent, and people would tell him he looked like someone from Brazil's Northeast. It took him years to realize that calling someone a Northeastern in Sao Paulo had a pejorative connotation. He tells the story that once he received a friend's acquaintance to stay in his house to study in Sao Paulo for three years, and this person was black. He would get home late after school "and used to joke that he had police escorting him every night." He said these situations were a microcosm of broad racist social practices, and he would get very concerned about his guest's safety.

He has worked in different private schools, and the longest time he spent working in one of them is 19 years. In 2018, he was involved only in preparing history textbooks and programs of studies but said he did not enjoy it as "it was like writing a music sheet and not playing it" (Interview 1). He has been teaching grades six to nine in the current school since 2019. However, he is dissatisfied with his wage, considering that "this school demands so much from me."

He did a master's degree in education and wrote the thesis about history teaching methods through three educators' eyes. Ademir says that at the beginning of his career, he used to think that good teaching related to lecturing well and drawing detailed diagrams on the blackboard but that currently, he feels his task is to provide students with tools to think about history.

Ademir mentioned that "teaching is a political act, and, in this sense, I think Paulo Freire is right. However, we cannot forget that politics is not a synonym of partisanship." He said Paulo Freire also brings the idea of fascination into education despite "the prejudice and untruths that

some people say about him.” On the one hand, the extreme-right portrays him “as an indoctrinator, a cultural Marxist, something he is far from being.” On the other hand, “some people identify him as a constructivist. However, although he advocated an active pedagogy, he was concerned with other things.” For Ademir, Freire was “an extremely democratic educator,” and his texts “open dialogical and artistic dimensions of knowledge.” Regarding the assertion against humanities teachers in Brazil of indoctrinating students, Ademir claimed that

Nobody becomes a leftist or rightist because they took a course in history or sociology. I am more inclined to the left and consider myself a radical historian, but people get confused. I am radical but not sectarian. Therefore, I identify with Reinhard Koselleck to rethink historical concepts. Radical is the person who goes to the root of things, understanding their foundation without sectarianism. Although I have my political sympathies, the same method I use for what I do not like I must use for what I like; otherwise, I become sectarian, and the classroom is not a space of sectarianism but intense radicalism. (Ademir, Interview 1)

He usually comes across students and colleagues saying that history “depends on opinion,” to which he replies, “it does not; opinion is subjective, but historians are not giving an opinion.” Instead, they present “an interpretation based on what other historians wrote, and the sources analyzed, they cannot just say anything....” He uses the Greek terms *doxa* and *episteme* to corroborate this idea. *Doxa* refers to common beliefs and opinions to which everyone is entitled, but it is different from knowledge or *episteme*.

## 6. Teacher Esther

Esther has been a history teacher in public schools since 2010, when she enrolled in university. She grew up in Brazil's Northeast, and later, she married and moved to the southern region, where she describes experiencing prejudice:

When I moved to southern Brazil, people started teasing me, calling me a 'flathead,' even though I was not born in the Northeast. It is a joke, but it has a prejudiced tone. It is imperceptible; the person does not even realize that they act this way, but there is prejudice. It is as if we were inferior, you know, because we lived in the Northeast, people think, "oh, this person experienced starvation." I see these people as poor in knowledge and ignorant of reality. (Esther, Interview 2)

Due to teacher scarcity, she has taught since she began the course, first as a one-on-one tutor and since 2012 as a classroom teacher. When she moved south, she transferred to another university but claimed that her education degree had on-campus classes only once a week. Moreover, there were no field trips and only one tutor to assist her during the entire program. Esther mentioned that in this second university, there was no support, "no one to sit next to you, indicate authors, movies, all these things that would increase our knowledge," and she had to learn everything in practice (Interview 1). Nonetheless, Esther is completely satisfied with the profession. Before, she worked as a bartender and waitress, and the decision to pursue a history degree came ten years after she concluded high school.

Her first teaching job was in a school for children in vulnerable positions. She mentioned that many pupils came from difficult conditions, such as incarcerated parents. Esther said there were confrontations in the class to the point of being threatened by a student. These situations were challenging and forced her to develop new approaches, "as all theory and concepts you see



in university disappear when you are in front of the class, and I had to be tactful to understand the situations that were happening there.”

Esther greatly admires the military, and her grandfather was an armed forces member. A significant influence for her is a high school teacher who “was very strict and severe. Students were afraid of him, but I admired his authority.” She supports President Jair Bolsonaro and neoconservative stalwart Olavo de Carvalho, and many of her representations reflect their views. Esther mentioned the latter “opened my mind to some things,” as she feels high school had indoctrinated her into leftist views.

Following Olavo de Carvalho, she criticizes what she perceives as the political correctness imposition. It is present mainly on the internet because there is excessive surveillance. For her, it makes democracy “too superficial, and a person cannot say anything because it can offend someone.” For Esther, online media is curtailed and “you can be sued for posting what you think.” Similarly, Esther thinks the education system wants to inculcate leftist ideals into students:

My whole life, I believed Che Guevara was a good man, concerned with justice and other people. However, it is a joke, an old wives’ tale, as he was a genocidal person, and I only learned about that later in life. (Esther, Interview 1)

Religion plays a crucial role in her life, and the Bible is a central reference for her. She taught religion for some years in junior high and described that school managers expressed concern that she would impose her beliefs on pupils. In this sense, she said that many things in the curriculum were not per the “Bible, so I know it is not right. But I taught them because I am an academic, but I do not condone these things [i.e., other creeds].”

When I asked her about the School without Party movement, which targets leftist teachers, Esther mentioned that many leftist educators in universities want to indoctrinate students. Therefore, the School without Party “must be for both sides, but leftists are always brainwashing and speaking ill of others, and I think you have to go into the class as a neutral person and teach the content.” She is a staunch supporter of meritocracy because “poverty does not classify intellect.” Although she recognizes that some students in public schools have difficulty because they do not have support, Esther argues, “there are also brilliant students there.”

## **7. Teacher Luciano**

Luciano has been a geography teacher since 2005 and has worked in many private and public schools. He was the first person in his paternal family to go to university, and his father quit school in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. He pursued a geography degree at a public university and mentioned that he learned many things in the course, such as reading and interpreting texts. He said that “there were no books in my house, and I learned to appreciate reading at university, such as Adam Smith’s and Karl Marx’s texts.”

Luciano obtained a master’s degree in geography in 2016 and said it widened his horizons on the discipline’s epistemology. His dissertation focused on how travelling changes how people represent the world to reconstrue “references regarding our birthplace, where we feel at home or as a foreigner.” He appreciates the master’s course because it allowed him to “think about geography more broadly, in a way that makes more sense.” Moreover, it made literature an essential resource, and he started using it in his classes.

Luciano also stressed the influence of his master’s supervisor, who leads a group study. This professor has “an amazing capacity for listening and being welcoming. Additionally, he

demands quality reading, so only those who read the assigned material can participate in the meetings.” Luciano says the supervisor “is very provocative, in a positive manner.” He is very rigorous and frank, sometimes disconcerting Luciano, “but he also praises when it is appropriate.” There is a strong parallel between the professor’s attitude and how Luciano sees geography, as it “should start from our personal experiences so we can problematize them.”

He is satisfied as a teacher and prefers to work with junior high “because there is not so much pressure to prepare pupils for university exams.” He also says that combining teaching and textbooks and curriculum consultancy gives him financial satisfaction and allows him to work in different educational areas. Moreover, he feels confident about his formation, but it does not mean there are no things he looks at critically regarding his practice.

A pivotal concept for Luciano is identity, which contains individual and collective dimensions, including the nation-state. As a teacher, he aims to discuss

Identity, to problematize it and lead students to ask who they are from the experiences of the space they inhabit, and the identity of the people they live with. So, I see education as the possibility of openly questioning things instead of looking for conclusive answers.

(Luciano, Interview 1)

He feels discussing Brazilian identity is essential “as the present moment demands us to think about it.” He cited some authors, such as Marx, who can help understand social class issues, but Luciano does not “take it to explain everything.” He feels it is paramount for everyone to reflect on

What it means to inhabit a Republic, I think I say this from my own experience. This lack of awareness has affected how we approach contemporary issues, and it has caused this considerable difficulty in dialoguing in the country. (Luciano, Interview 2)

Therefore, he considers that Brazil has fallen short of the democratic and republican ideals stipulated in the Constitution and feels it is an essential topic for educators. Regarding the School Without Party movement, Luciano partially agrees because

No one will want a school linked to a political party or defending a party. However, the school must take a stance on ethical issues and human rights. I think that people are confused by this movement, but it opens an opportunity for educators to advance the argument that there is no neutral view of things. (Luciano, Interview 2)

Thus, dialogue is an essential element for Luciano, and he commits to forming competent interlocutors who can engage in public discussions.

## **8. Teacher Olga**

Olga was born in Paraiba, in the Northeast region and has been a geography teacher for 23 years. She started teaching in 1997 and obtained her degree in 2000. She migrated to São Paulo for better living conditions and worked in many schools, primarily public state institutions. Olga prefers these places because “of their work methodology, freedom and identification.” She recently worked in a central state school in the metropolitan São Paulo area for nine years but decided to transfer to a school in a *periferia* in 2019 after experiencing regional discrimination.

Her mother was a washerwoman and used to tell her that “in the Northeast, if you are born poor, you will die poor.” She was the only person in her family to attend the university. Olga mentioned she did not think about becoming a teacher during adolescence, although she liked the humanities because

They help us better understand our daily lives, our place in history, the historical issues in Brazil, why we are here, and what has led us to that situation. I also began to understand social inequality in the country and its consequences. (Olga, Interview 1)

Her first option was law school, but she got her second choice: geography at the Federal University of Paraiba. Olga said she was the only black student in her class and lived university life intensely. It starkly contrasted with her home life, as her mother was very religious and did not like to talk about politics. After going to university, Olga stopped attending the church as the “pastor wanted to control even the film we would watch in the cinema.” She became critical of religion and claimed evangelical churches thrive in impoverished communities where “people have little contact with other cultures.” When I asked her whether she was satisfied with the profession, she said that

I am satisfied because it was the profession I chose. I try not to take it to the financial side; we know that public school teachers in Brazil are devalued, especially regarding the career plan. However, I feel satisfied, particularly in the classroom, when we teach and awaken students, making a difference in their lives and developing their critical senses. Therefore, I am satisfied and would not change my profession. (Olga, Interview 1)

Olga mentioned that entering the university made her appreciate the humanities more deeply, enhancing her views on social issues. Olga has always been keen on human geography and how relationships “influence people’s behaviours, how unequal access to information and education will interfere in their lives.” The fact she was a minority student and all difficulties related to entering and remaining in the university made this process “natural because when you enter the university, you start acquiring perspectives you did not have before.”

A relevant experience came from being a professor’s research assistant investigating the quality of life in settlements of the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST). She interviewed several people in the rural area of Paraiba to understand how the land reform initiatives were improving their lives. After graduating, she spent 15 days in an MST settlement. She engaged in

meetings there, and her objective was to “analyze the life quality aspect of the settlements because I have always believed that land reform would be the best way to decrease social disparities.”

Another issue related to land reform is the country’s migration waves that took millions of people from the northeastern regions to the southern states, such as São Paulo. She feels that if these people “had access to land and support, many would remain in their original places.” For example, governmental organizations helped develop goat and fish farming projects in the settlement where she spent a fortnight. Thus, “they could take advantage of the land to develop socially and economically, and the experiences I had there were excellent.” These experiences made her admire Paulo Freire’s work with peasant literacy and increased her interest in these topics, and she took one term in the master’s program on social movements, which she had to quit to move to São Paulo. She is also an active member of the teacher’s union and affiliated with the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL).

Another topic of paramount social importance is the anti-racist struggle. Olga feels it is a cause everyone should embrace, “not only me who is black but especially white people.” She recommends reading *Small Anti-Racist Manual* by black activist Djamila Ribeiro (2019) for everyone and feels it is an important discussion for the humanities. Even though there have been initiatives to include the study of African and Black contributions to Brazilian society in the curriculum, Olga feels it is not enough. Olga recognizes vigorous debates about racism in higher education but thinks they are still timid at schools. For Olga, the increasing access to information and social media has put this issue in the spotlight and “nowadays, any racist act is brought to public knowledge, debated and used as an example so that others do not repeat it, but it is something very recent.”

## **Discussions about Participants' Profiles**

This chapter's introduction discussed how social-historical perspectives are part of an extensive repertoire of beliefs and conceptions essential for individuals to achieve stability regarding their identities and places in the world (Pajares, 1992). Thus, people filter knowledge through their core conceptions and incorporate and reject information based on these tenets. Furthermore, according to Pajares (1992), the more central a belief is within one's representations, the harder it is to change. Therefore, identities have a structural and a temporal component.

Although participants have had similar experiences, such as the fact that they all come from a working-class background, their central references to interpret these experiences are different, leading them to come to opposing conclusions about different aspects. Archer (2003) explains these contrasts arguing that "situations do not directly impact upon us; they are reflexively mediated via our own concerns" (p. 139). This chapter has shed some light on participants' chief concerns, which act as a prism for their reception and response to the objective situations they confront (Archer, 2003).

As discussed in chapter four, this research employs a heuristic to categorize teachers' historical stances based on how they conceive the country's motions in time and their concomitant pedagogical commitments. Although each participant constitutes an individual case, they share common perspectives that allowed me to classify them with the ideal types presented previously. Therefore, I present a preliminary categorization of participants in the table below and explore the ideas they put forth that justify this classification in the following paragraphs.

### **Table 3**

*Classification of Participants' Historical Stances*

Historical Stance	Participant
Adherents	David and Esther
Reformers	Luciano and Ronaldo
Dissenters	Olga, Felix, Ademir, and Regina

*Note.* Classification created by the author

Esther and David, in this sense, indicated that meritocracy constitutes a critical component in how they interpret social events. In other words, both agreed that the principal cause of an individual achieving higher educational levels or social ascension lies in their effort, seen as the engine that will lead to social improvement. Although they did not come from advantaged backgrounds, they disqualified perspectives that question the legitimacy of the status quo as insincere and impractical. Therefore, they fit the adherent profile as they construe the status quo positively.

David, for example, argued that capitalism works better because it incentivizes humans to work selfishly, fitting our nature well. He also hinted that poor people could not develop sound economic strategies (e.g., investing their money), preventing them from prospering. On the other hand, Esther implied that the state moves teleologically and that there should be no impediments to this development, such as quotas for disadvantaged students or media regulation, as further explored in chapter six.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, participants like Olga, Ademir, Regina, and Felix fit the dissenter category. They construe the motions of society as unjust, as they have favoured a group of people to the detriment of others (e.g., black people, the working class). This perspective stems from personal experiences of discrimination interpreted with critical references



such as Karl Marx and anti-racist activist Djamila Ribeiro. Therefore, they support disrupting the motions of society to bring about significant change and redress these inequalities.

Finally, Ronaldo and Luciano fit the reformist category. On the one hand, they value society's republican and democratic institutions, such as the opportunity to vote and form associations. Nevertheless, on the other hand, they consider that these institutions have been ineffective. Consequently, they commit to strengthening democratic attitudes and mechanisms through individual empowerment and institutional reform. In this sense, they advocate the need for increased awareness of social issues and personal responsibility.

Notwithstanding the differences in participants' understandings of the nation-state, their profiles also contained similarities. For example, most participants described the influences of teachers on their career choice and pedagogical stances. Nonetheless, their historical stances also impacted the ideal qualities they identified in the educators that inspired them. Esther, for instance, admired her authoritative and rigid high school history teacher, and David praised some of his educators for their professionalism. On the other hand, Luciano, Ademir, Regina, Olga and Ronaldo described the influences of educators who helped them reflect and see things through different lenses.

This chapter also indicated moments of rupture in participants' perspectives when they changed their affiliations. Olga and Felix, for example, described quitting going to church after concluding that it no longer made sense to them. They encountered references in higher education that made them reconfigure their ideological and moral foundations, like Luciano, Ronaldo, Ademir, and Regina. Esther made an inverse path and adhered more firmly to her religious practices after contacting Olavo de Carvalho's ideas. She rejected historical representations learned in high school and feels that they were indoctrination attempts.

Therefore, this chapter also outlined the historical agency of groups involved “in struggles over the conceptual resources that individuals use to interpret social and material life” (den Heyer, 2018, p. 244). Likewise, Duveen (2001) defines the modernity ideological landscape as a dispute among heterogeneous representations seeking to establish “a certain way of making sense so that things are seen in *this* way and not in *that* way” (p. 17, emphasis in the original). In this context, social movements and actors galvanize certain representations and action agendas and provide people with cognitive resources to interpret society. Olga, for example, claimed that her experiences with the Landless Workers’ Movement convinced her of the relevance of land reform for social justice, leading her to join a socialist political party, and Regina became familiar with feminism on Facebook. Similarly, Esther attributed her conservative representations to Olavo de Carvalho’s online videos and books

These examples outline the dynamic aspect of identities and historical perspectives, which may change when confronted with contradictory concepts. Posner et al. (1982) called these contradictory ideas anomalies because people cannot easily integrate them into their repertoire of representations. If individuals recognize that they must reconcile these anomalies for their relevance and pertinence, they usually assimilate the new information into existing ideas. However, if assimilation is not possible due to the extent of the contradiction of the new information, then there is accommodation, in which a person reconfigures their belief systems and changes their perspectives regarding aspects of reality (e.g., Mansour, 2008; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Posner et al., 1982). This chapter indicated several situations that have led participants to significantly alter how they perceive history and society and their places in it.

Embodied experiences also impacted participants’ social representations. Mignolo (2010), in this respect, argues that “different perspectives on modernity are not only a question of

the eyes, then, but also of *consciousness* and physical location and power differential” (p. 320, emphasis on the original). For example, Olga, Ademir and Esther described suffering regional prejudice, which relates to the colonization model and racialization of parts of the territory connected to slavery and serfdom, and concomitantly, poverty. However, Esther did not associate regional discrimination with more profound power structures, seeing it as an isolated occurrence. Thus, although Esther experiences the difficulties of working-class families and northeastern people, she does not identify the mechanisms that have generated these inequalities.

Some factors may create this difficulty in identifying how the country’s development has generated and perpetuated sharp inequalities. The first relates to the lack of opportunities for developing a coherent historical perspective of the country’s motions. Consequently, many people have a superficial understanding of its trajectory and construe the social relationships based on the widespread progressive unilinear template. Thus, although they experience the contradictions of living in this society, such as prejudice or inequality, they do not identify their historical causes, seeing it as ‘just the way things are.’

In this sense, there is a strong tendency among people to identify with predominant images of society, leading them to resist engaging with specific topics to maintain the integrity of their identities (e.g., den Heyer & Abbott, 2011). This resistance may stem from the desire to avoid internal conflicts because these perspectives contradict deep-seated beliefs and values. It may also come from a person’s worries about remaining integrated into a specific group (e.g., a family, a political party, a religious organization), which the change in perspectives could disrupt (e.g., van Kessel et al., 2020).

Education, in this sense, relates to exploring the more profound implications of a situation, assisting people in singling out elements from their background awareness to reflect

upon them. These elements can then become a part of people's considerations and the object of their action and cognition (Freire, 2005). Thus, participants such as Olga, Regina, Luciano and Ronaldo described how educational encounters shifted their understanding of their places in the world. In this sense, teacher preparation plays a critical role in developing critical thinking, and chapter seven will discuss in more detail how it impacted participants' achievement of their educational goals.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter synthesized participants' profiles by describing essential aspects of their biographies and experiences and presenting their fundamental ideas and beliefs that serve as parameters to construe social reality. It indicated that they share similar social experiences but interpret them differently according to their repertoire of values and understandings. These differences relate to their position within post-colonial structures and affiliations to groups that promote and enforce specific social representations.

Moreover, this chapter employed the heuristic presented in chapter four to group participants' political orientations and facilitate their analysis and comparison. Thus, I classified them according to the most salient characteristics of their perspectives and recognized that this classification, although not absolutely precise, offers an essential methodological tool. The next chapter, in this sense, will employ this tool to interpret participants' historical understandings and pedagogical commitments.

## **Chapter 6 – Participants’ Understandings of Brazilian History and Society and their Political-Pedagogical Commitments**

Chapter five explored participants’ profiles to examine the parameters with which they interpret history and society. It indicated that although participants share similar experiences, such as their coming from a working-class background, they construe their experiences differently. These differences stem from their unique set of values and beliefs that establish their identities and impact how they receive knowledge and interpret events (e.g., Archer, 2003; Pajares, 1992). In addition, interactions with cognitive tools in public discourses have shaped their representations, leading them to associate with groups and authors who provided significant references for interpreting society (e.g., social movements, authors, online activists). Finally, chapter five also indicated that participants’ embodied experiences in a colonially shaped society constituted a relevant factor influencing how they construe social events, such as experiences with racism and regional discrimination. Again, however, their perspectives also impacted how they interpreted such experiences.

This chapter will investigate participants’ perspectives of Brazilian history and how they shape pedagogical commitments. Such perspectives emerge from a narrative template that underlies a whole set of specific narratives, each with its characters, dates, and events (Wertsch, 2012). To become familiar with participants’ historical perspectives, I requested them to list the events that they considered shaped Brazilian history. I also asked them to highlight the main characteristics of society, including politics and education (see Appendix B). With the think-aloud protocol approach presented in chapter four, I explored three aspects to construe their historical perspectives. The first one was what events they indicated as critical moments in the country’s history to assess what past aspects they emphasized or overlooked in their narratives.

The second one was how they ‘emplotted’ these events, which shows the motions of these narratives (e.g., improvement, stagnation, deterioration). Finally, the third element was how their narratives about the past related to how they construed Brazil’s present socio-economic, political, and educational features, giving more evidence about how they interpreted the country’s trajectory and the results of the historical processes they had cited as relevant.

In addition, their narratives also pointed to the desired future trajectory of the country and demonstrated how they situated themselves in history and the political and pedagogical commitments that stemmed from these positions. Finally, the completion of the list and the mind map also allowed me to identify participants’ epistemological considerations about what constitutes a reliable source of information, which “play a key role in knowledge interpretation and cognitive monitoring” (Pajares, 1992, p. 325). To facilitate the identification of their historical stances and how they fit into the analytical categories outlined in chapter four, I have tabled them as follows:

**Table 4**

*Summary of Participants’ Historical Stances*

Participant	Summary of Ideas
	Adherents
David	He argued that the country’s social problems originate from individuals’ resigned attitudes and lack of ethics. Therefore, teaching people to be ethical and conform to the status quo is necessary.
Esther	She argued that the country has had prosperous moments but that its re-democratization and introduction of political parties destroyed its good

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fortune. Consequently, individuals must recognize that there is much deception happening.

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Reformists

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Ronaldo

Despite historical inequality, Brazil's return to democracy has created opportunities for personal and collective development. However, for it to function properly, individuals must be prepared to take the duties and rights associated with it.

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Luciano

Educational opportunities are essential for enabling individuals to find their footing in society and consciously participate in public affairs. Nonetheless, these opportunities have been scarce for many people in Brazilian history.

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Dissenters

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Ademir

The country has many problems, but many individuals do not recognize them. Therefore, individuals must be conscious of their historicity and their part in collective life to engage consciously in society.

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Olga

Coloniality has relegated many people to subordinate positions and generated structural inequality. Intense activity is necessary to redress these events and achieve social justice.

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Regina

Brazilian society has deep class and racial divisions, but it has the tendency to minimize these issues. It is necessary to directly confront these problems to revert historical injustices.

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Felix

There is a serious colonial wound in the country in the form of violence against specific groups, such as black and Indigenous people. However, there

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is a tendency to pretend it does not exist. Hence. It is necessary to raise people's awareness.

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*Note.* Classification created by the author.

This table demonstrates that, although each individual is unique, there are significant similarities in their historical representations. The following sections, in this sense, group them according to the heuristics employed in this study but also highlight each participant's uniqueness by bringing direct quotations and exploring the rationale behind their historical perspectives and pedagogical commitments.

### **1. Adherent Teachers' Socio-Historical Stances.**

Chapter four portrayed the adherent stance as positively depicting the country's trajectory. As a consequence, they commit to preserving the status quo. Although they may recognize social injustices, they consider that it is in everyone's hands to overcome unfavourable situations such as poverty and fully claim their positions as members of the state. This perspective pervades David's and Esther's understandings of Brazilian history and society. David, for instance, did not distinguish any major event that shaped the country's history. Instead, he identified a pervasive *modus operandi* based on practices that disregard society's rules and institutions' well-functioning. He gave the example that many young people buy senior bus tickets to save money, which leads bus companies to increase the fares to compensate for the losses, affecting everyone. This increase, in turn, leads people to look more and more for these small advantages, creating a vicious cycle.

There is also excessive dependence on authority for David that "first started with the monarch, then the viscount, the minister, the governor." He thinks that many people feel satisfied if someone gives them a pittance. He gave the example of his great grandfather, who ran for



mayor in a small town many decades ago. Before the election, he gave one shoe to people and promised to give the other one if he won the election, which he did. For David, religion also plays a role in maintaining these relationships by promoting the idea that poverty is a virtue that will lead to afterlife salvation.

Thus, the country's problems (e.g., inadequate public services, inequality) stem from people's excessive dependence on authority, resignation, and a massive collection of acts of corruption at all levels of society. The issues, in other words, arise from a vast amount of bad individual choices and a lack of initiative. Thus, his political-pedagogical commitments involve generating student compliance with ethical principles and social norms. He believes that individuals are the basis of social structures, and social improvement can only happen if persons change. He opposes critical pedagogy because

If the school has a very critical faculty and students, it will not work. Institutions work because most people obey the rules. Critiquing is beautiful on paper, but it is not that good in practice. So, we need to be cautious about critiquing; otherwise, we will only debate and not go anywhere. (David, Interview 1)

It is possible to see that David regards organization and structure as indispensable to the well-functioning of an institution and that disruptions bring nothing positive. Moreover, David thinks that

Critiquing is beautiful if you are in the higher social classes when you have gone through the system's filters of knowing the rules. For example, critiquing in a master's or doctorate course is nice, but you must be careful with the criticism because if it is too intense, the institution will not award you the diploma. You may critique, but the paradigms are there; the person is excluded for disobeying the paradigms. Furthermore,

despite talking about empowerment and citizenship, the public school system itself does not work that way. School rules and the curriculum come ready for us; there is no room for discussion. Critiquing looks good on paper but is out of touch with reality. (David, Interview 1)

Therefore, schools must generate a degree of conformity, ensuring that all students have a minimum set of skills to function appropriately in society (e.g., know how to read, do math calculations, follow the rules, and have discipline). He argued that an important contribution schools offer is to teach pupils “to enter at the right time, leave at the right time, remain in your seat, and about your place on the production line... another thing that the school teaches is not to hit someone bigger than you” (David, Interview 1). Regarding the most recent humanities curricula, David argued that it is questionable because

It is more than what we can chew. We need to go through all the steps, and it is no use giving a philosophy book to a student who cannot read and write; it will not work even if it has a beautiful cover. I think we should first invest in the basics: learn to read, write, interpret, and do basic math. (Interview 2)

When I asked him what he thought differentiated a student who worked hard at school from one who did not, he again claimed people are multifaceted but suggested it had to do with their motivation and hope to improve their situation. In this sense, he identified it as part of his job to orient the pupils about their possibilities in life but mentioned that “there are battles we win and battles we lose.” To achieve that, David tries to foster reading habits among students. He brings texts with moral dilemmas that pupils can relate to and tries to adjust the activities to each student, depending on their skills and level of interest. He claims that, although this approach is not ideal because it leaves out many pupils who are not into participating, he gets better results

than if he had “everything the same for everyone because people are not the same, they learn at different paces.”

Esther shares very similar views and considers the imposition of discipline as paramount to students’ development. However, unlike David, she considers that Brazil already had a golden age when it had autocratic regimes, such as the monarchic (1822-1888) and the military periods (1964-1984). Thus, Esther’s historical template contains good moments, when the country prospered, people were united, and there was no corruption, and bad moments, related to the formation of political parties and the perceived privatization of public interests:

After the introduction of presidentialism and political parties, corruption began. I don’t see so much dirt from what I read about the monarchic period. Of course, there is a game of interests, the nobility, as it has always existed in all civilizations, but I don’t see the widespread corruption of today. I believe that the thing has been in plain sight for everyone to see. From 1992 or 1994, something went wrong; the business got ugly!

(Esther, Interview 2)

Thus, Esther sees the country’s return to democracy with direct presidential elections in 1989 as troubling. This perspective is common among many neoconservative supporters of Jair Bolsonaro. They see in him the possibility of returning to military rule, portrayed as a period of political integrity, as the media could not publish anything not approved by the government’s censorship department.

Furthermore, Esther claims that some institutions create conformity to this corrupt status quo. She identifies collusion between political parties and the media to deceive people and curb their initiative and independence. Similarly, she feels that leftist ideologies (e.g., socialism, anti-racism) create divisions in society and lead some people (e.g., the working classes, black people)

to believe they are victims. The education ministry, for example, has designed textbooks to indoctrinate students into leftist conceptions. Hence, Esther rejects them and brings “internet materials that contain more truth and less political interest.” For instance, she disagrees with the idea that the country had a military dictatorship, claiming that she has spoken with people who went through the period and stated that everything the textbook says is a lie, as it was not a dictatorship but a military rule. Therefore, she says these people’s testimonies corroborate her perspectives and are free from the biases of the textbooks. Thus, she commits to teaching them discipline and respect. Moreover, she endeavours to teach students how to do academic work, defined as “showing them how to create a cover, back cover and summary so they have no difficulty later on as I had when I entered university.”

Paradoxically, she recognizes that the wage structure in the country is very unfair as  
The minimum wage is insufficient to support a family! I know there is a financial limit on what the government can do, but I cannot understand how some people earn so much, and others earn so little .... So, financially, Brazil cannot prosper because people are very poor; they earn little, and what do they do? They slip into debt with a credit card or a loan. (Esther, Interview 2)

Furthermore, Esther identifies many social class privileges as people from influential families can quickly get a well-paying job in the government due to powerful connections. However, Esther has a different perspective on racism as she feels there is not as much racial prejudice as regional and class. Esther argues that

[The idea that Brazil is racist] is instigated by the media. They use insignificant acts to say that Brazil is racist. There is prejudice, but it is not as strong as the media puts it.

There may be an isolated case, and people see it as a generalized thing, but I do not see it that way (Esther, Interview 2).

It is possible to see that, although Esther recognizes regional prejudice, class privileges, and economic inequality, she subsumes these perceptions into the modernity template that highlights the power of individuals to develop and exalt nation-states as major civilizational achievements. Based on these historical understandings, she commits herself to inspiring pupils

To have more hope in the country, but not in politicians! To have hope in themselves, be better people, not make the same mistakes as others, be people who struggle to get their things, not expect anything on a silver platter, and avoid all evil, knowing that God is watching over us. To know they are as capable as any other student and not accept all the information the media wants to shove down their throats. To be critical and question everything to defend themselves in a society as corrupt as ours. (Esther, Interview 2)

Thus, it is possible to see that Esther would fit the conservative profile as defined by Knowles (2018) and Pacievitch and Cerri (2016), for example, as she places a strong emphasis on discipline, the formal aspects of schoolwork (as opposed to focusing on content) and on giving students lessons about morality.

## **2. Reformist Teachers' Socio-Historical Stances.**

Participants I have identified as reformists, Luciano and Ronaldo, stress the potential of deliberative processes and, in this sense, see the country's return to democracy in 1984 as a critical historical event. Nonetheless, they consider the mere existence of democratic institutions (e.g., political parties, civic associations) as insufficient to reach a better state of collective existence.

A massive issue in Brazilian society for these two teachers is the impoverishment of public debates. They attribute it to the fact that most people are immersed in conventional beliefs and have little access to literacy and culture. Luciano, for example, said that

My father never read a book, and my mother, very few. Although they tried to foster some culture in me, it was not systematic, and our family was resigned; we accepted things as they were. I am saying this because I think our formation is fragile and strongly connected to the television. I have always watched much television. At least from my generation, I see our education as very connected to television and mass culture. I attribute the weakness of popular and erudite culture in the country to the prevalence of mass media, including online platforms such as YouTube. (Luciano, Interview 2)

Consequently, Luciano attributes the lack of class consciousness and racial and regional prejudices to this fragility of public life, “perpetuating the distance between those who give orders and those who obey.” Therefore, this weak cultural background “reinforces these problems and does not contribute to improving social relationships.”

Ronaldo, in this sense, argued that this lack of access to general culture is not an accident but a result of the deliberate endeavour by the military regime (from 1964 to 1984) to depoliticize the population through media and curriculum control. This period left a deep impression on Brazilians, and, for Ronaldo, it created mechanical conformity to the national framework without fostering attitudes essential for social development, such as critical thinking.

Thus, these two teachers’ political-pedagogical commitments share the concern of raising students’ awareness about the importance of public affairs (e.g., politics). Furthermore, they aim to help students develop cognitive skills to participate consciously in these matters. Hence, Luciano tries to provoke students to think deeply so “they can learn to describe and

observe, read a map so that they can read the world.” It includes reading texts, such as pieces of legislation and working with dictionaries, “not simply as a secondary activity but to lead to discussions about the meaning of words.” He feels schools must demand “better reading skills from pupils,” which textbooks and other materials prevent by having short and superficial texts. Furthermore, he adopts regional literature to study the concept of landscape and increase the presence of books at school.

Ronaldo takes a similar approach and emphasizes the importance of cultivating study habits. He introduces several learning strategies such as semantic maps and summaries to teach pupils cognitive methods. Thus, he claims that “the essential thing is that the student can use thinking tools to argue logically, become critical people, leave common beliefs behind, and move towards scientific knowledge.” Ronaldo also commits to helping pupils “learn how to dream.” It relates to expanding their perception that they can achieve more than their present circumstances allow. He gives the example that when a student tells him they want to become a doctor, he says, “it is difficult but not impossible. You must dedicate yourself and go for it!”

### **3. Dissenter Teachers’ Socio-Historical Understandings and Commitments**

Olga, Regina, Ademir, and Felix indicated that oppression and inequality are the defining characteristics of Brazilian history. For Olga, the origin of social inequality has deep historical roots, as

many families arrived here with land and money, and they accumulated even more wealth. Labourers never had a chance to improve their situation with the passing of the Land Law [in 1850]. Thus, the rich have gotten richer, and the poor are poorer.

(Interview 2)

Another critical component in the country's history for Olga is the transatlantic African slavery and the fact that there was no reparation after its abolition. Therefore, "they moved to slums, and the black and poor population occupy the most peripheral places with no life quality in metropolitan regions." Thus, there is structural racism present in

The restricted access and continuity of black people in different education levels. Also, if you look at political representativity and presence in companies, we know black people are in the lower rungs and receive lower wages than white workers even when they have the same occupation. (Olga, Interview 2)

Felix has similar perspectives and argues that the encounter of races in Brazil involved "rape and genocide, very violent! Genocide is a standard practice in Brazil!" Notwithstanding unequivocal evidence that racism shapes social relationships in the country, there is a general tendency to negate the problem.

Denial is part of the Brazilian ethos, and because we deny the conflicts, we are in a situation like that of an alcoholic who does not stop drinking because they think they are not an alcoholic, which is very common. (Felix, Interview 2)

According to Regina, an essential component in this denial is the national foundational myth of harmonious miscegenation of races. For her, miscegenation discourses attempt to depict Brazil positively and exalt it as a racial democracy. Regina cited research in the 1950s sponsored by UNESCO to investigate racial relationships in the country that demystified the image of racial harmony, pointing out that black people had the least prestigious occupations in society.

In Brazil, proportionally, the poor pay more taxes than the rich, but as black women are at the bottom of the social pyramid, they pay more taxes even though they are at the bottom. They are the poorest and have less education and lower wages, so willingly or



not, racism will act within Brazilian society to harm black and brown people. It may not be conscious, but it negatively impacts their lives. (Regina, Interview 2)

Ademir has very similar viewpoints, arguing that there are many cities within São Paulo, and if you go to a wealthy neighbourhood, the only black people will be the babysitters and security staff.... Nonetheless, if you go to a *periferia*, you will see tight spaces, unfinished houses, and many people on the streets.

(Ademir, Interview 2)

Ademir says there are regions where the police enter shooting without care and that “black people usually become crime suspects.” He affirms that “the right to life, which is so basic, is not guaranteed, and this is a state policy.” Like Felix, Ademir considers that despite these evident discrepancies, “society has difficulties dealing with it to the point that some groups strongly contest any actions to solve it.” Furthermore, he sees a tendency to regard social problems as concerning only a group of people, such as the idea that “racism is a black people’s problem.”

The four dissenter teachers also agree that there is a general lack of interest in politics, which they identify as the primary source of social change. Regina attributes this indifference to the fact that “the working class does not have access to education, because if they had, they would support the workers, including in the elections.” In addition, she claims that misinformation is prevalent, which causes many people to be aloof from the things going on. Accordingly, Olga claimed that people vote for someone “who tells them what they want to hear or who promised something, and after the election, they become indifferent.” Olga admits, “I do not know where this lethargy comes from.” In this sense, Ademir attributes this disinterest to the decades of military rule that aimed to depoliticize the population, creating a tradition in which people pay little attention to politics.

However, Olga, Regina and Ademir recognize the relevance of social movements that carry out vigorous political action, such as the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and the Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST). For Regina, the media portrays these movements as extremists, but they are actually “fighting for democracy, constitutional rights! Imagine what they would do if they knew what radicalism is?” Likewise, Ademir said that although there is a general tendency for depoliticization in the country, these movements trigger crucial discussions in public spaces regarding property rights, social class, gender, and race.

A difference between the dissenter and reformist participants is the heavier emphasis on the legacy of coloniality given by the former. Thus, structural racism and authoritarianism are central concepts in their historical templates. However, participants in these two groups agree that it is necessary to increase pupils' awareness of the importance of political participation.

Ademir, for example, said that

My most significant political contribution is to teach pupils to question things. They must question even the things with which they sympathize. Does the student like Bolsonaro? They have to question it! Do they like Lula? They must question it too! (Ademir, Interview 1)

For him, helping learners develop critical autonomy is essential “not just in the sense of helping you choose your political party but to help you situate in the world.” Ademir aims to provide learners with the tools to analyze sources and investigate their characteristics to see if they are reliable, essential amid the pervasiveness of fake news and political polarization.

Likewise, Regina tries to show pupils that it is not silliness to discuss politics and that it is “vital to know what citizenship and democracy are and how they impact our lives.” She gave the example of holding classroom discussions about the social security system's reform in 2019

and its impact on them and their parents' lives. She also reiterates that "we all are working-class, and it is necessary to have class consciousness. If their parents do not have this conscience, they should teach it to them."

Olga also addresses serious problems such as inequality and shows students "they have rights, but they need to fight for them." Furthermore, she wants her pupils to understand that they can impact the world, especially now through social media, allowing them to share ideas and have their voices heard. She has noticed a growing interest among youth in politics and gives the example of the 2020 United States' election in which "young people voted Donald Trump out." Therefore, Olga believes that "youth can change the country, and they must open their eyes for that."

Moreover, Olga tries to incentivize citizenship by explaining the importance of participating in collective affairs, such as becoming community leaders and connecting with elected officials. These perspectives influenced her recent transference to a peripheral school, where she hopes to strengthen the student union, which Olga identifies as a potential stepping-stone for creating political leaders. Felix also aims to raise pupils' awareness of relevant social problems:

I have always told my students that if they do not take sides, they are on the side of the status quo. The status quo in Brazil is sexist, racist, homophobic, and transphobic. The Brazilian tradition is authoritarian and violent. Today, we have a government that directly attacks philosophy and sociology. (Felix, Interview 1)

Therefore, Felix and Regina approach difficult topics (e.g., racism, police lethality, the lives of incarcerated people) in their classes, challenging traditional socio-historical accounts. Felix claimed that the perception that schools reproduce an authoritarian discourse became

salient in his master's research. Consequently, he renounces many petty powers given to teachers, such as deciding when pupils can go to the washroom, dress codes, and even eat in class or address him by his first name. Most importantly, he does not demand that students know encyclopedic information in the exams and is entirely against having students repeat the grade, which "is anchored in the idea of propaedeutic education that does not make much sense." Felix said this posture makes many colleagues criticize him for being too complacent with students. However, these people "talk tough with students and are docile with the boss, with the state! No! We have to do the opposite, talk tough with the boss and the state and welcome students!" (Felix, Interview 2).

#### **4. Discussions about Participants' Historical Accounts and Pedagogical Commitments**

This chapter indicated that the heuristic outlined in chapter four was relevant to classifying participants' historical stances. Although each participant spoke from a unique vantage point, the consonances and differences among them made the distinctions clear. In some cases, phrases uttered by the teachers were almost identical to each other, such as the dissenter participants talking about the denial of racism in the country or the adherents describing their support of meritocracy because everyone can improve their status with effort.

Furthermore, it was possible to see that concepts of human agency lie at the heart of participants' historical perspectives. Thus, each person attaches different weights to the roles of individuals and social structures in human action, which stems from considerations about their own agency. For example, the adherent participants, Esther and David, expressed the highest satisfaction with the teaching profession, which represented a form of social ascension for them. Thus, they see their trajectories in terms of overcoming obstacles through effort and express the idea that everyone can do it. Olga and Ronaldo, on the other hand, despite also experiencing

social ascension by becoming teachers, expressed reservations regarding the idea of meritocracy. Olga, for example, whose first option was studying law when applying to the university, pondered that,

If I had tried harder, would I be a lawyer or a judge? Sometimes I think, “did I try hard enough?” So, it’s not just a matter of effort; we must be down-to-earth. Hey, I’m from a poor family, my mother used to be a washerwoman, and I’ve improved a lot. So sometimes people keep their feet on the ground because they know that it will be very difficult no matter how hard they fight. (Olga, Interview 2)

Therefore, she analyzes her position in society considering broader contexts, as the following quote reveals,

I worked very hard to get where I am, but my brothers didn’t make it, so it was much harder to continue studying... Recently, I watched a news report on TV about the issue of racial quotas. They have been ineffective because 30% of black people who entered university through quotas had to drop out as they could not afford it. (Olga, Interview 2)

Ronaldo had very similar viewpoints and said it is necessary to have a broader social perspective to contextualize the concept of meritocracy. He claimed that

the poor can chase opportunities, but the chances are one in a million.... For example, I have a friend who came from a very modest family and always attended public schools and earned a doctorate in physics at USP (Universidade de Sao Paulo). He could do it, but he is one among thousands of people. The same thing applies to you, you are pursuing your doctorate, but you are one among thousands. (Ronaldo, Interview 2)

Thus, it is possible to see that the conceptions of human agency occupy a critical position in participants’ construal of social reality and emerges from a combination of personal

experiences, references adopted, and epistemological considerations. For example, Olga used the statistical data provided by official institutions to demonstrate “the income, wage inequalities, and gender issues in the country.” Similarly, Felix cited statistical data to point out a massive income gap and that the “six richest people in Brazil have the same wealth as the one hundred million people poorest people.” On the other hand, Esther implied significant deception in the country and was suspicious about the available demographic data. She argued that there was no transparency, as “the census never came here at home,” and the information could easily be manipulated to fabricate a narrative.

The way participants viewed the curriculum and textbook also offers insight into their epistemological orientations. Felix and Ademir, in this sense, argued that the textbooks present an oversimplified view of socio-historical facts, depicting them as a list of concepts and events pupils must memorize. On the other hand, Esther portrayed the textbooks as biased and “full of political interests” (Esther, Interview 2). Her adhesion to neoconservative sources supports a monolithic historical perspective, as she was the only participant who did not mention slavery in her description of Brazilian history.

Thus, I conclude that the concept of human agency occupies a pivotal role in how people construe the social world and is informed by their experiences dialectally with their core representations. Epistemological stances, in this sense, function as gatekeepers to these core ideas and values. These considerations carry a profound implication for this research’s central question: how historical perspectives shape and are shaped by political and pedagogical commitments. Thus, I conclude that although historical perspectives and political and pedagogical stances are deeply related, as they hinge on people’s core representations, they do not necessarily shape each other.

In this sense, even though most people can instantly provide a historical description of their society, they tend to compose a narrative by gathering widespread images and replicating the typical unilinear modernity template without referring to the contradictions they observe daily. The literature review indicated that even among humanities teachers, who routinely discuss historical and sociological concepts, positivistic and unilinear historical conceptions are prevalent (e.g., Garrido, 2008; Ricci, 1998; Yilmaz, 2008).

Nevertheless, on the other hand, a better-informed historical perspective does have the potential to shape political and pedagogical stances. Participants like Olga, Regina, Luciano, Ronaldo, Felix and Ademir, in this sense, described how they went through learning experiences that reframed how they conceive of the society they are part of and their footing in it. In other words, more advanced knowledge about the humanities (e.g., history, sociology, geography, and philosophy), including its epistemological tools, impacts one’s identity and perceptions regarding society and, consequently, how one should act in it. The power of the humanities is behind the fear and criticism they receive, and conservative groups depict the shift in identity they can cause as indoctrination because it can alter individuals and social structures.

In addition to demonstrating that the heuristic outlined in chapter four is an appropriate tool for analyzing historical perspectives, this chapter demonstrated that it is also valuable for categorizing their pedagogical commitments. The table below summarizes participants’ pedagogical commitments to facilitate their analysis.

**Table 5**

*Summary of Participants’ Pedagogical Commitments*

Participant	Summary of Commitments
Adherents	

David	Teach pupils to integrate into the status quo by instilling favourable habits in the job market (e.g., punctuality, discipline, respect for hierarchy) and foster reading habits among them. Raise pupils' hope that they can improve their lives with effort.
Esther	Teach pupils the value of hard work and respect. Show them they must be critical to guard against the corrupting influences in society (e.g., from the media). Instruct them on the formal aspects of academic work (e.g., how to create a cover and summary).
Reformists	
Ronaldo	Provide students with opportunities to develop thinking skills and cognitive tools (e.g., mind map, diagrams) to go beyond conventional beliefs. Help them see they are free but must be responsible. Additionally, assist them in having hope about a better future for themselves.
Luciano	Foster reading habits and interpretive abilities among pupils. Raise their awareness about their identity in space and time so they can problematize what is around them. Help them realize they are part of society and should participate in discussions of public interest.
Dissenters	
Ademir	Help them develop critical thinking and question things. Develop students' interpretive skills and their historical consciousness. Increase their appreciation for the discipline.



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Olga	Raise students' awareness of social contradictions by bringing data for discussion (e.g., statistics, maps). Motivate them to exercise political agency (e.g., vote, follow elected officials, create local organizations).
Regina	Raise students' awareness of social contradictions and foster their desire to combat them by presenting sociological concepts and organizing debates in the classroom.
Felix	Show students the glaring contradictions of society and urge them to take a stance. Combat excessive repression in the school environment (e.g., overemphasis on tests) and teach sociological concepts in a relevant way.

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*Note.* Classification created by the author.

This table indicates that the hypothesis regarding teachers' pedagogical commitments concerning their historical perspectives was valid as there was a clear relationship between them. Although they did not shape each other, both stemmed from participants' core representations and identity, in a dialectical relationship between the iterative and projective realms of human agency. The next chapter will explore how specific contexts impinge upon the achievement of these commitments. Therefore, it will explore how they manifest or encounter barriers in participants' situated practices. This investigation will show what types of personal and cognitive interactions schools promote and to what ends it contributes.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter explored participants' perspectives of Brazilian history and their political-pedagogical commitments. It indicated that there are different ways of depicting historical facts and that these differences stem from the diversity in identities, experiences, values, and beliefs.

Thus, it demonstrated how interrelated political orientations, historical perspectives, and pedagogical commitments are. In this sense, the commitments ranged from teaching pupils to fit into the existing order, such as David, to exposing them to the harsh realities of oppressed groups (e.g., black people, impoverished communities) and trying to motivate them to engage in political action, such as Felix and Regina.

Furthermore, this chapter argued that although participants aim to benefit the students, such as arousing hope in themselves, ideas of what will benefit pupils and how to do it are also different. In other words, the meanings of terms such as hope or social justice are polysemic, and interpretations emerge from different perspectives on human agency. The next chapter will investigate participants' understandings of the Brazilian education system and how they situate themselves in it. Thus, it will examine what impacts the fulfilment of the political-pedagogical commitments that this chapter described.

## **Chapter 7 – Participants' Understandings of Brazilian Education Struggles and the Affordances and Constraints to their Work**

Chapter two explored Brazil's educational history, indicating that it intimately correlates to the colonial power matrix. Thus, many communities (e.g., peasants, descendants of people under slavery) could not attend schools for a long time, as they were exclusive to a small agrarian elite. This situation started to change only after the emergence of urban centers, creating the need for more skilled and semi-skilled workers (Holston, 2008).

Nonetheless, the school system continued to bar impoverished students from accessing and attaining higher education levels (Ferreira Jr., 2010). When the military took power in 1964, there was a dramatic expansion in the number of schools, accompanied by the migration of middle and upper-class pupils to the private sector due to the lowering quality of public institutions (Saviani, 2002; Zibas, 2005). As argued in chapter two, this distinction between public and private schools is an inheritance of the colonial system to maintain an educational advantage for privileged groups.

Although these disparities were brought to light with the country's re-democratization in the 1980s, chapter two demonstrated that public schools still have severe issues regarding infrastructure, teacher remuneration, working conditions, and student learning. Furthermore, although the most recent humanities curriculum has aimed to redress the inequalities brought by the colonial power matrix, there is considerable reactionary resistance from neoconservative groups who depict these attempts as leftist indoctrination.

Chapter three argues that social structures impinge upon individual action, presenting openings and constraints to agency. Therefore, these structures constitute the backstop against which teachers perform their duties, impacting their identities and sense of self-efficacy (e.g.,

Bandura, 2001; Biesta et al., 2015). Furthermore, nation-states play a crucial role in education systems, determining aspects that directly impact educators and learners (e.g., investment in infrastructure, remuneration, number of students per class).

Thus, this chapter will address the second question of the research: what circumstances do teachers believe impact (as constraints and affordances) the enactment of their pedagogical commitments? Each participant constitutes an instrumental case study that sheds light on this question individually and offers the opportunity to extend the findings to broader contexts (e.g., Simons, 2014). This chapter first analyzes the differences between private and public teachers' perspectives because it constitutes a marked characteristic of post-coloniality in Brazil. Then, I employ the heuristic presented in chapter four to examine how their working contexts impact (as affordance and constraints) their pedagogical commitments. Finally, I synthesize this chapter's findings using the model of human agency established in chapter three.

### **1. Educational Understandings from Private School Teachers**

Ademir, Luciano and Felix have considerable experience in elite private schools and have very similar perspectives on the affordances and constraints these institutions offer. Among all participants, only these three teachers had a master's degree, suggesting that obtaining a job in one of these places is very competitive. They were unanimous in considering that the pressure to prepare pupils for university admission exams is a significant obstacle to fulfilling their political-pedagogical commitments. Luciano, in this sense, argued that this pressure,

Reduces the possibilities of what education can be, especially in high school, and of reflective thought. There may be interesting admission tests, but schools become an assembly line. I think that soon people will turn on a class on YouTube and no longer need the school if their interest is just passing the entrance exams (Luciano, Interview 2).

Felix employs a very similar metaphor to construe the functioning of private schools and the pressures on educators, claiming that their work is

Almost like in Chaplin's (1936) movie *Modern Times*. Anyone who can read can 'tighten pedagogical screws.' There is a substantial deskilling process. A teacher becomes an expert at repeating the same things every year. Sometimes I experience déjà vu: I am in the middle of the class and ask students, "didn't I already teach this content here?" "No, you have never talked about that subject." "I do not believe it; let me check your notebooks!" Then I confirm that I have not taught the content before in that class. (Felix, Interview 1)

Ademir has very similar perspectives and illustrates the mechanisms with which private schools ensure conformity:

What defines the curriculum is not state policy. Nobody ever told me not to teach a specific topic. However, when you receive a curriculum that starts at the caves and goes to the third millennium, there is no way to go deeper into anything. We know that this very loaded studies program is the best way to depoliticize history. (Ademir, Interview 2)

Another significant impediment to these three participants' fulfilling their political-pedagogical commitments is the cliental relationship model pervasive in private schools. It gives parents the power to oppose specific challenging topics (e.g., labour relationships, property rights). Felix considers this cliental model the expression of instrumental reason, which became pervasive in schools, such as

In the context of the pandemic, in which teaching had to be improvised, I received an email from a boy saying he did not want me to waste time asking if they were okay...

Instead, he wanted me to focus on talking about the rules of the sociological method to solve university entrance exam questions. (Felix, Interview 1)

In turn, Ademir says that “we have never had academic freedom, and the School without Party movement restricted it even more.” Hence, “I cannot afford the luxury of criticizing the current government in the classroom although I am critical of it.” Furthermore, he and the coordination “agreed that it was best not to speak about the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) in the classroom to avoid problems with families.”

It is possible to identify two remarkable characteristics of the private education sector. The first one is its adherence to the productivity paradigm, as the quality of an institution relates to the number of students it helps approve in prestigious universities. The fact that the federal government started publishing the rankings of schools in the national high school exam aggravated the issue and has become a powerful marketing tool to attract new ‘clients.’ The three teachers from private schools were unanimous in recognizing that the productivist model drastically curbs their pedagogical agency. Biesta (2005) agrees with these perspectives and argues that this model “has brought about ever-tighter systems of inspection and control, and ever-more prescriptive educational protocols” (p. 57).

The second remarkable characteristic of private institutions is the prevalence of the cliental model in which parents have a say in what learners will study. Luciano, in this sense, hypothesizes that this control aims to prevent the student from questioning certain things about the family, such as how they inherited lands or wealth. Therefore, “if pupils confront their parents, they may blame the teacher.” Finally, Felix said that educators also collaborate with this situation, arguing that some

Private school teachers live under the illusion that they have the same living standard as the students for whom they work. They put up with much nonsense during the whole year to get a new car or travel to Paris, and then they think they belong to the upper classes and show disdain for their counterparts in public institutions. (Felix, Interview 2)

Thus, it is possible to see that these three participants who have extensive experience in elite private schools portray them as an economic enterprise that demands strict conformity from educators to guarantee the educational advantage of their students. For Felix, Luciano, and Ademir, these situations strongly impinge upon their pedagogical agency and sense of self-efficacy and limit the educational potential of schools.

## **1.2 Participants from Public Schools**

Luciano and Felix also have considerable experience working in public schools and made insightful comparisons between both systems. While they recognized that public institutions offer teachers much more freedom, both felt they lacked guidance and unity. Thus, Luciano attributes one advantage to private institutions: they “keep some organization and operational logic from the beginning to the end of the year because they must show results.” In contrast, Luciano worked in some public schools where “everyone did what they wanted, as no one would say anything once the classroom door was closed,” compromising the place’s pedagogical unity and quality control. David has a similar perspective, arguing that public schools demand very little from teachers, and if they keep students inside the classroom, “they can do anything, including not teaching at all.” Biesta et al. (2015) offers insight into this situation, arguing that

Autonomy (understood here as a comparative absence of regulation) does not necessarily equate to agency. Teachers granted autonomy may simply fail to achieve agency as they,

for example, habitually reproduce past patterns of behaviour or as they lack cognitive and relational resources. (p. 142)

Felix corroborates this perspective, claiming that teachers lack pedagogical support in many public institutions. He gave the example that once he was in a mandatory weekly meeting in a school and heard some teachers saying they would give students “impossible tests to confront them with reality.” He suggested a collective reading of authors who talked about evaluation, such as Pierre Bourdieu, arguing he could help them better understand how teachers judge students’ abilities and cultural capital. The coordinator responsible for planning the meetings replied, “I have been in education for thirty-five years. There is nothing to read that I do not already know!”

Olga, Regina, and Ronaldo share analogous views and resent that state schools offer no incentives for educators to continue studying. Furthermore, Olga, David, and Regina identified the weekly meetings inside each school as a hassle. David, in this sense, stated that “the only thing that is worth it inside the school is the students. The bureaucracy and uselessness of the meetings are overwhelming.” Likewise, Olga argued that these encounters mainly force them to stay inside the school without a clear purpose. Instead, “they should bring someone with more knowledge (e.g., university professors) to update our approaches that tend to become obsolete with time.”

Educators from public schools also identified the lack of resources as a significant hurdle in their practices. For example, Esther says teachers cannot “even photocopy a worksheet without paying for it.” She says, “I am paying to work, and therefore I have to request students to bring 20 cents to cover it, ridiculous!” She must pay even for the coffee and mineral water in her current school. Similarly, Felix said that he worked in a state school where it would take months



to repair the printer or the computer lab room due to state bureaucracy and limited autonomy.

Ronaldo summarized how this scarcity of resources impacts his practices:

It is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century school for 22<sup>nd</sup>-century students. What resources do we have at school? It is chalk, the blackboard, our voices, and textbooks. Meanwhile, the student has a cell phone, a tablet, a Kindle, and many electronic resources. These devices end up attracting their attention more. Therefore, very few students search for something inside the school. (Ronaldo, Interview 1)

It is possible to see that participants identified two distinctive traits of the public system. The first one is the insufficient infrastructure that chapter two had already described. It is visible in participants' remarks about the absence of essential equipment, such as a photocopier or digital resources in the classroom. It poses severe obstacles to their practice as it makes it difficult to prepare attractive classes with which students, who are digital natives, can engage.

The second distinctive trait is the lack of collective pedagogical work and formative opportunities to help them increase their understanding of educational issues and approaches. Biesta et al. (2015) corroborate this view, arguing that the discursive resources these opportunities could provide “do matter for the achievement of agency. As with beliefs, the wider vocabularies and discourses teachers have available provide an important ‘window’ on the here and now” (p. 84). Thus, many public institutions do not have a sense of direction and unity, and the collective meetings are a formality they must endure. Moreover, Felix, Ronaldo, and Regina identified obsolete authoritarian and bureaucratic managerial practices, relegating them to ‘deliverers of knowledge’ and restricting their political and pedagogical agency.

### 3. Affordances and Constraints and Historical Stances

Historical stances also impacted the perceived affordances and constraints to fulfilling participants' pedagogical commitments. Notwithstanding the similarities described in the previous section, there are also significant differences that this segment will explore. The following table summarizes the constraints and affordances to achieving pedagogical agency according to their historical stances.

**Table 6**

*Summary of Participants' Perceived Affordances and Constraints*

Participant	Summary of Perceptions
Adherents	
David	The school lacks an accountability system for teachers and students. Hence, many pupils go to school without the intention to learn, causing serious disruptions. Moreover, the learning expectations of the program of studies are unrealistic as many students struggle with basic reading and writing.
Esther	The school lacks discipline and accountability. It does not follow a meritocratic approach and promotes many students who do not deserve it. Additionally, there is a scarcity of resources available for teachers (e.g., a photocopier).
Reformists	
Ronaldo	Schools' way of functioning is outdated and does not generate student interest. In addition, there is no appropriate support for educators to improve their practices, and the technology available is obsolete.

Luciano	Private schools exert tight control on teachers by requiring them to strictly follow the program of studies. There is insufficient collective work and pedagogical support in public schools.
Dissenters	
Ademir	Private schools do not promote collective work, and teachers work in isolation from one another. The program of studies is very loaded, preventing teachers from exploring any topic in depth and engagingly.
Olga	There is a scarcity of opportunities for professional development. Many teachers join the profession underprepared, with no basis to participate in crucial professional discussions. Moreover, many students from the <i>periferia</i> do not believe studying will positively impact their lives.
Regina	The school management is very authoritarian and curbs teacher autonomy. Her teacher preparation course was bad and did not prepare her to teach. Classrooms are overcrowded and lack appropriate technology.
Felix	Private schools function like machines, and teachers become deliverers of content. Students and parents treat educators as their employees. Public schools lack resources and opportunities to support teacher autonomy.

*Note.* Classification created by the author.

This table indicates that adherent teachers' ideas on the constraints to their pedagogical agency are distinct from the two other groups. In this sense, David and Esther identified the lack of accountability and rigour as the main obstacles to their practices. Both agree that schools are too lax with pupils and teachers, compromising the whole process's quality. David, for example,

strongly resents the fact that he must work with so many high school students who are unwilling to put in the effort to learn. He half-jokingly said that many students spend their days sitting by the window “just as plants doing photosynthesis.” Thus, he thinks that high school should not be compulsory because there is

A difference between high school and adult education. It is different because the person is there because they want to in adult education. So, despite having greater difficulties, working with people who choose to be at school is very different, much more relaxed. (David, Interview 1)

Hence, a significant obstacle to David’s achievement of pedagogical agency is the presence of many pupils in school without the intention to learn, making him waste time and energy. For him, the state is interested in promoting all students to inflate the completion rate but neglects that many pupils move on in the school path without achieving the basic reading and writing skills. Consequently, many lose interest in the classes because of their inability to engage with the content. Furthermore, David claimed that many students only attend school to collect the monthly federal benefit *bolsa-familia* and are a nuisance in class. The solution for David would be switching the attendance pre-requisite to a grade precondition, and “if a student gets 7, they should receive 70% of the benefit, if they get five, they receive 50% because I think that would be a better incentive than simply being in the classroom” (David, Interview 1).

Esther has very similar ideas and considers that schools should be more selective and have students repeat a grade more often. She claims that

If the student did nothing to deserve it, they fail. This year [2020], they forced me to give nine and a half to a student on the final class council not to fail him. I felt dirty, incapable, and a terrible professional because I had to give a grade to a student who did

not deserve it. I always tell my students I am in favour of meritocracy. People get what they deserve, simple like that. I prefer to fail students to improve rather than approve them without knowledge. (Esther, Interview 1)

Another obstacle for David and Esther in fulfilling their pedagogical agency is the lack of discipline in schools, disrupting their activities and causing frustration. Esther claimed that “pupils must understand that I am the teacher and must have respect. If the school imposed the rules more efficiently, it would improve greatly.” Similarly, David considered it a good idea to have a police officer at the school. He argued that although it is an unpalatable idea,

It would give a little more peace and tranquillity to those who want to study and learn.

We spend much time with students who want nothing and are just there to get attendance, show off and cause trouble. So, a police officer inside the school would inhibit many things and help those who want to study. We would spend less time controlling behaviour, like trying to stop a student who is chasing a classmate with a shard of glass in hand. (David, Interview 1)

It is possible to see that the adherent participants did not identify any factor outside the school that constrains their pedagogical agency. Instead, they argued that the main obstacle stems from the lack of adherence to the rules and principles of accountability. On the other hand, the table indicated that reformist and dissenter participants pointed out comparable obstacles to their pedagogical agency. Ronaldo, for instance, attributed disinterest in class to the fact that

What is taught is not very connected to the student’s reality; there is no transposition between what is taught and the world in which the student lives. This distance is one of the main factors for the lack of meaning that the student sees within the school.

Therefore, you must prepare and support the teachers in this path with the students.

(Ronaldo, Interview 1)

Felix has an analogous perspective and identifies a tendency in humanities classes to present concepts in encyclopedic terms, which is burdensome to students, who must memorize too much information. Therefore, he argued that “some of the things we teach them are so distant from their interests and comprehension that it is like thinking about galaxies that are billions of light-years away.” Thus, the discussion about teaching in a relevant way is fundamental, but schools have become engrossed in preparing students for admission exams and avoided these conversations.

Likewise, Ademir claims that teachers must have the time and space to study, debate with peers, and create interdisciplinary projects to “make connections between the curriculum and the region where they work, essential in a country with continental dimensions.” However, because these opportunities are scarce, educators use textbooks as the program of study. Ademir claimed that such books cover many events superficially and gave an example from a chapter about colonization “that instructed teachers to tell students that Indigenous peoples in America thought that the first European settlers were gods (laughs).” He cited a Mexican historian who said, “if they thought they were gods, they changed their minds after lunch (laughs).” He summarized this point by saying, “you cannot use these stultifying characteristics to describe a people... it is way more complex than that, and I often have to wrestle with the textbook.” This excessive and superficial content makes the classes dull, suppresses creativity, and curbs interdisciplinary work. Ademir gives the example of the history and geography curricula, which are “completely divorced,” and says, “it is a crime!” Therefore, Ademir feels that many teachers work in isolation and have no qualified interlocutors to support their practices.

Thus, it is possible to see that reformist and dissenter participants emphasize the need for educational opportunities for teachers to constantly expand their knowledge to enact the curriculum more meaningfully. In addition, they would like to work more closely with their peers as a valuable relational resource. Therefore, the scarcity of formative opportunities inside schools due to a lack of time, space, or cognitive resources constitutes a significant constraint to their pedagogical agency.

These participants also identified university preparation as critical for quality education. In this sense, Olga, Luciano, Felix and Ademir argued that the dichotomy between private and public institutions inverts in higher education, and the latter has much better instructors, materials, and field experiences and is much more competitive. Olga, for example, argued that many private education degrees are online and offer no proper academic support. Moreover, she described that the recent changes in legislation made it possible for anyone with a degree in any area to obtain a teaching diploma quickly, such as “someone with a business diploma who can get a mathematic teaching degree in six months.”

Felix, in this sense, feels that teachers who obtained these quick degrees have no theoretical basis for situating themselves in pressing issues, such as the role of assessments. It leads to the repetition of authoritarian discourses that stifle the debates in the collective pedagogical meetings. Similarly, Olga reported seeing many educators who got their diplomas in online courses delivering “limited and fragmented classes, with very superficial discussions, sometimes brought from Facebook.” Olga offered an insightful analysis of this issue, arguing that

Education is increasingly neglected, and I am very critical of distance learning. I know that it is a way of including the working class in higher education, but I believe that most

of these courses have no quality; they do not develop learners' reading skills. I have tried to argue with some teachers and make a point, but I cannot because they do not have a solid basis. (Interview 2)

This decline is visible in Esther's experiences in her university degree, in which she had only one tutor for the whole course and had very few in-person meetings to discuss and develop her ideas. Moreover, there were no additional activities, such as field trips and symposiums. Similarly, Regina described her online after-degree in education as based mainly on memorization. An important scholar in teacher preparation in Brazil, Bernardete Gatti (2014), corroborates this perspective, arguing that

Most online teacher preparation courses are lonely and demand reading proficiency and interpretation of texts, which virtual contacts or insufficient tutoring do not favour .... Also, distance students do not experience an academic culture, such as direct dialogue with colleagues and teachers daily, participation in student movements, debates, and diverse experiences that university life offers more intensely. (p. 37)

In addition, participants such as Regina and Luciano described how the program of studies in universities neglects to examine coloniality properly, focusing on European authors that write within the parameters of modernity. Luciano, in this regard, offers a critical analysis of the issue, contending that

Universities catered to few people for a long time. There was an elite hegemony, the hegemony of the white men and the European heritage, and it has pervaded the formation of universities. I think this hierarchization of culture has existed for a long time.

(Interview 2)



These factors lead many teachers to reproduce the authoritarian education founded on the unilinear modernity paradigm. One of the consequences, according to Ronaldo, is a strong association between schooling and the job market, aiming at turning pupils “into qualified pawns.” Ronaldo feels that students also bring this mentality to his classes and ask him, “why do we have to learn about Socrates and Plato if there is no use in the job market?” Felix paints a similar picture regarding students from private schools:

I usually ask the students jokingly after teaching about Marx: ‘okay, people, now you're going to make a revolution, right?’ ‘No, we just want to address some questions regarding this content in university entrance exams.’ How significant was this teaching when the only thing the student wants after having heard so much and read so much is to be able to answer what ideology is? (Felix, Interview 1)

Finally, participants indicate that the political polarization in Brazil has increased the animosity towards specific content. Such polarization reached a peak in 2018, during the presidential election that led Jair Bolsonaro to power. Olga, for example, described suffering harassment by students in the central state school where she worked,

A high school student tried to record my opinion. He asked what I thought about gun control, the death penalty, and quotas in universities. After hearing my answer, this student said, ‘Ah, you are from the Northeast, you support the Labour Party (PT), and your family receives the *bolsa-familia* benefit.’ I heard these stereotypes in this central school, that the Northeast is ruining the country. (Olga, Interview 2)

Similarly, Regina described several situations in which students harboured a grudge against her and attributed it to the fact that sociology entails exposing things different from what people are used to hearing. She gives the example of saying that the police in Brazil are the most

lethal and hearing a student retort, “‘but my father is a police officer;’ I say, I am sorry, that is how it is; the data is here.” She ponders about these situations in the following way:

I have been through some conflicts in the classroom because it reflects society; what happens in society is reflected in the classroom. So, this polarization in society happens inside the classroom, like boys saying they hate feminists, all that stuff. (Regina, Interview 1)

Therefore, Olga and Regina describe situations in which students bitterly opposed what they were saying, contesting their authority. Such situations led Olga to transfer to a peripheral school where such events do not happen, and Regina considered leaving the profession.

Likewise, Felix described the situation in the following way:

There are tight restrictions regarding philosophy and sociology teachers, and my career turnover is very high. Unless the teacher is very collaborationist, the turnover ends up being very high, but what bothers me a lot is the loss of autonomy. I commented to friends these days that some years ago, you could show students a movie without worrying about receiving reprisals, e-mails from critical parents, or becoming the topic of a parent's WhatsApp group calling for your head. You cannot do that anymore. (Felix, Interview 1)

Thus, although most participants described some restrictions on what they could say in the classroom, the dissenter teachers experienced this opposition more strongly, indicating the sensitive nature of some topics. Thus, teachers who present ideas that challenge the status quo tend to face resistance from the school management, families, and students.

#### **4. Considerations about Participants' Understandings of Brazilian Educational Struggles**

The previous sections indicated that public and private schools present different ecologies that offer specific affordances and constraints to teachers. In addition, they demonstrated that different political orientations entail diverse possibilities and barriers to teacher action. For example, dissenter and reformist participants wanted more formative opportunities inside schools to develop their semantic potential and enhance their practices to serve better their educational purposes. Moreover, they recognized resistance to specific topics due to their sensitive nature regarding representations of the nation-state, such as racism and land ownership. Each participant in this group reacted differently to the restrictions on these topics.

Regina and Felix, for example, seriously consider quitting the profession due to the stifling atmosphere in schools. Both report several conflicts with families, school management and students and see little possibilities for agency in this environment. On the other hand, Olga, who shares similar pedagogical commitments, recently transferred to a peripheral school where she sees new agentic possibilities with the support of the principal: strengthening the student union to allow them to develop their political agency.

Luciano approaches these topics through literature and legislation (e.g., laws about land use) to increase students' awareness and avoid adverse reactions from families and pupils. Likewise, Ademir brings pop culture to the classes to increase students' ability to consume entertainment and recognize the historicity of the content they receive on the media. Finally, Ronaldo tries to remain neutral and bring opposing views to pupils so they can learn to interpret conflicting information with logical criteria to go beyond conventional beliefs.

It is possible to see that reformist and dissenter teachers swim against the current in their practices. Consequently, they recognize the need for more robust pedagogical support from the

school and the academic community to teach congruently with their pedagogical and political commitments, which Campbell (2012) defines as teacher agency. Thus, conscious political action requires a solid semantic foundation and a supportive community. Therefore, participants in this group also argue for the need for better teacher training programs at universities.

Contrariwise, Esther and David did not mention the necessity of increasing pedagogical support for teachers. Instead, they claimed that imposing a traditional framework would substantially improve education (e.g., taking more disciplinary actions, failing students who did not get the minimum grade). Moreover, these two teachers reported much less opposition to the content they taught and argued that politics should stay outside the classroom.

Thus, this chapter demonstrated that, despite changes in the policies in recent years (e.g., the 1988 Constitution), school ecologies and traditional historical narratives tend to persist, and a serious effort is necessary to change them. In other words, social structures and widespread representations strongly impact how most people conceive the world and only through concerted effort can they change. Furthermore, some participants who face these challenges daily are constantly looking for ways to enhance their practices to fulfill their pedagogical commitments. Others, in turn, do not see any possibility of attaining their pedagogical goals in school and consider leaving the profession. Thus, this research began with the premise that every teacher has pedagogical commitments that hinge on their core representations. Still, some may give up hope that they will attain any fulfilment in the profession due to the ecologies of schools and follow the motions of teaching because they need it to survive.

Finally, adherent teachers aspire for more efficiency in the education system, closely connecting it to the goals nation-states assigned it in its inception: prepare the labourers for the job market and the citizen to conform to the institutions (e.g., Albisetti, 2019). Therefore,

although participants work in similar circumstances, they attribute different meanings to their practices and face distinct obstacles, indicating that education is a complex field.

## **5. Chapter Summary**

This chapter explored the different ecologies in private and public schools. It indicated that while the former operates akin to a company, imposing a strict line for teachers to follow, the latter suffer from disorganization and lack of cognitive and material resources. This dichotomy demonstrates that the disparities in education brought by the colonial power matrix have found their way to the present, despite the initiatives to increase access and quality.

Furthermore, this chapter showed that historical stances impact teachers' career trajectories, and even when they work in the same place, the affordances and constraints they face are different. For example, teachers whose views are close to the traditional aspirations regarding the education system (i.e., prepare the youth for the job market and develop a sense of institutional conformity) suffer less opposition from pupils and their families and school management. Contrariwise, those who see education as a disruptive act and approach challenging topics to nation representations (e.g., police violence) reported more resistance, including hostility.

Consequently, historical stances impinge upon what teachers see as ideal for their practices; while some aspire for more accountability and discipline, others long for a stronger pedagogical community to enrich their practices and help them deal with the difficulties of teaching specific topics (e.g., the relevance of political participation). Therefore, this chapter demonstrated that although the right to education has become widely recognized as essential, the meaning attached to it is polysemic. The next chapter will summarize the main findings of this research, point out its limitations, and indicate relevant topics for future study.

## Chapter 8 – Conclusions and Final Considerations

During this research, the transcription of the interviews took approximately two hundred forty-five pages with more than one hundred and fourteen thousand words. Finding coherence in this large amount of data required a clear idea of what I was looking for and the purpose behind this study. I wanted to find participants' historical stances and pedagogical commitments to examine their interrelationship and elaborate on education's political character. While creating this research's drafts, I received feedback from the thesis committee that it needed a more robust theoretical framework. Reading these drafts, I notice that I portray historical representations and pedagogical commitments as something educators choose casually, like people selecting fruits in a grocery store. The obvious conclusion was that teachers' historical understandings relate to different pedagogical commitments and lead them to perceive their work environments differently. Consequently, teachers just needed to be exposed to the post-colonial historical perspective to see things from the right angle.

This conclusion's obviousness made me wonder what I was missing, as it could not explain the variation in historical narratives and the bitter divisiveness around them. Delving into the theory about human agency and identity showed me that historical stances and political commitments were more than an issue of choice; they are an existential matter. In other words, they are part of how individuals see themselves and give meaning to their lives. Rusen (2004) explains the vital role of narratives, arguing that

By means of historical identity, the human self expands its temporal extension beyond the limits of birth and death, beyond mere mortality. Via this historical identity, a person becomes a part of a temporal whole larger than that of his or her personal life. (p. 67)

This historical identity is visible in how intangible aspects such as family, community, religion, country, and political party have guided people who were willing to live and die for them throughout human history. Identities contain a temporal dimension as people first acquire a sense of who they are from early experiences with family and community. These aspects tend to become the core concepts with which one interprets the world and filters out incongruent representations (Nespor, 1986; Pajares, 1992).

Wertsch (2004) corroborates this perspective, arguing that humans are storytelling animals because narratives give us a sense of who we are and indicate future paths. Stories also bring identity stability and occupy a vital adaptative role, promoting group solidarity and offering psychic protection against the uncertainties of life, such as our mortality (Durkheim, 2006; Pajares, 1992; van Kessel et al., 2020). Consequently, a strong emotional component imbues such stories and representations, leading people to safeguard them against disruptions (e.g., avoidance of dissonant perspectives, confrontation) (e.g., Zembylas & Chubbuck, 2015).

Modernity, in this sense, significantly impacted the production of these narratives. Anderson (2006), for example, argues that national narratives replaced dynastic and religious accounts and became a crucial aspect of people's identities. Tales of progress and liberty pervaded these stories and contributed to forging the contemporary citizenry, portrayed as occupying the summit of human evolution (Willinsky, 1998). Thus, states have become prolific producers of stories spread through the creation of spatial references (e.g., street names, statues), temporal references (e.g., the periodic commemoration of national events), and symbolic references (e.g., language, music, literature, mass culture) (e.g., Anderson, 2006). Consequently, the modernity template became the default paradigm for identity production and historical

interpretation, and the humanities have played a strategic role in circulating these stories (e.g., Parkes, 2007).

However, as discussed previously, concomitant with the forging of identities related to the nation-state, colonization also damaged many societies by destroying pre-existing symbolic and material foundations. Native societies such as in Africa and America suffered the loss of their ancestral connection to the land and entered modernity as non-humans or quasi-humans who could be removed, bought, and sold according to settlers' desires (Wynter, 2003). Physical and symbolic violence, in this sense, was the defining characteristic of their entrance into the age of nationalism (e.g., Quijano, 2000).

Thus, nation-states emerged on these faulty lines of colonialism and have dealt differently with accommodating different groups into society. Chapter one demonstrated that Brazil maintained a firm grip on the colonial paradigm and kept slavery for 66 years after its independence. However, it has sought to forge a national community as a meta-race, accompanied by the hope of 'whitening' racialized groups (e.g., Skidmore, 2010). Consequently, the colonial power matrix remained concealed under narratives of racial democracy. Hence, there was no action to deal with the structural aspects of coloniality, visible in how racialized groups disproportionately experience poverty and inequality. Nonetheless, traditional national stories usually omit these aspects or represent them as an accident or the result of bad choices. Despite the development of narratives that challenge these perspectives to uncover the oppression at the root of modernity, the national template remains the default understanding for most people because it is ubiquitous, infused with an affective component, and easy to grasp (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011).



According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), research is also an opportunity for subjective development, and investigators need to keep track of how their ideas have evolved in the process. A central reference for my understanding of Brazilian society was Marxism and the idea that inequalities stemmed from capitalists exploiting the working class to extract surplus value. However, I have concluded that this paradigm speaks mainly to the European context, where waged labour became predominant with the advancement of capitalism/colonialism (Quijano, 2000). In other words, Marx employs many Eurocentric concepts as if they were universal. Therefore, such representations are not adequate in a context where many people entered as free labour under slavery or forced serfdom (Mignolo, 2005). Thus, one of the consequences was that many people could not access educational opportunities, and structural inequalities became a foundational trait of society. Moreover, these historical events created a symbolic basis for inequality and several myths regarding the inferiority of racialized groups and everything associated with them (e.g., job occupations, neighbourhoods, religions, eating habits) (c.f., Freire, 2005, Holston, 2008).

At the beginning of this research process, I adopted a Gramscian paradigm and resisted approaching an anti-racist perspective because it did not match how I construed the country's history and society. Like many Brazilians, I share a love-and-hate relationship with the country; on the one hand, I appreciate the diversity and friendliness of people. Nevertheless, on the other hand, I am appalled by all the contradictions experienced in any urban centre, such as slums, children begging for money, and homelessness. Thus, like many other Brazilians, I wish the country were closer to Western European and North American countries regarding human development, social safety net, and human rights. However, during this research, I concluded that instead of emulating these countries, which also have their issues concerning coloniality, it

was necessary to develop representations that addressed the country as it is, recognizing the pernicious effects brought by the racialized colonization model.

The thesis committee's feedback, in this sense, allowed me to see that Gramscian lenses could not realize the explanatory potential this research aimed to fulfil, leading me to search for authors who employed post-colonial critical analysis, such as Da Costa (2010), Eakin (2018), Quijano (2000, 2007, 2015), Mignolo (2005, 2010), and Wynter (2003). In this final chapter, I conclude that my resistance to engaging with such a paradigm stemmed from an image of the country that I wanted to keep intact because it served as a basis for identity and pride, as ethnocentric narcissism usually "wends its way into memory in quite nonconscious ways" (Wertsch, 2012, p. 11).

Bringing the concepts of historical templates and cultural tools to the forefront was a decisive step in deconstructing such a deep-seated perspective. Such a step is vital for construing how we become part of the collectivity and what ties us together. Furthermore, this interpretive approach reveals how deeply intertwined the unilinear grand narrative framework is with our perspectives. Thus, assisting learners in recognizing that prevailing historical accounts stem from a template and presenting alternative frameworks is essential because past perspectives engender present engagements and future commitments.

Simon (2004) corroborates this perspective by arguing that in learning about the past, a person must experience "a questioning and a transformation in one's own unfolding stories" (p. 9). Similarly, Farley (2009) contends that "history education is much more than a lesson in chronology or cognition; it is fundamentally psychical labour of symbolizing the internal conflicts that both complicate and constitute our attachments to the world" (p. 551). Likewise, Zembylas and Chubbuck (2015) argue that:

In both the narrative negotiation of identity and the sorting and subsuming of beliefs, the reflective process involved is frequently tacit, unexamined, and even unconscious, with the implication that bringing such negotiations to an explicit, conscious level is valuable for identity formation and/or belief change. (p. 175)

Thus, the humanities can play a crucial role in furnishing learners with tools for self-reflection as “the internal conversation is never suspended, it rarely sleeps, and what it is doing throughout the endless contingent circumstances it encounters is continuously monitoring its concerns” (Archer, 2002, p. 19). Increasing students’ competence to recognize the cultural tools and historical templates that permeate their ideas can enhance their agentic possibilities as it allows them to adopt different stances and generate better-informed commitments.

Developing historical perspectives about the education system is also crucial for teachers. Bourdieu (2007) corroborates this perspective by arguing that:

to penalize the underprivileged and favour the most privileged, the school has only to neglect, in its teaching methods and techniques and its criteria when making academic judgements, to take into account the cultural inequalities between children of different social classes. (p. 50)

Therefore, a historical perspective of education is essential for teachers to have a broad perception of the issues that impact their daily practices. Such a perspective must go beyond the traditional unilinear narratives, encompassing heterogeneous historical nodes to address the crucial events that shaped society within the modernity-coloniality dyad (Mignolo, 2005).

However, in the current moment in Brazil, neoconservative discourses have tagged curricular initiatives to address these topics as ideological indoctrination. Additionally, they have associated politics with divisiveness and ulterior motives, such as Esther or Jair Bolsonaro

mentioning that education should be free from political interests. Nevertheless, this idea fails to consider that a group of people laid out the nation-states' foundations to serve their interests to the detriment of others and have generated structural inequalities that persist to this day. In other words, neoconservative narratives refer to a sense of collectivity that subsumes all the different groups in society and obliterates the heterogeneity of positions in social structures. Thus, their claims to unity prevent the recognition of historical injustices and their redressing.

Therefore, I conclude that neoconservative assertions about education stem from very limited historiography informed by deep-seated beliefs based on a 'manifest destiny' template (e.g., Taylor, 2020). Moreover, I conclude that neoconservatism has gained ground in different countries of the world (e.g., Canada, Brazil, USA) because it provides a straightforward explanation to a large group of people who closely identify with the traditional modernity narratives, keeping intact their sense of pride as the topmost members of the national community.

However, notwithstanding the differences in historical stances and pedagogical commitments, every teacher develops practical wisdom about education, enabling them to speak authoritatively about its aspects (e.g., Aoki, 2004; Ross, 2006; Tardif, 2013). Thus, this research approached participants as intellectuals who allowed me to research *about* them and *with* them, and many of their ideas aligned with the scholarly work explored in this paper. For example, although there were many things in David's discourse that I disagree with (e.g., his considerable support for meritocracy), he raises extremely relevant points regarding the need to support language development among students, without which it is very difficult to promote learning of more advanced historical or philosophical topics. Also, Esther points to the need to ensure students have learned the minimum necessary to go to subsequent grades to be ready to engage with more complex concepts. As discussed in chapter two, illiteracy and insufficient learning is

an enduring legacy bequeathed by coloniality and confronting these issues is essential for a decolonial agenda.

Thus, although I identify primarily with reformist and dissenter teachers regarding historical stances and pedagogical commitments, I conclude that people with other political orientations may have different concerns, focusing on other aspects worth considering. Biesta (2011), in this sense, argues that “political communities are characterized by plurality and difference, and it is precisely here that the difficulty of politics and ‘political existence’ is located” (p. 28). In this sense, schools should function as a community that offers educators the opportunities to engage in dialogue and develop their historical and pedagogical understandings and practices. The following section, in this sense, discusses two aspects that I found essential in this regard.

### **1. Two Essential Aspects of Humanities Education**

There are different degrees of historical consciousness, and the most elementary stage relates to taking the past to be the traditional unilinear modernity framework. Such a perspective disregards the existence of other narratives and the possibility of portraying the past in other terms (e.g., Rusen, 2004; Yilmaz, 2008). Developing historical consciousness requires approaching history and sociology as inquiry fields and learning to employ their methodologies to construe social events. Consequently, higher stages of historical consciousness entail sufficient opportunities to contact relevant sources and acquire relevant epistemological tools. This research indicated that such opportunities manifest when an adequate ecology provides educators with the necessary time and resources.

Teacher preparation courses constitute a critical moment in this regard. However, as chapter seven indicated, many university courses do not create sufficient situations for

intellectual advancement. There was a stark contrast between participants' experiences who attended public institutions, such as Luciano and Olga, and those who attended private ones, like Esther and Regina. Such disparities in formative opportunities impact the development of a professional vocabulary that provides the intellectual resources to critique traditional discourses, including one's internal dialogues (Archer, 2003; Biesta et al., 2015). Letorneau and Moisan (2004) corroborate this perspective, arguing that a teacher "has to be well equipped - factually and interpretatively competent and intellectually undaunted - to deviate from an established narrative or even to criticize it" (p. 115).

Additionally, school ecologies do not offer adequate opportunities for in-service development, curbing their agentic possibilities. In this regard, chapter two indicated that the current policies in Brazil stipulate that schools must periodically create and renew a political-pedagogical plan with the participation of teachers, students, and management to lay down their political-pedagogical principles. However, the interviews suggested that it is a formality with hardly any impact. In this regard, David even mentioned that his school had not renewed the plan for a long time, without any practical consequence.

Moreover, participants expressed difficulty coordinating their work with their colleagues in private and public institutions. Those who worked in private institutions, in this sense, claimed that the guiding principle in these places was approving students in university admission exams. On the other hand, teachers from public schools expressed that the collective meetings were not utilized properly. One of the reasons pointed out by Felix was the resistance to engage with critical thinking by school coordinators, creating an authoritarian environment, as mentioned by Regina too. In addition, as Olga described, many meetings were led by people who did not receive any training for the job, making them repetitive and pointless. Consequently, there is a

strong tendency to reproduce the relationship patterns and socio-historical thinking received, which is strongly influenced by an unequal distribution of educational opportunities and twenty years of military rule (e.g., Ricci, 1998).

However, as Biesta et al. (2015) suggested, relational resources are as necessary as cognitive ones, and creating a robust horizontal community builds up trust among educators, encouraging mutual support and risk-taking. In addition, such professional communities allow teachers to meet different perspectives and engage in critical thinking and questioning perspectives, essential characteristics of education (e.g., Aoki, 2004; den Heyer, 2018). For example, Ademir described his interest in anti-racist education but pondered that it is such a massive undertaking that it should involve all teachers. Another example is the challenges expressed by participants in approaching difficult knowledge due to families' and students' resistance. In this sense, Luciano described using the legislation and regional literature to approach delicate topics as an effective way to overcome opposition. Such experiences could be available for educators in the school community, generating a rich professional culture. Furthermore, such communities could apply the principles of current policy in Brazil, which stipulate that the teachers should have a significant stake in school affairs (e.g., Brazil, 1996). Nonetheless, teachers have become 'deliverers of content' in the current situation.

Finally, this research concludes that it is essential for educators to study and research throughout their careers, but participants indicated that such opportunities are inconsistent. Many proposals they appreciated, such as courses delivered in partnerships between public schools and universities, were intermittent. Therefore, the drive to continue studying relied solely on their initiatives, using economic and time resources not easily available. These structural aspects impinge upon teacher agency, preventing them from developing political and pedagogical

understandings essential to enacting the curriculum and fulfilling education's political task. Therefore, education that contributes to the formation of democratic identities relies significantly on the quality of teachers' repertoires of ideas and opportunities to engage democratically in the school environment. Letorneau (2006) supports this idea, arguing that "the teacher is at the heart of any qualitative transformation in the collective historical consciousness of students. For that reason, ... we should not spare efforts to improve their training" (p. 85). However, as this research concludes, the public and private education systems do not offer the proper ecologies for achieving these goals, expressing a distance between the curricular goals and the means available.

## **2. Study's Limitations**

This research investigated the repertoire of historical perspectives and pedagogical commitments of a group of teachers, offering insights into how they develop these understandings and how it interrelates with their professional goals. One concept that became clear is that nation-states consist of heterogeneous groups of people placed on different levels of worth according to the values of the dominant groups (e.g., Quijano, 2000). However, as discussed in chapter one, the Brazilian state invested heavily in erasing this heterogeneity by forging the myth of a meta-race (Eakin, 2017). Thus, although I combined the convenience and heterogeneity principles when selecting participants, I did not consider that regional differences are a critical aspect of the colonial power matrix.

However, each country region constitutes a singular space that expresses these contradictions, leading people to see their relationship to the state differently. Participants such as Esther and Olga manifested these perspectives, particularly regarding the stereotypes with which people in the southern states treated people from the Northeast. Thus, investing in a more



regionally diverse sample of participants could have offered additional insights to the research. For example, how would a teacher from the North region, which has a significant Indigenous population, relate to the colonial power matrix? How would a teacher from Bahia, one of the states with most black people in the country, address these issues? In other words, the perceptions with which I began this research prevented me from considering an essential criterium for sample heterogeneity that could have broadened the research's scope: regional diversity.

Moreover, field observations would have provided further insights into participants' agency and allowed me to juxtapose what teachers say and do. Many of the commitments expressed by the teachers were performative, such as Felix's endeavour to relinquish his teacher micro-powers or Esther trying to foster hope among students that they can prosper. Fieldwork research would help to answer how teachers embody the commitments at school and how students interact with them. Such observations would allow me to understand better students' resistance to specific topics, such as those described by Olga and Regina and discuss ways to engage this resistance meaningfully. School observations would allow me to compare the ecologies in different institutions and how it relates to the communities where they are situated.

Finally, a suggestion for future research is to include teachers from other disciplines in studies about historical perspectives and political-pedagogical commitments. As discussed in chapter one, education and politics are inseparable. It would be worthwhile to see how educators from science, math, physical education, arts, and trades conceive of this relationship and if there are significant differences viz-a-viz their humanities counterparts. As this text concluded, political orientations and pedagogical commitments are a pivotal part of teacher identity and

satisfaction and delving deeper into this relationship contributes to the literature on the topic and teacher education programs.

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## **Appendix A – First Interview Questions Guide**

How long have you been a teacher? What made you choose the profession?

Where have you obtained your teaching degree? When was it? Have you taken any other courses?

How long have you worked in this school? What other places have you worked in?

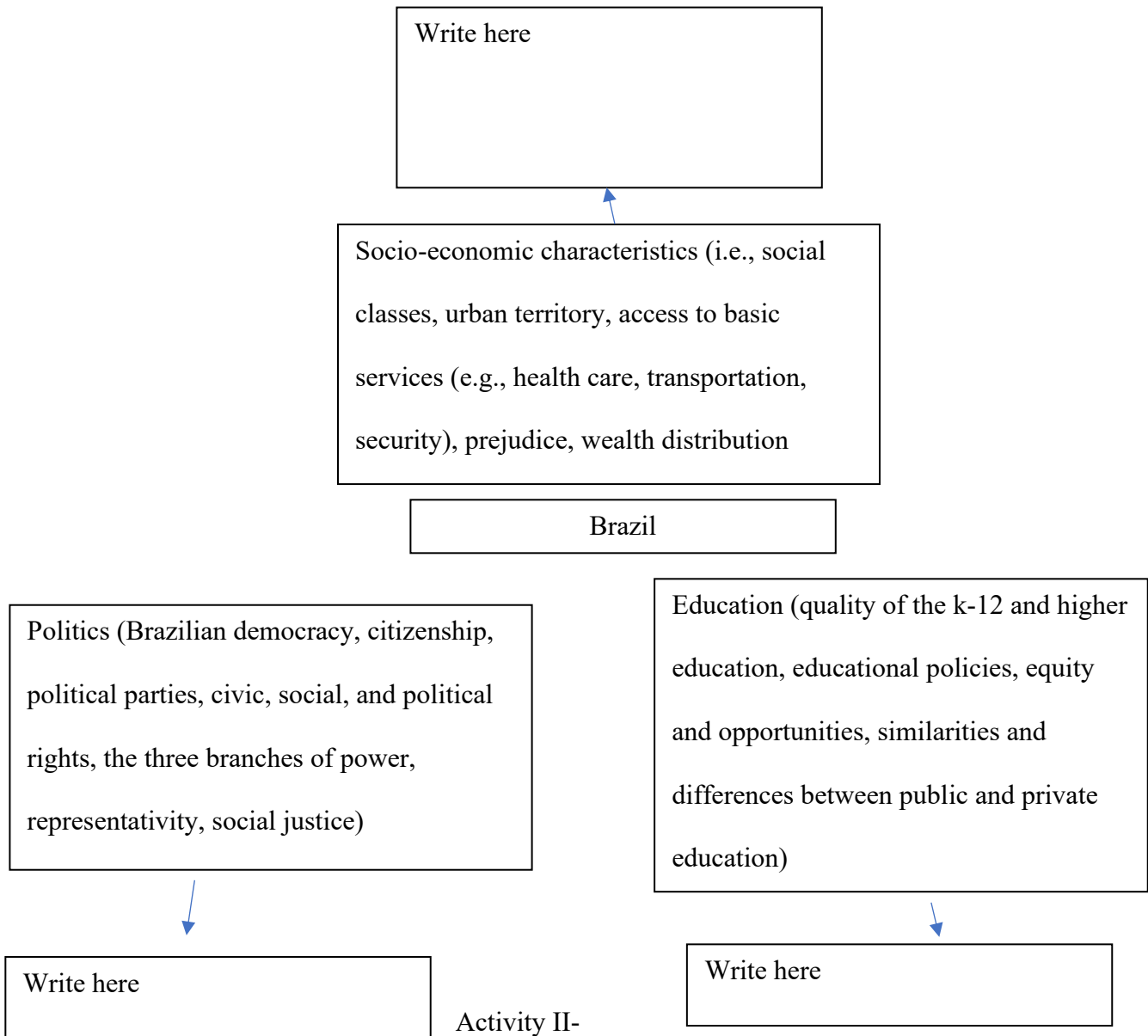
Are you satisfied with the profession? And with your current workplace?

What changes would you make to the current school you are working? And to the education system?

Do you feel your perspectives regarding your profession have changed the way you see it? If so, what experiences impacted the way you see your profession?

**Appendix B – Activity Participants Were Requested to Do for the Second Interview**

Activity I - Please create a mind map describing Brazilian society's main characteristics regarding its political, social, economic, and educational features using the template below. You may use suggestions of concepts to describe each aspect in brackets, but you can use others too).



Considering your description of Brazilian society in the previous activity, list the historical events that you think have shaped each mind map component (economy, society, education, and

politics). Include at least ten events and give a brief explanation about why you consider these events important in Brazilian history.

**Appendix C - Information Letter and Consent Form (version for the ethics committee).**

Study Title: Politics and pedagogy: how teachers' historical understandings shape and are shaped by their political commitments.

Research Investigator:

NAME: Alexandre Weingrill Araujo

Supervisor: Dr. Kent den Heyer

ADDRESS:

University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB, T6G 2R3

EMAIL: [awaraujo@ualberta.ca](mailto:awaraujo@ualberta.ca)

PHONE NUMBER: (587) 974-2706

Background

This study aims to investigate the dynamics between teachers' socio-historical understandings and their political and teaching commitments. You are being asked to be in this study because you are a teacher that could contribute to the execution of this research project. I obtained your information through shared contacts. The present study will involve writing a text with the events you consider most important in Brazilian history and an interview to explore it. The results of this study will be used in support of my doctoral thesis.

Purpose

- The purpose of this research is to offer insights into the relationships between politics and pedagogy and how such relationships play out in different contexts.

Study Procedures

- The research procedures will involve asking you to write a text with the facts you consider most important in Brazilian history. After that, there will be an interview that is expected to last about one hour to explore your text. The interviews will be online and will be recorded using an electronic device for later transcription.

Benefits

- There will be no material or any foreseeable benefit for participants.
- We hope that the information we get from doing this study will help us advance the discussions about the relationships between politics and pedagogy that can lead to better teaching and learning.

Personal and Social Risks

- You may feel psychologically or emotionally stressed, demeaned, embarrassed, worried, anxious, scared, or distressed. You have complete autonomy to withdraw from the study at any moment and decide whether your contributions to this point may be used by the researcher. Also, you do not have to respond to any questions you may feel uncomfortable with, reschedule the

interview if you feel you need more time to think about the answers, and take breaks if you feel it is necessary.

- You may experience cultural or social risk. (e.g., loss of privacy or status or damage to reputation). To mitigate such risks, your name and the names of your working places, or anything that might lead to your identification will be switched in the published version.

#### Voluntary Participation

- You are under no obligation to participate in this study. The participation is completely voluntary, and you are not obliged to answer any specific questions even if participating in the study.

- Even if you agree to be in the study, you can change your mind and withdraw at any time. In the event of opting out, we will continue to use the data we have collected only with your permission. You have up to two weeks after the interview and focus group to have your data withdrawn from the study.

#### Confidentiality & Anonymity

- The use of the research is to produce a doctoral dissertation in which the findings will be published. It may also be used for writing academic articles and presentations in courses and conferences.

- Excerpts from the transcript of interviews and texts will be published with the dissertation.

- The researcher will take all necessary measures to preserve the anonymity of participants. The name of participants or anything that can reveal their identity (i.e., working place, neighbourhood, and city of residence) will be switched in the published paper.

- The recording of the interviews will be kept by the author for five years in the secured University of Alberta server and participants may receive a copy of those if they request.

- We may use the data we get from this study in future research, but if we do this it will have to be approved by a Research Ethics Board.

#### Further Information

- If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact:

Alexandre Weingrill Araujo

E-mail: [awaraujo@ualberta.ca](mailto:awaraujo@ualberta.ca)

Dr. Kent den Heyer

Email: [kendenhe@ualberta.ca](mailto:kendenhe@ualberta.ca)

- The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call +1 (780) 492-2615 or send an e-mail to [reoffice@ualberta.ca](mailto:reoffice@ualberta.ca). This office is independent of the researchers.

#### Consent Statement

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form. I will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

---

Participant's Name (printed) and Signature

---

Date

---

Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

---

Date



## **Appendix D – Translated Information Letter and Consent Form submitted to the ethics committee (given to research participants).**

Título do trabalho: Política e pedagogia: como perspectivas sobre a história influenciam e são influenciadas pelas posições políticas dos professores.

Pesquisador:

Nome: Alexandre Weingrill Araujo

Orientador: Dr. Kent den Heyer

Endereço:

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Edmonton, AB, T6G 2R3

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Contexto:

A pesquisa procura investigar a relação entre política e pedagogia com a ideia de que todo esforço educativo contém representações sobre a trajetória humana e o papel que os esforços educacionais devem ter nessa trajetória. Entretanto, o trabalho do professor é influenciado por suas condições laborais, que por sua vez levam a uma ressignificação em relação a atividade docente. Dessa maneira, o estudo procura compreender a dinâmica entre as perspectivas sociais, políticas e pedagógicas de professores e como essa dinâmica é impactada pelas condições de trabalho docente em contextos específicos. Você está sendo convidado para participar deste estudo porque você é um professor que poderia contribuir para a execução deste projeto de pesquisa.

Propósito

O objetivo é contribuir para as discussões sobre a dinâmica entre as ideias de educadores sobre história e sociedade e suas perspectivas políticas e pedagógicas. Visa também se aprofundar na compreensão dos impactos de estruturas institucionais específicas sobre a atividade docente.

Procedimentos de Estudo

- O presente estudo envolverá uma conversa sobre sua trajetória profissional, o pedido para que escreva um texto com as características da sociedade brasileira e os eventos históricos que moldara, a sociedade brasileira. Haverá subseqüentes entrevistas para discutir seu texto e a influência que essas ideias têm sobre seu trabalho docente. Os resultados deste estudo serão usados como suporte à minha tese de doutorado. As entrevistas serão online e gravadas em dispositivo eletrônico para posterior transcrição.

Benefícios

- Não haverá ganho material para os participantes
- Esperamos que as informações que obtivemos ao fazer este estudo nos ajudem contribuir sobre as discussões a respeito da relação entre política e pedagogia e como tal relação se desenvolve em diferentes contextos.

Risco Social

- Você pode se sentir psicológica ou emocionalmente estressado, humilhado, constrangido, preocupado, ansioso, assustado ou angustiado. Você tem total autonomia para se retirar do estudo a qualquer momento e decidir se suas contribuições até este ponto podem ser utilizadas pelo pesquisador. Além disso, você não precisa responder a nenhuma pergunta com a qual possa se sentir desconfortável, pode remarcar a entrevista se achar que precisa de mais tempo para pensar nas respostas e fazer pausas se achar necessário.

- Você pode enfrentar riscos culturais ou sociais. (por exemplo, perda de privacidade ou status ou danos à reputação). Para mitigar tais riscos, o seu nome e os nomes dos seus locais de trabalho, ou qualquer coisa que possa levar à sua identificação serão trocados na versão publicada.

#### Participação voluntária

- Não há nenhuma obrigação de sua parte em participar do estudo. A participação é completamente voluntária e você não é obrigado a responder nenhuma pergunta específica mesmo que participe do estudo.

- Mesmo que concorde em participar do estudo, você pode mudar de ideia e sair a qualquer momento. Se você desistir no meio, continuaremos a usar os dados que coletamos com você apenas com sua permissão. Você tem até duas semanas após as entrevistas para decidir retirar sua contribuição do estudo.

#### Confidencialidade e anonimato.

- O uso da pesquisa destina-se à produção de uma dissertação de doutorado. Também pode ser utilizada para a produção de artigos acadêmicos e apresentações em cursos e conferências. Em todos os casos, a identidade dos participantes permanecerá anônima.

- Trechos das entrevistas e do texto serão publicados na dissertação.

- O pesquisador fará todo o possível para preservar o anonimato dos participantes. Isso será feito trocando-se os nomes de qualquer coisa que possa levar a sua identificação (e.g., nome, local de trabalho, cidade onde mora, etc.).

- A gravação das entrevistas será mantida pelo autor por cinco anos no servidor da Universidade de Alberta e participantes podem receber uma cópia se solicitarem.

- Poderemos usar os dados para pesquisas futuras, mas isso terá que ser aprovado pelo comitê de ética de pesquisa.

#### Mais informações

- Se desejar obter mais informações do estudo, contate:

Alexandre Weingrill Araujo

e-mail: [awaraujo@ualberta.ca](mailto:awaraujo@ualberta.ca)

Dr. Kent den Heyer

E-mail: [kendenheye@ualberta.ca](mailto:kendenheye@ualberta.ca)

- O plano para esse estudo foi examinado pelo comitê de ética da universidade de Alberta. Se tiver perguntas sobre como essa pesquisa deve ser conduzida, você pode ligar para: +1 (780) 492-2615 ou mandar um e-mail para: reoffice@ualberta.ca. Esse comitê é independente dos pesquisadores.

Declaração de consentimento

Li esse formulário e a pesquisa foi explicada a mim. Me foi dada oportunidade de fazer perguntas e elas foram respondidas. Se tiver mais perguntas, estou ciente de quem contatar. Eu concordo em participar do estudo descrito acima e receberei uma cópia desse formulário. Receberei uma cópia desse formulário depois de assiná-lo.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nome e assinatura do participante.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Data

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nome e assinatura da pessoa obtendo consentimento

\_\_\_\_\_  
Data