Policy discourses and multi-scalar interactions in curriculum development: Institutionalizing and translating ethnicity/race issues in Brazilian education

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Framing the Issues

Education is a site of struggle and compromise. [...] education is both cause and effect, determining and determined. (Apple, 1998: 182)

One key interest in this research is learning to understand processes of change in education. The focus is on the contents of education – what is taught – and the processes by which these contents are developed and subsequently put into practice. These development processes are understood as consisting of initial formation processes – in which contents are shaped that did not previously exist – but also of transformation processes, in which already existing contents are altered. The result of these processes can be transformation in and through educational practices, but also reproduction.

In this case the focus is on Law 10.639, education legislation that envisions changing contents and processes in education in order to combat racial inequality and racism. This chapter presents the theoretical framework and main concepts used in the investigation of change in education and the creation and reproduction of ethnicity/race issues in Brazil in and through education.

2.1 Structure, Agency and Processes of Change

This thesis started from the idea that teachers – as well as other members of the pedagogical and management team in schools (such as educationists, principals, and coordinators) – are crucial agents in the (de)construction of mechanisms of exclusion in education and as such play a fundamental role in the combatting of racial inequalities in education. Hence, a pure structuralist or intentionalist approach would not help in explaining and understanding the rationales and processes underlying transformation or reproduction in education. In an attempt to understand the dialectic between structure and agency in the process of educational change (and reproduction) from a critical sociological perspective (see Bonal, 2012; Mathers and Novelli, 2007), this study has been informed by the strategic-relational approach (SRA) (Hay, 2002a, 2002b; Jessop, 2008, 2009). The study also assumes that, in order to understand the actions of agents, we should understand the relationship between the agents as political actors and the environment in which they find themselves. In other words: we need to understand “the extent to which political conduct shapes and is shaped by political context” (Hay, 2002a: 89). Actors are conceptualized as conscious, reflexive, and strategic. Strategy of actors is understood as “intentional conduct oriented towards the environment in which it is to occur” (Hay, 2002a: 128). Actors, reflecting on their identities and interests, are able to learn from experience and, by acting in contexts that involve strategically selective constraints and opportunities, can and do transform social structures (Jessop, 2008: 42). Hence, strategic action yields both direct effects upon the structured context as well as strategic learning on the part of the actor(s) involved (see also Hay, 2002a: 133).

The strategic-relational approach to the question of structure and agency, however, also affirms that structures present “an unevenly distributed configuration of opportunity and constraint to actors” (Hay, 2002b: 380-381). Strategic selectivity and discursive selectivity are central concepts in the approach. In relation to strategic selectivity Hay states: “Structures are selective of strategy in the
sense that, given a specific context, only certain courses of strategic action are likely to see actors realize their intentions. Social, political and economic contexts are densely structured and highly contoured” (2002b: 380-381). Thereby it is important to note the temporality and spatiality of these constraints: “Structural constraints always operate selectively; they are not absolute and unconditional but are always temporally, spatially, agency- and strategy-specific. The latter term implies that agents are reflexive, capable of reformulating within limits their own identities and interests, and able to engage in strategic calculation about their current situation” (Jessop, 2008: 41).

Accordingly, this thesis starts from the idea that it is important to keep in mind that contexts never ultimately determine strategies. It is then best to think of strategic selectivity favoring certain strategies over others. Environments always favor certain strategies over others as means to realize a given set of intentions or preferences (Hay, 2002a: 129). When the focus is on the institutional environment, for example, this “favoring of certain strategies over others” happens through mechanisms of institutional constraints such as implicit or explicit norms and codes, rules, and logic of appropriate behavior. This idea of the strategic selectivity of the context is then the second building block of the strategic-relational approach.

In the same way that a given context selects for certain strategies over others, the strategic-relational approach emphasizes that contexts are also discursively selective: contexts also select for (however also here never ultimately determine) the discourses through which they might be appropriated (Hay 2002b: 382). Hence, through including the concept discursive selectivity, Hay (2002b: 382) also points to the centrality of ideas and discourse in the relationship between agents and structure, and conduct and context. Discursive selectivity of the context has then to do with the place of different ideas within certain selective contexts. Discourse is considered a mechanism that mediates between structure and agent (see Figure 2.1 below).

Figure 2.1 Discourse as a mediating mechanism between structure and actor

Discourse is understood as texts in many “forms,” such as written or spoken, as well as other forms of semiosis, such as visual images, and body language (Fairclough, 2005: 924). Henceforth texts are considered “social spaces in which two fundamental social processes simultaneously occur: cognition and representation of the world, and social interaction” (Fairclough, 1995: 4). Discourses are situated in social contexts in which the participants are not only speakers, writers, listeners, or readers, but also social actors, and members of certain groups and sectors of society. Discourse norms, rules, conditions, and functions and their effects are socially shared. The mental dimensions linked to discourses are embedded in social situations and social structures. And, vice versa, social representations, relations, and structures are often constituted, constructed, valued, normalized, evaluated, and legitimated through text and speech.
Accordingly, many theories on discourse recognize the knowledge and power issues linked to discourse. An often expressed argument is that the knowledge produced by a certain discourse exercises power over that what is known or those that are known. One of the most important functions of discourse is defining parts of reality, thereby demarcating that reality. Dominant discourses often exclude alternative points of view, making it very difficult to look at, think about and speak about certain issues in an alternative way. Discourses distinguish the “thinkable” from the “unthinkable.” Accordingly all major social and political processes have a partly linguistic-discursive character: their “texts” constitute subjects, society, and culture, and vice versa. Henceforth reference to discourse as a “social practice” implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structures which frame it (Fairclough, 1995, 2005; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). This entails that every instance of language use makes its own small contribution to reproducing and/or transforming society and culture, including power relations (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 273).

Accordingly, the critical approach has its theoretical underpinnings in views of the relationship between “micro” events (e.g., verbal events) and “macro” structures which see the latter as both the conditions for and the products of the former, and which therefore reject rigid barriers between the study of the “micro” and the “macro” (Fairclough, 1995: 28). In Chapter 3, I will come back to this point, discussing the role of discourse and discourse analysis in this research.

Taking together the approaches to structure, agent, and discourse discussed above, this research project focuses on the relationship between: (1) the strategic selective context of the governance of ethnicity/race issues in education, and (2) the strategic actions of actors within institutions. Hence, instead of simply studying these two subjects, the intention is to gain insight into the relationship between the two. For example, where it concerns the actions developed in schools, it is understood that the formation and transformation of (pedagogical) practices of actors should be understood as created in dialectical relation with the constraints of these institutions as an institution (with its – sometimes implicit – codes, cultures, conventions, value systems, social beliefs, and ideologies) (Hay, 2002a: 105). These constraints of the school as institution should in turn also be understood in a broader societal and political context. It is recognized, however, that actors are often not blessed with perfect information regarding the contexts in which they operate. In fact, as Hay (2002b: 381) states: “At best their knowledge of the terrain and its strategic selectivity is partial; at worst it is demonstrably false.” Due to the complex, contingent, and unpredictable quality of many contexts, often actors routinely rely upon cognitive shortcuts in the form of more or less conventional mappings of the terrain in which they find themselves (Hay, 2002b: 382). This in itself may lead to an elimination of other alternatives, or sometimes perhaps even more suitable interpretations of the context. Hence, while actors might acquire cumulative knowledge over time, this is most probably in environments that are essentially unchanging. Various theories affirm that in situations characterized by a density of existing institutions and practices, and a proliferation of strategic actors, this is rarely, if ever, the case (see, e.g., Hay, 2002b: 381). Hence, while it should be taken into account that strategic action almost always includes unintended consequences (Hay 2002a: 382), it should be affirmed that, even when actors may also act intuitively and/or out of

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45 Thereby these works oftentimes draw on the work of Michel Foucault (1984) (see for example Soeterik, 2001; Van der Valk, 1993).

46 See also Giddens (1990: 53-54) on the idea of unintended consequences of actions as one of the sources of the dynamism of modernity.
habit, strategic actors are assumed to be able to render explicitly their intentions and their motivations (Hay, 2002a: 131).

In the next section, the discussion turns to the issue of how change in education regarding ethnicity/race issues is considered.

2.2 Alternative to the Linear View on Processes of Change in Education

The process of educational change will now be discussed more in depth. I will start off by briefly discussing the work of Fullan, an often cited thinker on change in education. I will argue that, in the case of this study, his approach does not suffice to grasp the complexity of the policy change process in education.

When discussing the meaning of educational change, Fullan (2007: 30) argues that “there are at least three components or dimensions at stake in implementing any new program or policy: (1) the possible use of new or revised materials (instructional resources such as curriculum materials or technologies), (2) the possible use of new teaching approaches (i.e., new teaching strategies or activities), and (3) the possible alteration of beliefs (e.g., pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new policies or programs).” While individuals may implement either none, one, two, or all three dimensions of the change process, the author argues that in practice the change has to occur along the three dimensions in order for it to have a chance of affecting the outcome. Reflecting on the process of implementation, Fullan (2007: 87) states that evidence of research over the past 35 years points to a small number of key variables. Nine “critical factors” are identified that in the view of the author commonly influence change in educational practice. These factors are organized into three main categories: (1) the characteristics of the innovation or change project, (2) local characteristics, and (3) external factors. The factors are listed in Figure 2.2 below.

**Figure 2.2 Interactive factors affecting implementation**

![Interactive factors affecting implementation](image)

Source: Fullan (2007: 86)

While it is not my intention to discuss all nine factors here, building on the discussion in the last section, I start this study from the idea that the relationship between the above mentioned “factors” and change in education is not so linear as Fullan’s model suggests. In fact, the author himself also
recognizes that, when considering change in education, there is more than the aggregation of a set of factors and characteristics. Referring to instigating successful change as “a highly complex and subtle social process” (2007: 86), he admits that “more than anything else, effective strategies for improvement require an understanding of the process, a way of thinking that cannot be captured in any list of steps or phases to be followed” (2007: 86). One of the expectations in this study is that distinctions between effects of so-called “local” or “external” factors are actually very blurred. Thereby I agree with authors like Dale (1983), Ball and colleagues (2012), Bowe and colleagues (1992), Ball (1992), Lopes (2005, 2006), and Macedo (2006), that it is necessary to examine the relationship between education policymaking and what goes on in schools much more open-mindedly than an a priori commitment to the top-down, one-way approach of “implementation” allows (Dale, 1983: 201-203).

Looking at transformation and reproduction in education, this study specifically focuses on the curriculum. It starts from the recognition of the need to understand both the processes of formal curriculum development (development of what is also referred to as the intended curriculum) and the processes of enactment related to this in schools. For this understanding it is necessary to deconstruct the implicit binaries present in many studies that distinguish (education) politics and practice as two instances in which dominance and resistance, action and reaction are polarized (Lopes, 2006: 38-39) (see also Lopes 2005 and Macedo, 2006). Similarly Ball and colleagues (2012: 2) argue: “In much writing on education policy, the meaning of policy itself is frequently just taken for granted and/or defined superficially as an attempt to ‘solve a problem’.” The authors point to the fact that many of these writings refer to the production of policy texts such as legislation or other locally or nationally driven prescriptions as merely based on the intention to solve existing problems. The authors argue that “this kind of ‘normative’ policy analysis generally ‘takes’ policy as a closed preserve of the formal government apparatus of policy making” (Ozga, in Ball et al., 2012: 2). However, building on Taylor and colleagues the authors argue that if policy is only seen in these terms, then all the other moments in processes of policy and policy enactments that go on in and around schools are marginalized or go unrecognized (Taylor et al., in Ball et al., 2012: 2).

Macedo (2006: 99), a Brazilian scholar working in the field of curriculum studies, also emphasizes the need to avoid the “bipartite conception of curriculum” predominantly used in education policy and curriculum analysis. The author refers to conceptions of the curriculum that distinguish, for example, the binaries “preactive curriculum” versus “interactive curriculum,” or “active curriculum” and “curriculum as a fact” versus “curriculum as practice” (Macedo, 2006: 101). These conceptions always represent a polarization between something “dynamic,” that is, active, interactive, in action, and something “static,” that is, pre-active or given.47 While some theories do advocate the idea of interaction between these different dimensions of curriculum, the use of the bipartite categories by themselves would reinforce the idea of a separation between production and implementation. The author argues that these conceptions of curriculum happen to sustain a linear vision of the relation between these dimensions. This, to her view, does not help to recognize the “paradoxical character of the relation between autonomy and control that characterizes the political construction of curricula” (Macedo, 2006: 103). Based on the critiques described in this section, Lopes (2005) argues that the dominant (linear and hierarchic) view on education policy, curriculum, and schools – besides limiting understanding of the phenomena – also has political implications, as

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47 Macedo (2006: 101) points to the fact that, for example in Brazil, the studies of Young and Whitty (1977), who propagated the idea of “curriculum as fact” and “curriculum as practice,” and the studies of Goodson (1975), who works with the concept of “pre-active curriculum” and “active curriculum,” are the most widely accepted among scholars.
it contributes to a hierarchical understanding of power (top down, i.e., policy defines practice, but also bottom up, i.e., practice understood as not linked to policy and as such independent). According to the author, these binaries between politics and practice relate to an understanding of the state as centralizing the production of education policies (see also Lopes, 2005, 2006). Hence, a more comprehensive approach to the process of policymaking and curriculum formation and transformation in education also implies a non-linear view of scale. I will come back to this point later.

Guided by the objective to “not fall in the ‘trap’ of explaining education from within education,” Dale also points to the need to understand the dialectic dynamics between processes outside and inside schools (Dale, 1994: 35). Thereby the author refers to “the politics of education” (understood as “the agenda for education and the processes and structures through which it is created,” p. 35) and “education politics” (being “the processes whereby the agenda is translated into problems and issues for schools, and schools’ responses to those problems and issues”). Besides a hierarchical understanding of power, the de-linking of “politics of education” and “education politics” (Dale, 1994: 35) would also contribute to the depoliticization of educational contexts, contents, and processes. This approach, also referred to as a neoliberal tendency, tends to present and understand educational institutions and educational processes as independent, that is, not connected to inequalities and power structures in society (Apple, 2005).

2.3 The Policy Cycle

The policy cycle model developed by Bowe, Ball, and Gold (1992) includes both macro and micro processes in the analysis of education policy, making it possible to analyze the dialectic relationship between structure and agent and the role of discourse in this relationship. Emphasizing the dynamics between policy formulation and implementation, the model brings out the complex and controversial nature of the process of policymaking in education. It also highlights the importance of recognizing the variety of contexts and actors, intentions, disputes, and clashes that influence the policy process (Ball et al., 2012). The authors (Bowe et al., 1992; Ball et al., 2012) argue that the focus in analyzing policy processes should be on the formation of the policy discourse on the one hand, and the active interpretations and translations of policy texts into practice on the other. This implies identifying processes of resistance, assimilation, and conformism within and between the contexts of practice, and the outlining of conflicts between the discourses within these contexts.

The policy cycle model (Figure 2.3 below) (Bowe et al., 1992), visualizes a continuous cycle containing three contexts of policy production and reproduction: the context of influence, the context of text making, and the context of practice. Each of the three represents a domain within which policy is initiated, developed, and redeveloped. All contexts consist of a number of arenas of action and interest groups and involve struggle, compromise, and “ad hocery” (Ball, 1993: 16). The author explains that the three contexts are interrelated in the sense that they are “loosely coupled and there is no simple one direction of flow of information among them” (1993: 16). Consequently, in the model the contexts do not have a time dimension, which means the contexts are not sequential and linear stages do not exist.

48 This depoliticization in itself could be understood as linked to what Ball et al. (2012) call the “dematerialisation of education contexts,” the “non-consideration of teachers” work in relation to micro and macro contextual factors.
The context of influence is the context where public policies are initiated and the political discourses are constructed. In this context different interest groups compete to influence the definition of the social objectives of education and of what it means to be educated. Instead of referring to interest groups, Lopes (2006), building on the works by Ball, refers to “epistemic communities” playing a central role in the circulation of discourses that produce curriculum policies. Lopes argues that use of the concept “epistemic communities” allows for a deeper understanding of power-knowledge relationships in making curricular politics in the contemporary globalized world. She starts from the idea that “those communities are responsible for the circulation, within the education field, of discourses that lie at the basis of the production of directions and meanings for the curricular politics within different contexts” (Lopes, 2006: 40). She highlights the intellectual community, but other actors such as social movements, professional organizations, or unions could be thought of as well. Nevertheless, the core idea is that in a given context certain concepts gain legitimacy and together shape a discourse that forms the basis for policies.

The context of influence has a symbiotic, yet complex relationship with the second context: the context of policy text production. While the first context represents specific interests of certain groups, the policy texts represent the outcome of disputes in the political arena. Representation in the context of policy text production can take various forms, such as legal official texts, political texts, formal or informal comments on official texts, official statements, visual material, etc. Bowe and colleagues (1992) argue that these texts are not necessarily internally coherent and clear, and that they can also be contradictory. For example, in the texts’ key concepts can be used in different ways. The texts are the result of dispute and agreements, as the groups that act in the different contexts of text production also compete for the control of political representation.

The idea of “hybrid discourses,” used by Lopes (2006: 40, 2005), is considered useful when trying to understand the policy process in education. The notion of hybridity refers to the multiple interpretations, reinterpretations, and negotiations of meanings at different moments during the production of texts and discourses related to a specific reform (Lopes, 2005, 2006). This negotiation happens specifically regarding conceptions related to the curriculum and agreements that have to be made between the different “epistemic communities” (Lopes, 2004; see also Macedo, 2006). Lopes (2005: 45) gives the example of the national curriculum, that due to the hybrid character of related discourses, oftentimes becomes a horizon imagined by collective subjects who articulate their

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49 In Chapter 4, therefore, theories on social movements, agenda-setting processes, and framing will be presented.
interests and power relations related to the project. Lopes emphasizes that this hybridity does not resolve the tensions and contradictions between the multiple texts and discourses, but produces ambiguities, “zones of escape of meaning” (2006: 40). In the same line, curriculum is defined by Macedo as a cultural practice involving negotiation of ambivalent positions of control and resistance (2006: 105). Macedo (2006) argues that curriculum itself is culture, a “place of enunciation,” hybrid, a space where cultures negotiate with difference. Therefore, negotiation is a central notion when trying to understand processes of policymaking and curriculum development. This notion in itself links up to the notion of recontextualization that will be discussed later.

Bowe and colleagues (1992), referring to policies as “textual interventions,” point to the fact that policies, while being “textual interventions,” also have real consequences and produce effects. As already stated earlier, discourses also carry with them material limitations and possibilities. These consequences are lived in the third context: the context of practice.

The context of practice is where policies are subject to interpretation and recreation and where the policy produces effects and consequences in practice that can represent change and significant transformation in the original policies. Bowe and colleagues (1992: 22), emphasize the idea that politicians (those who create the policy texts in the arena of policy text production) cannot control the meanings given to texts in practice. Professionals acting in practice are no “naïve readers [of policy texts], they observe [the policies] based on their own histories, experiences, values, and intentions.” However, while Bowe and colleagues argue that politicians cannot control the meanings given to texts in practice, in a later publication Ball (1993), when distinguishing the concepts of “policy as text” and “policy as discourse,” explains, using Foucault’s theory on discourse, that policy as discourse definitely establishes limits in possibilities of thinking, and in that sense indeed influences the possible development and transformation of practices. He argues that discourses incorporate meanings and use propositions and words on the basis of which certain possibilities of thinking are constructed. Discourse then distributes “voice” in the sense that in certain contexts only certain voices will be heard as legitimate and given some authority. In sum, the interpretation process is characterized by disputes, as different interpretations and interests are contested. For the authors (Bowe et al., 1992) the key issue is that – in this arena – policies are not simply implemented, but are subject to interpretation and recreation. Ball and colleagues (2012) therefore prefer to use the concept enactment instead of implementation. The authors indicate that such enactment should, in addition to the “limits in possibilities of thinking,” be understood in relation to contextual factors such as the – sometimes contradictory – policy demands and the “real material conditions” and “varying resources” present in schools (Ball et al., 2012: 1).

The policy cycle model discussed here matches the approach regarding structure and agency adopted in this study, as it also starts from the idea that actors involved in the process, while dealing with real material conditions and varying resources, can have an active role in the processes of developing education policy. When discussing the idea of policy as discourse, the concepts “strategic and discursive selectivity,” introduced in the first section of this chapter, must be addressed. It is worth recalling Hay (2002b: 380-381), who states that in a specific context only certain courses of strategic action are likely to see actors realize their intentions, as contexts present an unevenly distributed configuration of opportunity and constraint. Moreover, the notion of “discursive selectivity” also pointed to the fact that, due to a selection of discourses in contexts, only certain strategies might be appropriated (Hay 2002b: 382). As will also be shown in the analytical model presented at the end of this chapter, this study then builds to a great extent on the policy cycle model.
2.4 Conceptual Tools for Understanding Formation and Transformation of Education Policy and Practice

In order to understand the relationships and processes of sense-making between the different arenas, sub-arenas, and actors in the process of construction of Law 10.639, from its approval to its coming into force in schools, use is made of the concepts recontextualization, scale, power, beliefs, ideology, and discourse.

2.4.1 Recontextualization, Scale, and Power

Recontextualization

The policy model suggests that, while it may be possible to discern a set of principles or theoretical model underlying policy, these rarely translate into policy texts or practice in direct or pristine form, but are interpreted, re-interpreted, and translated. When trying to understand these processes and the way they shape practices, often Bernstein’s (1990, 1996) concept of recontextualization is used (see, e.g., Bonal & Rambla, 1999; Lopes, 2005; Rambla & Verger, 2009; Robertson, 2011; Robertson et al., 2004).

With his notion of pedagogy as a “cultural relay,” Bernstein (1996) points to how education is governed by particular regulative structures and practices that take place in and through the way elements like space, time, and discourse work together to regulate social life (Robertson et al., 2004: 4). The author developed his theory based on the perception that most studies, and especially the ones that refer to theories of cultural reproduction, often study only what is transferred or relayed in education and not the constitution of the relay itself. Bernstein, however, affirms the importance of studying the process itself as “the relay and relayed are not neutral [...] rather particular ‘rules’ act selectively (or restrict or enhance) the meaning potentials and thus what is available to be realised and pedagogized” (Robertson et al., 2004: 4). Accordingly, Bernstein’s theory emphasizes that the discourse of education is not only a “voice” through which other discourses (such as, e.g., discourses on class, gender, religion, race, and region) speak. Instead, Bernstein’s work clarifies: “Education is a site of struggle and compromise. [...] education is both cause and effect, determining and determined” (Apple, 1998: 182). Accordingly, the author theorizes on the structure that allows and enables education to carry the (power) relations existing external to itself (Apple, 2002: 612, see also Apple, 1992). In the attempt to construct the sociological nature of pedagogical knowledge the concept recontextualization takes a central place in the work of Bernstein (1996: 39).

Explaining the concept, the author states:

As the discourse moves from its original site to its new positioning as pedagogic discourse, a transformation takes place. The transformation takes place because every time a discourse moves from one position to another, there is a space in which ideology can play. [...] the pedagogic discourse is constructed by a recontextualizing principle which selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourses to constitute its own order. (Bernstein, 1996: 47)

To the view of the author, processes of recontextualization have a crucial function in creating the fundamental autonomy of education (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999: 269; see also Apple, 2002). The author argues that struggle for control over the pedagogic discourses takes place in the “recontextualization field.” This field is composed of two sub-fields: the official recontextualizing field (ORF) and the pedagogic recontextualizing field (PRF). In the struggles in both the ORF and
the PRF so called “agents of recontextualization” regulate the production of pedagogic contexts, the relationships between agents in these contexts, and the texts produced by these agents at the macro levels of state policy formation, and micro levels of classroom interactions (Singh, 2002). The ORF, which produces the official pedagogic discourse, consists of specialized departments and sub-agencies of the State, and local educational authorities. The PRF, the field in which the non-official pedagogic discourse arises, consists of university departments of education, the literature of their research, as well as specialized educational media (Bernstein, 1990: 192). However, Bernstein recognized that the PRF may also “extend to fields not specialized in education discourse and its practices, but which are able to exert influence both on the state and its various arrangements and/or upon special sites, agents and practices within education” (Bernstein, 1990: 192).

Important to highlight here is the fact that more recently the concept of recontextualization acquired other dimensions. Linked to processes of globalization, recontextualization increasingly involves agencies and actors at different scales. As highlighted in literature from the field of education and development and global governance of education, increasingly regulatory authorities operate at different scales, “including a thickening global scale” (Robertson, 2011: 5). Ball (1998: 127), in an article in which he introduces an international perspective on education policy, emphasizes that “in our attempts to understand the ways in which education policies are interpreted, re-interpreted and translated in their context, we need to understand the complex relationship between ideas, the dissemination of ideas and the recontextualization of ideas at different scales.” He then expands the context of influence to the global scale, recognizing “the ‘problems’ of globalization which frame and ‘produce’ the contemporary ‘problems’ of education” (Ball, 1998: 127). The author thereby states that “the careful investigation of local variations, exceptions and hybridity should not divert attention from the general patterns of practical and ideological, first-and-second-order effects achieved by the ensemble of [e.g., global] influences and policy mechanisms” (Ball, 1998: 128). With these more recent contributions in mind, in the conclusion of this chapter I will return to the recontextualizing field and the two sub-fields identified by Bernstein, elaborating on them, as well as on elements from the policy cycle, in an analytical model. Now I will proceed with a discussion on the concept of scale.

**Scale**

Scale is indeed a concept that lies at the heart of understanding the contemporary world. The almost omnipresent use of the idea of globalization to explain phenomena and processes in a wide variety of areas brings scale center stage in many narratives. Accordingly, increasing reference is made to relations between the global, the regional, the national, and the local, in order to understand processes and transformations around the world. However, the way in which one understands the concept of scale itself has a major influence on constructing explanations for phenomena (Santos & Soeterik, 2012). For example, Santos and Soeterik (2012; see also Santos, R.E., 2006) highlight the difference between more traditional and contemporary academic work in the visions they present of the scalar ordering in the world. The traditional vision is often dominated by an idea of preconceived and reified scales interrelating hierarchically: a set of locations forms a region, a set of regions forms a country, a set of countries forms a continent, and a set of continents forms the world. In this vision the metaphor of the level (as a vertical

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50 See for example, Robertson (2011, 2012); Robertson et al. (2007); Robertson et al. (2012); Mundy, (1998, 2006, 2007); Verger, Novelli and Altinyelken (2012); Jacobi (2009).
51 The work of Dale clarifies how these authorities act through mechanisms such as imposition, dissemination, harmonization, standardization, and installing interdependence (Dale, 1999).
overlapping of different horizontal planes) constructs an image of hierarchy between spatial scales: each level is formed of the summation and embedding of territorial divisions on the scale immediately below in terms of area covered (Santos & Soeterik, 2012: 183). Often this metaphor is accompanied by an idea of a relation of subordination and hierarchy between scales. The world appears, therefore, as the result of the so-called “embedding” of scales (Vainer, in Santos & Soeterik, 2012: 183).

This traditional scale-based model of the world is lacking, as it dissociates scales and thereby presents processes and actors as autonomous (making local processes and actors separate from others that are called national or global, for example). Therefore, it is argued that the very idea of scale needs to be revised. Scale should be understood as a social construct based on power relations. As a heuristic instrument, scale enables one to distinguish levels of analysis of the real: Yet, in the real, such levels are not levels, but rather simultaneities – of social actors, objects and actions that construct geographic space (Santos, R.E., 2006). Indeed, what justifies scalar narratives is the assertion that phenomena, as interrelated simultaneities, have impacts and effects on distinct environments and spatial units. Local, regional, national, and global are in the same place, so that elements (actors, processes, phenomena, and objects) are multi-scalar, with one scale influenced by other phenomena within other scales. This is the complexity (and the importance) of the scalar organization of political relationships: It enables actors, relationships, processes, and phenomena that coexist in space to be ordered so as to establish systems of domination and power. The scalar character of “political games” is therefore related to the hierarchy of social actors, of arenas in which they participate, and of contexts of interaction that serve or do not serve as arenas. Moreover, it is clearly related to legitimations and exclusions imposed on social actors in each scale. It is thereby understood to be an ordered power game, with defined spatial coverage, recognized (and non-recognized) actors, its own rules and standards of conduct, and specific objects of dispute. To be a “global actor,” one must then be recognized globally by other actors, cause global impacts, and be capable of engaging in dialogue and imposing one’s projects in environments where others are unable to. What has become increasingly clear is that social actors “confined” to local or national scales have learned to manipulate and use this form of scalar organization of power games (Santos & Soeterik, 2012). This is how expressions such as “disembedding and re-embedding” (Giddens, 1990) and “boomerang effect” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998) have arisen.

**Power**

Reflecting on the concepts recontextualization and scale, the concept of power appeared in various forms. In the last paragraphs reference was made to “power relations,” including mentioning “systems of power,” “power games,” and “spheres of power.” In this project the understanding of power is based on the work of Hay (2002a), Bernstein (1996), Lukes (1974), and Jessop (2008: 29).

Related to the reflections on recontextualization and scale, Hay (2002a) explains that power is about context-shaping. In his view power is about the capacity of actors to redefine the parameters of what is socially, politically, and economically possible for others. The author then proposes to define power as “the ability of actors (whether individual or collective) to ‘have an effect’ upon the context which defines the range of possibilities of others” (p.185). Elaborating on Lukes’s (1974) three-dimensional view of power, Hay (2002a) highlights the importance of distinguishing

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52 “Boomerang effect” and “indirect pressure” are concepts the authors use when referring to the situation where groups within a repressive political context forge alliances with transnational actors that can bring pressure on that state through international institutions (see also Verger & Novelli, 2012: 12; Tarrow, 2001).
between direct and indirect power. When referring to power as context-shaping, it is about an indirect form of power in which power is mediated by and instantiated in structures. The author states, however, that power is also exercised in a direct sense. Therefore, to power as context-shaping, he adds power as conduct-shaping:

Indirect power is evidenced in the capacity of a government, say, to pass legislation. This does not directly and instantaneously affect the conduct of B, but once instantiated in statute serves to redefine the parameters within which B will continue to act while providing a power resource for the potential exercise of direct power by the law-enforcement agencies of the state. (Hay, 2002a: 186)

Hay (2002a) clarifies that, to his understanding, direct power is immediate, visible, behavioral, and manifest in such practices as physical and psychological coercion, persuasion, and blackmail. This in contrast to indirect power that refers much more to “the capacity to redefine structured contexts and is indirect, latent and often an unintended consequence” (2002a: 186).

Bernstein’s (1996) concept of power is much more linked to the idea of indirect power described by Hay (2002a). This is definitely the case where he explains that power produces and reproduces dislocations and boundaries, because it operates between categories of groups (of e.g., gender, class, race), different categories of discourse, and different categories of agents, thereby reproducing boundaries in relations of social order (Bernstein, 1996: 19). The work of Bernstein shows that power relations are never static or stable. They are challenged, contested, and negotiated in relationships, such as, for example, those characterized by pedagogic communication. Bernstein explains how power relations are internalized via pedagogic communication and social relations of control between, for example, teacher and student (Singh, 2002: 577). The concept control is linked to the concept power as, to the view of Bernstein, control legitimates forms of communication appropriate to the different categories: “[p]ower constructs relations between and control relations within given forms of interaction” (Bernstein, 1996: 19).

With his three-dimensional view of power, Lukes (1974, 1993, 2005) envisions to offer “the prospect of a serious sociological explanation of how political systems prevent demands from becoming political issues or even from being made” (Lukes, 1974: 47). In order to understand the working of power, he argues, a framework is necessary that is capable of recognizing: “(i) the strategies, struggles and practices that characterize the decision making process; (ii) the actions and inactions involved in shaping the agenda for the decision-making process; and (iii) the actions and inactions similarly implicated in the shaping of perceived interests and political preferences” (Lukes in Hay, 2002a: 179). Lukes then proposes to focus analysis on: a) decision making and control over political agendas; b) issues and potential issues; c) observable (overt and covert) and latent conflict; and d) subjective and real interests. Thereby he recognizes that power can be exercised, consciously or unconsciously, by individuals, by groups, or by institutions (Lukes, 1974: 45).

In this research project, the interest in the theoretical concept power is reflected in a focus on understanding who sets the agenda on race issues in education in Brazil (i.e., what actors in what arenas play a role in this process, and who defines what is included and what is excluded from this agenda). In addition, questions are also raised involving understanding the pedagogic discourse on race issues in education (the identification of contents).
2.4.2 Beliefs, Ideology, and Discourse

For understanding the process of development (initial formation, transformation, and reproduction) of pedagogical practices and the meaning of strategy in education contexts, it should be interesting to also discuss more in depth the concepts beliefs, social beliefs, and ideology, and the ways in which these concepts, in processes of educational change and particularly in shaping pedagogical practices, relate to discourse as a mediating entity.

Beliefs

The strategic-relational approach (SRA) referred to in the first section of this chapter emphasizes the importance of the concept strategy in relation to the concept pedagogical practice. The interactions of actors are understood as conscious, reflexive, and strategic. However, the strategic-relational approach also recognizes that actors are not blessed with perfect information on the context in which they act. The latter is especially the case in situations characterized by a density of existing institutions and practices, and a proliferation of strategic actors.

Hay (2002b) sees the education field as a field where such matters as “density of practices,” and “proliferation of strategic actors,” as well as “unpredictable factors” play a part; this is also recognized by other authors. Nespor (1987), in the article where he discusses the role of beliefs in the practice of teaching, argues that, due to the chaotic character of many educational contexts, beliefs play a central role in shaping pedagogical practices and structuring knowledge and information necessary to create these practices. This brings Hay’s statement to mind that not all action is strategic in the sense that it is based on the information presented by the context and knowledge of the actor (Hay, 2002b). Nespor argues that it is important to comprehend the distinction between beliefs and knowledge. In contrast to knowledge, he states, beliefs are characterized by a strong affective and evaluative component. Affect would operate independently from cognition, which is associated with “factual knowledge.” Knowledge of something is therefore distinct from feelings in relation to something. This evaluative component also results in the judgmental function of beliefs. Moreover, Nespor explains that knowledge is stored in a semantic way, while beliefs reside in the episodic part of memory, as they are normally based on earlier experiences (episodes) lived through by the individual. These earlier experiences guide perception and “color” subsequent experiences. From the perspective of the strategic-relational approach, Hay (2002a: 212) also recognizes the role of earlier experiences of actors in the formation of their strategies of action, thereby using the concept “cognitive templates,” instead of “beliefs.” He writes: “For particular ideas, narratives and paradigms to continue to provide cognitive templates through which actors interpret the world, they must retain a certain resonance with those actors’ direct and mediated experiences.” With regard to this study, for example, a combination of factors such as personal ethnic/racial consciousness, own educational experience, approach to race issues in the own family context, or lived experiences in relation to racism could play a role in the way in which an education professional gives shape to pedagogical practices with regard to race issues in the work context. Also interesting to highlight here is the point made by Nespor that individual beliefs, due to their episodic structure, are not dynamic, and as such are difficult to change. This does not mean that beliefs cannot change at all, but simply that they do not always change, even if this would be logical or necessary – for example in the context of teacher training. Also, following Nespor’s

53 Other authors (e.g., Pajares, 1992) make this distinction as well between general knowledge as a structure consisting of systematically organized cognitive elements, and the belief component, containing elements of evaluation and judgment.
theory, change is more probable when new knowledge links up with personal beliefs. For example, a teacher with strong racial consciousness or lived experiences related to racism could be more receptive to the acquisition of new knowledge concerning race issues, while those teachers who do not have this consciousness or experience would not be so open to this acquisition, tending to fall back on their personal beliefs. This points to the need to reflect on the different roles knowledge – in this case with regard to race issues – presented in the context of teacher training could play in the formation and transformation of pedagogical practices of different actors.

Nespor (1987) refers to the often chaotic daily routine in schools and argues that, due to this context, teachers frequently do not base their actions on knowledge, acquired for example during teacher training, but – also due to “immediatism” – often fall back on their personal beliefs. This would mean that the “density of practices” and the “proliferation of strategic actors” that characterize educational contexts could make the consequences of actions unpredictable, and lead to actors oftentimes performing not based on knowledge but on beliefs. Actors within educational contexts would then (also unconsciously) fall back on their “primary” – more “episodic” – beliefs, which are linked to personal experience and therefore more difficult to change (Nespor, 1987: 321, see also Soeterik, 2001, and Hay, 2002b).

However, keeping “analytical dualism” (Willmott, 1999) in mind, it is important not to draw deterministic conclusions in which in the end all change depends on the individual actor and his or her personal beliefs. Beliefs, like practices, should be understood in their social context. The issue is indeed the material-ideational dialectic mentioned earlier. The notion of strategic selectivity of the context discussed earlier helps to understand both the strategic character of actions and the strategic selective context in which the (reinforcement of some, and/or neglect of other) beliefs also play a role in (trans)forming and/or reproducing practices.

**Social Beliefs and Ideology**

Theory on ideology enriches the understanding of the ways in which structure is strategically and discursively selective. The approach to ideology presented by Van Dijk is characterized by a conceptual triangle that connects cognition, society, and discourse (1998: 6). Hence this conceptualization links up to the idea of discourse as a mechanism that mediates between structure and agency, as proposed by the strategic-relational approach.

Van Dijk (1998) explains that clusters of beliefs together form ideology, and that in turn ideologies (also “social belief systems”) make up the social structure of society. Ideologies help individuals to identify themselves with one another and form groups and social systems. In this manner they provide a certain social cohesion – both at individual and societal level they provide structure, order, direction, and shared values. This explains the fact that in discourse certain social beliefs are often (and sometimes unconsciously) considered to be familiar to the audience by the narrator. Ideology is frequently laid down in discourses in which certain beliefs are presupposed by the narrator and not considered explicitly as information. In this regard a good example is the fact that in contexts marked by ethnic/racial diversity actors often only reflect on the “blackness” of certain individuals or issues, while “whiteness” – also being a racial identity created throughout history – is not considered. Thereby whiteness is often implicitly taken as the norm.

Regarding the topic of this study, it is important to clarify that ideology not only provides social cohesion. Ideology is also connected to societal conflict and power relations. In other words: here, too, agency/strategy and power of certain actors located in certain arenas play a role. In fact, it is often precisely (societal) conflict that helps to shape and strengthen certain ideologies as opposed
to others. In reaction to campaigns for legitimation of alternative points of view held by “minorities in power,” dominant groups in society can use their power to impose and disseminate discourses through which certain ideologies are strengthened. Building on the work of Fairclough (2003) and Jessop (2008), Rambla and Verger (2009) explain how this works: “In a given society, now and then powerful individuals recall discourse variation, select a singular discourse and harness its resonance. Actually, the core of modern politics intermingles with these processes in so far as states define and enforce collectively binding decisions in the name of the general will” (2009: 465).

Hence, diverse strategies can be used by the dominant group to disseminate and strengthen certain discourses. Accordingly, ideology is not fixed or unchanging. This brings Bernstein’s statement to mind that “every time a discourse moves from one position to another, there is space in which ideology can play” (1996: 47). Regarding the elaboration and dissemination of certain social beliefs or ideologies, diverse actors can (try to) use their power. For example, ideologies are expressed, communicated, and strengthened through discourses in different “genres,” such as, for example, news reports or research articles. There, messages are transmitted and shaped that qualify a coherent discourse, modulate its connotations, combine different discourses, or create new ones (Fairclough in Rambla & Verger, 2009: 465). In sum, the dominance of certain ideologies often goes accompanied by conflict, contestation, and dispute between different actors and groups. Ideologies show the power relations and struggles in society and, at the same time, play a part in governing relations of domination between groups. This is where theory on the working of social movements, agenda setting, and framing comes in.54

Up until this point the focus of the discussion was on understanding the process of change in education. The specific focus of this research, however, is on the formation, transformation, and reproduction of education processes and contents towards education that combats racial inequality and racism, and promotes a more racially just society. Therefore, before presenting the specific research questions, it is time now to turn the discussion to what I mean by race.

2.5 Defining Ethnicity and Race

O negro não é. Tampouco o branco.
(The black person does not exist, nor the white person.)
(Fanon, 1983)

Ethnicity and race are central concepts in this thesis. Because the concepts are contested in many contexts, it is important to make explicit how they are understood here. This section starts by briefly explaining the difference between the concepts ethnicity and race and clarifying why in this study the two concepts are used in tandem. Then race as a social construct and race in relation to other categories of exclusion will be discussed.

2.5.1 Why Ethnicity/Race?

Within societal, scientific, and media debates, preference is often given to use of the concept ethnicity instead of race. In many contexts people have difficulty with or do not agree with use of the concept race. This is the case, for example, in the Netherlands – where a strong societal taboo actually exists on using the concept race (see, e.g., Soeterik, 2001; Essed, 1991). As we will see, this

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54 These theories will be discussed in Chapter 4.
taboo also exists in dominant media and public opinion in Brazil. It is often argued that when reference is made to race we remain stuck to biological determinism that defends the idea that the human species can be divided in different – superior and inferior – races.\(^{55}\) While biology and genetics have already laid waste to this biologically determinist conception (see, e.g., Pena in Santos, 2009:4), during periods in history the concept race was used in the oppression of certain groups in society (Gomes, 2005), one historical example being Nazism. The recognition of the horrors caused during the Second World War made nations around the world organize themselves based on the idea avoiding other cruelties from happening. It was in this global context that racism and use of the idea of race in its biologically determinist conception was increasingly seen as unacceptable.\(^{56}\)

Parallel to the rejection of racism and the biologically determinist notion of race, use of the alternative concept *ethnicity* took off. Ethnicity became the alternative concept used to refer to different people such as Jews, indigenous, and blacks. The intention of the introduction of the concept ethnicity was to emphasize that these different groups of people were not in the first instance marked by biological characteristics inherited from their parents, but mostly by historical and cultural processes. In this sense *ethnicity* is the other concept used to refer to the ancestry, heritage, and background of certain groups in society. The concept *ethnicity* and the idea of *ethnic group* is then understood as:

A group that knows some degree of coherence and solidarity, composed by people who are conscious that they, at least in a latent way, share the same origins and interests. An ethnic group is not merely a group of people or a part of the population, but a conscious association of people united or proximately related through shared experiences. (Cashmore in Gomes, 2005: 50)

### 2.5.2 Race as a Social Construct

When I started writing down my ideas and observations during fieldwork, I first used quotation marks when referring to the concept race, always writing “race.” When the time passed, it became clear to me that these quotation marks allowed me to distance myself and not be explicit on how I understood the concept. As the discussion in this book shows, the debate in Brazil exists whether or not race is a valid concept to use in Brazilian society. In dominant media and public opinion, use of the concept race is often criticized as “racialization” of society and an attack on the Brazil’s so-called “racial democracy.” This argument is based on the idea that using the concept race in referring to the Brazilian population implies stimulating polarization and conflict in the society by creating different categories of people. These advocates do not consider, however, the already existing societal polarization due to huge inequalities between white and non-white Brazilians, inequalities, indisputably proven by (statistical) research. Insight regarding this point also came through the conversations and interviews I held with various actors. The words of these actors made me understand how – in different contexts – different people use and manipulate the concept race in different ways. For example, one black activist and scholar stated very accurately:

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\(^{55}\) For an understanding how this argument is currently used and disseminated in Brazil see, e.g., Kamel (2006) or Fry and colleagues (2007).

\(^{56}\) Albuquerque (2008: 39) explains how entities linked to the United Nations, and specifically to UNESCO, played a prominent role in the period right after the Second World War in this process, developing studies and (educational) programs that disseminated scientific facts that helped to deconstruct the notion of race as a biological concept. With regard to the “normative project in education around the ideas of universality” that UNESCO became associated with in this period, see also Robertson (2011).
Here in Brazil it is funny because… these people… our advisors [scholars and media actors who argue that racism does not exist in Brazil] […], they use this argument “race doesn’t exist,” while they know that race exists from a social point of view […] And then they put the concepts between quotation marks, like for example “black” etc. But the funny thing is that mestizo they do not put in quotation marks! As if mestizo has a real… The other categories aren’t real, but mestizo is? Mestiçagem [the mixture of people of different skin color and/or physiognomic traces] is also a social construction. […] They say that race does not exist, but they praise the racial democracy. This in my view is a contradiction […] (A2:555-562)

While coming back to the specific meaning and contestations related to the concept of race in Brazil in Chapter 4, here it is important to highlight that this study takes as starting point the idea that race is a social construct (or social construction, as the quoted activist has it). As I understand that race is just one more social construct of reality, in this book I will not use quotation marks when referring to the term.  

When referring to race as a social construct, I agree with the idea expressed by the Brazilian scholar Petruccelli that no objective element exists inherent to people that makes some belong to a certain racial group and not to others. The racial classification is an order based on the emphasized perception of some physical elements in order to suggest a symbolic representation. This means that the classification is present at all levels of social relations. As Petrucelli states: “It is the first thing you perceive of someone, but it is not an inherent attribute […] There exist certain physical characteristics that are arranged in a hierarchical order with the objective to construct a notion of Race, a notion of Ethnicity or of Racial group.”

The Brazilian scholars Castro & Abramovay (2006), building on the idea of race being a social construct, point to the “social materiality” of race, and the way race as a discursive category is sustained on the level of social relations, writing:

“Race,” a discursive category, is sustained on the level of relations, unifying identifications, otherness, stereotypes and delimitations of codes of conduct, which give it a singular meaning as a system of reference and socialization. The racial attribution or self-attribution makes it possible to situate the subject in a social context positioning him or her, based on a supposed exteriority, in the relations that are established. (Castro & Abramovay, 2006: 149)

Referring to race as a social construct and the “social materiality” of the concept links to the strategic-relational approach as discussed earlier in this chapter. Based on the considerations above, it can be understood that within societies race obtains meaning through structural and discursive selectivity (Hay, 2002b). In that sense race also has an operational function in culture and social life (Gomes, 2005: 44). Gomes, affirming this idea, writes:

[...] we can understand that races, actually, are social, political and cultural constructions produced through social and power relations throughout the historical process. They do not refer, in any sense, to facts of nature. It is in the context of culture that we learn to see races. This means that we learn to see blacks and whites as different in the way they are educated and

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57 I agree with the above cited actor that – when putting race between quotation marks – I need to be consistent and also put other social constructs and categories such as black, white, and brown between quotation marks.  
59 Statement made by José Luiz Petruccelli on the seminar “Inserção e Realidade,” SENAC, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, November 22nd, 2007 (See also Petruccelli, 2000, 2007).  
60 Translation of the Portuguese concept “Alteridade.”
socialized to the point that these so called differences are incorporated in our way of being and seeing the other, in our subjectivity and social relations in a broader sense. We learned, through culture and in society, to perceive differences, to compare, to classify. (Gomes, 2005: 49)

The author continues:

If things would stay on that level, we would not have so many complications. The problem is that, in that same context we do not resist the temptation to put these social, racial, gender and other classifications in a hierarchical order. In other words: we also learn to deal with these differences in an unequal way. And this, indeed, is very complicated! (Gomes, 2005: 49)

Paixão and colleagues (2010) put it even stronger, linking the operational function of race in social life to the concept racism. They state:

Racist ideology works through the moral justification of prejudice, discrimination and chronic situations of inequality proven to exist between people that are phenotypically or culturally different. In other words, racist ideology trains the eyes and minds of all society for an uncritical acceptance of the verified coincidence between class hierarchies and ethnic/race hierarchies. (Paixão et al., 2010: 21)

Essed (1991: 50) explains racism as being made up of cognitions, actions, and procedures that contribute to the development and affirmation of a system in which whites dominate blacks. This definition of racism fits the approach in this study, as it points to the mutual dependence of the macro and micro dimensions of racism. Considered from a macro point of view, racism would be a system of structural inequality, a historical process that is reproduced in practices that became routine. In her definition, however, Essed (1991) accentuates how, at micro level, routines and repetitive everyday practices play an important role in the creation of societal structures. Her theory on “everyday racism” explains that specific practices can only be considered racist when they correspond with existing racial inequalities in the system. In this way, structures of racism cannot exist without a connection to acting agents. Specific practices can only be considered racist when they activate the structural racial inequality within the system. The author gives the following definition of racism:

An ideology, a structure and a process in which inequality that is inherent to a broader structure in society, is connected in deterministic ways to biological and cultural factors attributed to a group that is considered of another “race” or of another “ethnical group.” (Essed, 1991: 54)

In line with the theory discussed above, individual racism and institutional racism are often identified as two (often interconnected) forms through which racial inequality is (re)produced in daily life. In its individual form, racism manifests itself in discriminating acts committed by an individual against another individual. These acts can have various forms (verbal, visual, and/or physical) and can reach high levels of aggression (Borges, Medeiros & d’Adesky, 2002 in Gomes, 2005: 52). Institutional racism refers to systematic discriminating practices promoted or indirectly supported by the state (Borges, Medeiros & d’Adesky, 2002 in Gomes, 2005: 53). Here one could think, for example, of the systematic failure of an organization, state-linked or otherwise, to provide appropriate and professional services (e.g., in education) to people belonging to a certain social, cultural, color, or ethnic group.

As observed in the definition given above, Essed (1991) also refers to socially shared beliefs when she states that ideology is the binding element in everyday practices in which several acting
individuals are involved. The author argues that there are two levels on which racism as an ideology operates: on the level of daily practices and the interpretation of these practices, and on the level of thinking and the refusal to recognize racism and take responsibility for it.

Similarly, critical race theorists, also emphasizing the concept race as a social construct, point to the importance of looking at lived realities of racism in daily life when trying to understand the operational function of the concept. Stovall (2006: 247) highlights, for example, that while race as a concept has no biological foundation, “it would be a critical mistake to deny the lived realities of racism in daily life.” During fieldwork I was confronted with many stories that would fit the idea of lived reality of racism. For example, a black woman, leader of Rio de Janeiro private school teachers union, stated:

Nobody is born racist, nobody is born as a man, nobody is born as a woman, nobody is born homosexual, we learn to see… we go there… and we go there… and people when they are born they are like Dalmatians, they get color afterwards. You know that you are black; you know that you are white; you know what the difference is: One skin is black and the other white, but the difference is like this, you remain outside and he enters. We only start to see these differences when we grow up. (A13:39)

While the concept of racism is further discussed below, here it is worthwhile to emphasize how the idea of lived realities of racism points to the importance of understanding the multiple meanings the concept is imbued with, based on site-specific experiences and relationships to structures of power (in, e.g., education institutions) (see Stovall, 2006: 247). It is important then to emphasize the relational and contextual dependency of the significance and meaning the concept race gains in daily life (see on this point also Sansone, 1996; Carvalho, 2005).

Fanon (1983) explained that blackness and whiteness are not essential categories. As the author states in the quote opening this section: “The black person does not exist, nor the white person.” These two (and other) categories can only be understood considering the relation these have with one another in a certain context. Similarly Gomes writes: “My world, myself, my culture, are all also translated through the other, bis/ her world and bis/ her culture, [my identity is created] in the process of decipherment of the other, the different. It is like a process of reflection” (2005: 42). Identity to become real presupposes interaction. No identity exists that is constructed in isolation (see also d’Adesky, 2001).

This brings the discussion back to the idea of the relation between structure and agent discussed in the beginning of this chapter: existing contexts, processes, and structures in society give meaning to certain categories (e.g., of people). At the same time, actors operate and define strategies (and identities) in relation to these contexts, processes and structures. It is important therefore to understand (ethnic/racial) identities as something relational and dynamic. Consequently, as critical race theorists clarify, when reference to race as a social construct is made, not only blackness, but also whiteness and related white privilege should be considered. Referring to a sustained investment in ensuring the continued invisibility of whiteness, Solomon and colleagues (2005: 159) explain that negating whiteness and its attendant capital is also a refusal to acknowledge how white people are implicated in relations of social domination, subordination, and instances of economic exploitation. Kailin (in Solomon et al., 2005) also writes:

61 In this regard the notion of “political race,” that surged within critical race theory, is important, as it reframes race as a concept that denotes both social location and political commitment (May & Sleeter, 2010: 8).
“Whiteness” as a social identity is invisible to whites, and the social and economic benefits that have accrued to whites over the course of our history must be understood in the context of white supremacy. (Kailin in Solomon et al., 2005: 159)

Referring to the meaning of the concept race in Brazil, Gomes (2005: 43) clarifies that black identity, as a social, historical, cultural, and plural construction, is gradually built “in a movement that involves numerous variables, causes and effects. [...] It implies the construction of a way of looking of one ethnic/racial group, or from subjects that belong to the same ethnic/racial group, on themselves, based on the relation with the other.” Thereby, referring to the difficult task of creating a black identity in Brazilian society, the author affirms that thinking and reflecting on identity and concepts, such as race and ethnicity, is not only a task of the black population, writing:

[reflecting on race issues in Brazil should not be something particular that only interests people belonging to the black ethnic/race group. It is a social, political and cultural issue that involves all Brazilians. In fact, it is an issue of Brazilian society and also a global issue when we amplify our reflection on relation between blacks and whites, between different racial-ethnic groups, in the different international contexts. In the end it is an issue of all humanity. (Gomes, 2005: 51)

Based on the last two sections on ethnicity and race, it can be stated that use of the concept ethnicity in combination with race (ethnicity/race), serves to emphasize that the tense relations due to differences in skin color and physiognomic traces (the social construct of race) are, in the case of Brazil, also related to the cultural roots linked to African ancestry that present different visions of the world, values, and principles of indigenous, European, and Asian origin (Brasil, 2004c: 13).

2.5.3 Race and Other Categories of Exclusion

The understanding of the relation and mutual linkages between race and dynamics related to other social (or socially created) categories such as class and gender lies at the heart of understanding and recognizing (lived realities of) racism and racial inequalities. Several theorists agree that without understanding class dynamics, the dynamics of race cannot be understood, and vice versa (Apple, 1992; Stovall, 2006). They argue that individuals and groups are inevitably located – and often differentially constrained – by wider structural forces such as capitalism, racism, colonialism, and sexism (May & Sleeter: 2010: 6). Critical race theory (CRT) also emphasizes that both race and class are central to the analysis of hegemony. This approach points to the structural function of racism as relevant and significant, in addition to class. In this sense Critical race theory highlights that “the ruling class continues to be white” (Stovall, 2006: 248). Therefore, Stovall argues,

[the social justice project in education will require the recognition of the interplay of race and class to assess political, social, racial and economic dynamic. Doing so will require those on the side of CRT to recognize that there may be intra-racial issues that need class analysis, while not separating them from the larger construct of White supremacy. Those who engage class analysis will have to recognize the dynamics of racialization in discussions of the ruling classes, in understanding that racism is not the sole byproduct of capitalism. Instead [...], the dynamics of

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62 As I will discuss in Chapters 5 and 6, many actors confirm the difficulty of constructing a positive black identity in a society that historically and from childhood onwards educates black people that, in order to be accepted, they need to negate themselves (Gomes, 2005: 43).
race inextricably identify a system of shifting hierarchies that are not married to a stringent interpretation of class analysis. (Stovall, 2006: 257)

Similarly, Apple (1992), reflecting on the categories race, class and gender, refers to the importance of understanding the processes of class “becoming raced (and/or gendered)” in order to understand cultural reproduction. He states:

We cannot marginalize race and gender as constitutive categories in any cultural analysis. If there are indeed basic cultural forms and orientations that are specifically gendered and raced, and have their own partly autonomous histories, then we need to integrate theories of patriarchal and racial forms into the very core of our attempt to comprehend what is being reproduced and changed. At the very least, a theory that allows for the contradictions within and among these dynamics would be essential. (Apple, 1992: 143)

Based on the recognition of the interplay between race and class, but also dynamics involving other social constructs such as, for example, gender, when in this study I refer to ethnicity/race issues, it is about the reformulation of social relations and the structuring of social opportunities and structures (the race-related issues that ask for restructuring and redistribution), as well as about the cultural-symbolic dimensions of social justice that ask for recognition. I affirm the importance of the idea formulated by Boaventura Sousa Santos of the “double sided” fundamental human right we have “to be equal whenever difference diminishes us,” and “to be different whenever equality decharacterizes us” (Santos, 2001b: 193, see also Santos, 1999b).

Linking up with the above, it is worth highlighting that though I disagree with the argument made by Fraser (1995) that – because (counteracting) racial inequality has both to do with redistribution and recognition issues – a dilemma exists. Concerning the fact that both redistributive and sociocultural injustices related to racial inequality are often intertwined, Fraser (1995) refers to race as being a “bivalent collectivity” that brings up dilemmas for those campaigning for racial justice. She summarizes the dilemma as follows:

Recognition claims often take the form of calling attention to, if not performatively creating, the putative specificity of some group, and then of affirming the value of that specificity. Thus they tend to promote group differentiation. Redistribution claims, in contrast, often call for abolishing economic arrangements that underpin group specificity. [...] Thus they tend to promote group de-differentiation. (Fraser, 1995: 74).

The author then argues that from the redistribution perspective that race would be put out of business if it provided more (distributive) justice, while the recognition perspective would seem to affirm that more social justice would mean exactly the social and cultural (re)valuing of oppressed racial groups. Fraser (1995) explains the tension by stating: “If ‘race’ were nothing but a political-economic differentiation, […], justice would require its abolition” (1995: 80). In the view of the author, race as a bivalent collectivity creates the situation that people who suffer economic and cultural injustice need to simultaneously claim and deny their specificity. Fraser points to the contradiction within the politics regarding these bivalent identities by stating that “the two remedies pull in opposite directions, however. They are not easily pursued simultaneously” (1995: 79). Fraser formulates the anti-racist redistribution-recognition dilemma as follows: “How can anti-racist fight simultaneously abolish ‘race’ and valorize racialized group specificity?” (1995: 81).

This study starts from the idea that, when the issues at hand are racial inequality and racism, and definition of policies to counteract this type of exclusion, it is not the intention to abolish race,
but *racism*, and consequently *racial inequality* – as the discussion in this section clarifies: race is a social construct. Consequently, when racial inequality and exclusion is addressed through policies and enactment in such a way that racial inequalities become non-existent, then indeed the concept *race* will no longer have any meaning in relation to lived realities – at least not when referring to the present time. However the ethnic (including the cultural) dimension will still exist, as ethnic/racial equality implies a recognition of origins, language, culture, traditions, interests, different visions of the world, values, principles, historical monuments, and/or territories. In sum, in the context of this study it is understood that the abolition of race is not an objective in itself – in fact the concept is the essential conceptual tool in the struggle against racial inequality, as it helps to understand and recognize this dimension of inequality.

### 2.5.4 The Coloniality Debate and Other Counter-Hegemonic Globalization Struggles

Many writings and other forms of expression exist that elaborate on the idea of the interconnectedness of dimensions such as ethnicity/race, class, and gender in processes of exclusion (see, for example, Santos 1999b, 2001b, 2003). Often these works fit in larger theoretical and societal projects that resist and/or offer alternatives to the Eurocentric “modernity” project (see Santos, 2001b, 2003, 2004). Escobar (2004, 2007), for example, refers to the emergence of self-organizing global, regional, national, and local social movement networks, which operate under a new logic, fostering forms of counter-hegemonic globalization worldwide.63

In the Latin American context, connected to the global rise of social movements, as well as wider processes of economic and cultural globalization, the coloniality debate opened up alternative ways of looking at political, theoretical, and epistemic debates (Saavedra, 2007). Theories on coloniality argue that the Eurocentric character of the world is constituted through the imposition of a relation of domination referred to as “coloniality” – a concept that differs from colonialism, which is a concept that implies the existence of a colonial administration. In explanations of the concept, reference is made to the *coloniality of being*, of *power*, and of *knowing* (see, e.g., Escobar, 2007; Grosfoguel 2007a, 2007b; Mignolo, 2007; Quijano 2005; Walsh 2007a, 2007b). Modernity is understood as establishing itself as a universal pattern together with this other face of coloniality. Coloniality, then, is a pattern of power that interacts with and influences various dimensions of social existence such as, among other things, work, subjectivity, authority, sexuality, culture, and identity. All these dimensions of the social experiences of individuals and groups determine the intersection of multiple power relations that, taken together, serve coloniality (Santos, 2009: 8). Coloniality thus is about the various sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic, and racial hierarchies that operate on various scales, from the global to the interactions between individuals. Debates on coloniality then help to understand the fact that – when we think of societal inequalities – we cannot reduce it to the exploration and domination in work and class relations. And this is an important point, as reference to the exploration and domination in work and class

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63 The fact that many of these works are not widely known and disseminated is again linked to the scalar character of “political games” in the globalized world that result in legitimations and exclusions of social actors and their discourses on different scales. As mentioned before, to be a “global actor,” one must be recognized globally by other actors, cause global impacts, and be capable of engaging in dialogue and imposing one’s projects in environments where others are not able to. As a response to what Boaventura de Sousa Santos refers to as “sociology of absences,” the World Social Forum can be considered one initiative that envisions to strengthen these global “local” social struggles in particular, joining them in one event and offering a “global stage” (see Santos, 2003; see also Dale & Robertson, 2004; Mathers & Novelli, 2007).
relations still forms the dominant frame in many societies when societal inequalities (in education, housing, income etc.) are explained. The coloniality approach thus makes it possible to understand that modernity, apart from capitalist structures, also was accompanied by various other dimensions of domination and hierarchization in order to function in societies (Santos, 2009:8).

Where it concerns education, the coloniality approach considers education systems in many post-colonial countries to be conservative, Eurocentric, and exclusionary (see for the case of Brazil, e.g., Santos, 2009; on the case of Bolivia see e.g., Lopes Cardozo, 2011). In thinking about education reform, the aim is then to understand and at the same time deconstruct historical structures of injustice, and construct an equitable and social, political, and economically just future. The coloniality approach then suggests that an epistemic dialogue between Eurocentric and other approaches to thinking and knowledge is necessary in order to understand and deconstruct injustices (Escobar, 2007; Gorfoguel, 2007; Walsh, 2007b). The deconstruction of knowledge is thus central to the coloniality debate. Instead of only adding new curriculum contents, effort should be made to also revise existing curriculum contents. In the revision of contents it is then the objective to combat Eurocentrism through the deconstruction of narratives that structure the reading of the world and create dominant world visions (Santos, 2009: 11). It is emphasized in this regard that “other” (such as indigenous) knowledge also needs to be valued (see, e.g., Walsh 2007a, 2007b). Often designed in cooperation between social movement actors, intellectuals, and progressive political leaders, these reform agendas envision going against the “Western,” “European” or neoliberal ideas that until present dominate education systems.

Summarizing, the coloniality debate helps in understanding the importance of recognizing the interplay between race, class, and other social constructs, such as gender, in lived realities of exclusion. Particularly regarding education it also helps to understand that the revision of existing curriculum contents is more important than the addition of new curriculum contents.

2.6 A Critical Approach to Identity, Difference, and Inequality in Education

When investigating the institutionalization of and enactments concerning ethnicity/race issues in education, this study makes use of the critical multicultural paradigm as discussed by May and Sleeter (2010) (see also May, 1999). Having its roots in a social movement that initially grew out of the civil rights movement in the United States, multicultural education is now a globally acknowledged idea. Thinking about multicultural education initially emerged from the search for ways to deal with the condition of cultural plurality in broader society and within the school, or, in the words of Sutton: “It speaks to questions of how school children are taught about their own social identity and the identity of others” (2005: 98). Accordingly, multicultural education developed as an alternative to the “universalists approach” to education that considered it the social mission of the school to “universalize knowledge” based on the Greek, Latin, and medieval heritage of the Western world, with this being considered the most highly developed human knowledge (Granato, 2003).

Due to the worldwide massification of education since the 1980’s, which has further intensified since the 1990’s – and the resultant increased diversity within schools and classrooms – the need to reflect on how educational institutions, processes, and contents should respond to the “multicultural” population was reinforced. The process of massification of education was also accompanied, however, by a spreading and strengthening of the human capital paradigm, disseminating the idea that education is predominantly an investment opportunity in “human
capital” (Bonal, 2012; Robertson, 2011, 2012), leaving aside complex issues such as identity, diversity, and citizenship (Sutton, 2005: 97).

While from the 1980’s onwards several alternative approaches appeared that developed more elaborate theories about identity, difference, and inequality in education, many authors point to the fact that the spreading of the multicultural discourse was accompanied by an increase in superficial interpretations of the issue of diversity and ways to work with it in education (May & Sleeter, 2010; Sleeter, 1996; Sutton, 2005; Gorski, 2006). These authors point to the fact that currently the dominant understanding of multicultural education is based on a vague appeal to “tolerance,” and “respect for diversity and difference,” that disassociates multicultural education from power issues. Some refer to these as “liberal” (see May & Sleeter, 2010), or “conservative” approaches (Gorski, 2006). I refer to this approach as the cultural approach and juxtapose it against the sociopolitical approach (see Table 2.1). This dominant approach is characterized in educational institutions by a primary focus on education about different ethnic/racial groups (studying the “other” and “their culture”). Thereby a naturalization of differences and a reification of the concept culture can often be perceived. In so doing, the “other” is (implicitly) discussed from a perspective in which the identity, customs, and worldviews of the (white) majority are taken as norm. The (often implicit) objective is then assimilation of minorities into the majority culture in terms of power. The discussion of exclusion, discrimination, and racism is not included in this dominant discourse. And when inequalities enter the debate, “minorities in power” are held responsible for their own situation of exclusion – a phenomenon also referred to as “blaming the victim.” Essed (1991) refers to the refusal to recognize racism and take responsibility for it as one of the two levels on which racism as an ideology operates. This is accompanied by the level of daily practices and the interpretation of these practices.

The dominant interpretation of issues related to identity, difference, and inequality in education were strengthened concomitant with the massification of education worldwide that propagates the value of meritocracy in education while carrying within a “universal cultural blueprint” (Sutton, 2005: 99). Dubet (2003: 40) argues that – due to the massification of public education in recent decades – the school as institution finds itself in a paradoxical situation: on the one hand the modern school affirms the equality of all (all children have, a priori, the same value), while on the other hand the school is meritocratic, since it ranks and classifies individuals based solely on their “merits.” The author indicates a dangerous trend in this regard of “blaming the victim”:

Exclusion is not only an “objective” systemic phenomenon, it is also a subjective experience of exclusion lived potentially as self-destructive, since each one is responsible for his or her own education, for his or her own adventure. In other words, excluded subjects are under the threat of being destroyed by their exclusion, which would be the sign of their own “nullity.” (Dubet, 2004: 41)

This dominant interpretation of issues related to identity, difference, and inequality in education fits in an all-over formal interpretation of equal opportunities and social justice identified by Van Parijs (2004). In education, this formal interpretation is also characterized by a focus on distributive elements of justice, such as those related to access and permanence, and does not consider the recognition dimensions that relate to educational contents and processes (on the recognition and redistribution dimension of social justice, see also Fraser, 1995). Education in general, and its contexts, processes, actors, and role are depoliticized (see also Apple, 2005). Schools are considered
neutral (concerning ethnicity/race issues also color-blind) institutions, not connected to differences and inequalities in society. Within this perspective no recognition exists of the sociohistoric context in which education takes place and in which identities are shaped. Consequently, in the formulation of policies and practices, no (or a minimal) analysis takes place of how power is used (both explicitly, as well as in implicit ways). Informal rules for distribution are not considered. Moreover, the fact that in practice we do not treat each other equally is not recognized. Taboos exist regarding differentiation. The focus is, instead, on improving formal participation structures, equal access, and stimulation of permanence.

As opposed to the cultural approach, a critical paradigm exists that criticizes – and at the same time formulates – an alternative to this liberal/conservative approach to education in general, and the curriculum and ethnic/racial inequalities in particular. The critical perspectives include elements of various other approaches, such as antiracist education (see, e.g., Troyna, 1987; 1993), critical race theory (see, e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1998, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Stovall, 2006), and critical pedagogy (see for example, Apple, 1995, 1996, 2004; Giroux, 1988, 2003). In its initial stage, the work by these critical scholars was strongly inspired by the writings of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, who in his work emphasized students’ ability to think critically about their education, and to recognize connections between their individual problems and experiences, and the social contexts in which they are embedded. Freire’s basic argument is that education can only become “liberating” when it stimulates the creation of consciousness (conscientização). Creation of consciousness is then considered to be the first step towards power and know-how for taking action against oppression (also referred to as praxis) (Freire, 1970).

The key issue addressed in the different critical approaches that have been developed since the 1970’s – specifically in their criticism of the liberal/conservative approach to diversity and inequality in education – is that it fails to recognize the power-grounded relationships within processes of identity construction, cultural representation, struggles over resources, and multiple interpretations, reinterpretations, and negotiations of meanings happening with regard to education in general, and “school knowledge,” or the curriculum, in particular. I therefore refer to this approach as the sociopolitical approach. In essence, this more critical paradigm intends to avoid an approach that essentializes and depoliticizes education and culture – treating both culture and education (policy) as neutral and unchanging “things” – thereby ignoring the wider social and political context (see May & Sleeter, 2010: 6). This approach to ethnicity/race issues in education fits in with the approach of the “cultural political economy of education” (CPE/E) that inspired this study (Robertson, 2009, 2011, see also Lopes Cardozo, 2011), as this approach also sees education “as a complex terrain and outcome of discursive, material and institutionalized struggles over education (knowledge, learning, teaching, assessment) in the ‘social contract,’ and the scales at which they are governed” (Robertson, 2011). The approach gives priority to structural analysis of unequal power relations, studying the role of institutionalized inequities, including – but not necessarily limited to – racism.

The sociopolitical approach identifies the importance of recognizing the way concerns regarding identity, difference, and inequality in education are played out differently in each (global, regional, national, state, municipal, or community) context. As Sutton (2005: 100) argues regarding the national context of education policymaking: controversies connected to multicultural education go to the heart of the meaning of citizenship in a nation-state, since mass schooling – besides strengthening debates on diversity – has also universally promoted certain concepts of citizenship in nations. Each national debate concerning cultural difference and education is embedded in the
“topography of diversity” that is unique to that nation. The differences refer to complex issues of identity, diversity, and citizenship ensuing from different local histories. Knowing the “lay of the land” thus provides the critical context for understanding each specific debate (Sutton, 2005). In the same line, Sleeter, in her article “Multicultural Education as a Social Movement” (1996), emphasizes that the political engagement of local social movement actors is essential for progressive change in education. Children of oppressed groups, their parents, their communities, and their grassroots advocacy organizations need to be seen as the natural constituency of processes of educational change towards more social, ethnical, and racial justice and recognition. It should be noted, however, that effective change will only be realized when the majority groups and their children, parents, and communities also take up their responsibility to engage in these processes of change.

Table 2.1 Considering identity, difference and inequality in education: two interpretations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural approach</th>
<th>Sociopolitical approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophical/Political point of departure</strong></td>
<td><strong>Holistic interpretation of equal opportunities:</strong> Focus on distributive and recognition dimensions of justice (access, permanence and processes and contents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pedagogical practices characterized by</strong></td>
<td><strong>-Recognition of differences and unveiling inequalities and informal rules for distribution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-Equal treatment through formal participation structures (reward individual outcomes/focus on “merit”)</strong></td>
<td><strong>-Unequals treated differently (positive discrimination allowed in some circumstances/contexts)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-Non-problematization and avoidance conflict</strong></td>
<td><strong>-Working with difference and inequalities, making use of conflicts that surge in context</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-Depoliticization of education context, processes, and contents (naturalization of differences and essentialization of identities)</strong></td>
<td><strong>-Recognition of political context and role education (school as a sociohistorical construct; traditional curricula product of power relations)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-Static approach to/reification of culture, as linked to “the other” (assimilation)</strong></td>
<td><strong>-Attention to how power is used in shaping education (systems, institutions, processes, and contents)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-No theorization of modernity (no theorization of the concepts ethnicity/race, whiteness; and intersection with categories as class and gender)</strong></td>
<td><strong>-Investigate/support grassroots activism (link community)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-Interrogates modernity (and concepts such as ethnicity/race, whiteness; and intersection with categories such as class and gender in lived realities of exclusion)</strong></td>
<td><strong>-Interrogate differences (hybridism of cultures &amp; social and individual identities)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building on the critical sociopolitical approach, in this study ethnicity/race issues are understood in the social, political, and historical meaning that the concepts have in Brazilian society. In the context of Brazil, it can be observed that those groups that debate identity, cultural representation, resources, and meaning of education in general, and “school knowledge” regarding Law 10.639 in particular – in line with “coloniality thinking” discussed in the last section – understand these issues in the context of Brazil as a country with a colonial history that influenced and still influences the “topography of diversity” that marks the country.

2.7 Raising the Questions

This chapter discussed the theoretical approach and concepts central in this study. It offers the basis for formulating the research questions and the conceptual framework. As foundation for the discussion in the rest of this book, the research questions and conceptual framework are presented.

The central research question of this study is:

*What policy discourses and multi-scalar interactions influence the process of curriculum development with regard to ethnicity/race and education in contemporary Brazil?*

The process of curriculum development (understood as initial formation and transformation) is the main focus of study in this thesis. My interest is in understanding both the process of framing “alternative” *policy discourses* with regard to ethnicity/race and education, and the process of recontextualization of these in *pedagogical practices* and *strategies*. Therefore, the study consists of two levels of analysis. One level deals with the arenas in which policies are designed and negotiated in an interactive process between political institutions and organized civil society actors acting independently from these institutions, while the other level deals with the arenas in which the outcome of this process is received and translated into educational institutions and practices.

Based on the theory discussed in this chapter, three main arenas are expected to play a role in the process of curriculum development regarding ethnicity/race and education in contemporary Brazil. Similar to the policy cycle model discussed earlier, I also refer to three main arenas involved: a first arena where the policies as texts are constructed; a second one in which the strategy of actors is mainly focused on problem framing and influencing agenda setting and; a third one where enactment on the policy agenda takes place. The three arenas are referred to as the “official political arena” (OPA), the “civil society arena” (CSA) and the “pedagogical arena” (PA). The three arenas and their expected relationships are visualized in Figure 2.4 below. I identify the official political arena as the arena in which policies – as texts – are constructed and institutionalized in political institutions at different scales. The civil society arena is the arena where the strategy of actors, operating outside the official political arena, is mainly focused on influencing the agenda-setting processes (which mostly happens in the official political arena) through framing specific issues in a specific way. The third arena, the pedagogical arena, is the arena where the policy agenda is recontextualized and translated in practices in educational institutions. In understanding the process in the pedagogical arena, focus is on what happens with outcomes of the agenda (in this case specifically Law 10.639 and the Curriculum Directives) at the school level.
The sub-questions, each relating to one of the two levels of analysis (A and B), are:

A) What discourses and multi-scalar interactions explain the uneven policy change process with regard to ethnicity/race and education in Brazil?

B) How is the new policy discourse received and recontextualized at the school level in Brazil and what conditions contribute to its effective implementation?

Linked to sub-question A, the following empirical questions were formulated:

a1) What arenas, actors, and events influenced the agenda-setting process concerning ethnicity/race issues in education until the moment when Law 10.639 was passed and its regulation came about?

a2) What arenas, actors, and events have (had) an effect on the process of institutionalization of Law 10.639 and the Curriculum Directives 003/2004?

a3) How do different actors interpret, maintain, or contest (the constitution of) this agenda and its institutionalization?

Linked to sub-question B, the following empirical questions were formulated:


b2) How do members of the pedagogical/management team and teachers in the school receive and translate the content of Law 10.639 and the Curriculum Directive 003/2004?

b3) How does personal background influence the way teachers in the school work with ethnicity/race issues?

Concerning the first sub-question, various actors active in official political arenas and civil society arenas, were expected to play a role. It was presumed that in the official political arena at national level the Ministry of Education (MEC) and the National Education Council (Conselho Nacional de Educação, CNE) either played or had played a role. Moreover, at state and municipal levels, the secretariats of education and related institutions, such as the school inspection and the education councils, were presumed to be the important actors. In the civil society arena, actors such as the Brazilian Black Movement and teachers unions, were expected to play a key role, but it was also expected that other organizations, such as NGOs (non-governmental organizations), INGOs (international non-governmental organizations) and the media played a role. Moreover in the pedagogical arena (an arena that is the focus of analysis in the second sub-question), schools, teacher training initiatives, scholars and, research entities were expected to play the most important roles (the last three, in fact, operating from spaces in which the pedagogical arena overlapped with the civil society arena).

Based on the theory, preliminary assumptions were also made regarding the relationships and interactions between the three different arenas. As the model illustrates, the three arenas were expected to be embedded in, and related to six different contexts at different scales. Besides the national, state, municipal, and community contexts, the regional and global contexts are indicated as well. This was done based on the expectation that events and developments taking place at these scales influence the process too. The different sub-arenas and actors involved in the processes of curriculum development regarding ethnicity/race were expected to be related to different contexts and scales, (sometimes) simultaneously. This expectation regarding the interaction and simultaneity
is visualized in the (partial overlap of the) three arenas. Hence, starting point for the study was the idea that it is mostly in the overlapping spheres that the agenda is strengthened. Besides a dynamic interaction between arenas, actors were also expected to be mobile between and within the arenas. It was also assumed that in these overlapping spheres the dynamic interaction between the arenas, and mobility of actors within and between these, is also characterized by hybrid discourses (Lopes, 2006) and power struggles. The concepts “official political arena” and “pedagogical arena” used in this study bring the two recontextualization fields Bernstein describes to mind. Indeed: this study affirms the idea that recontextualization plays a crucial role in the initial formation and transformation of official pedagogic discourses of federal and state policy at the macro level in the official political arena, and of local pedagogic practice (e.g., classroom interactions) at the micro level in the pedagogical arena. However, similar to the policy cycle, a third arena was included in the model. The “civil society arena” was added based on the expectation that – in the specific case and context studied – social movements play(ed) a crucial role in the agenda-setting process, acting inside, but at the same time also independently of both the official political arena and pedagogical arena. In the context of this study it was then considered important to analytically distinguish the civil society arena as a third arena. Accordingly, it is argued that this model – in which, in addition to the two arenas (official political arena and pedagogical arena) that frame the “official” and the “non-official” pedagogic discourse, another arena has been added where “alternative” pedagogic discourses are framed – does better justice to the expected central role played by social movements (specifically the Brazilian Black Movement) in the process.

Regarding the second sub-question, which focuses on how the new policy discourse is received and recontextualized at the school level and what conditions contribute to its effective implementation, expectations are also elaborated (these are visualized in Figure 2.5 below, which in itself should be considered as fitting into the pedagogical arena in Figure 2.4). Informed by the strategic-relational approach, characteristics are identified on both the actors’ beliefs/knowledge side (left-hand side of the model) as well as on the structural, context side (right-hand side of the model). It must be mentioned that, where Hay (2002a: 212) in his model refers to “cognitions,” in this study this has been replaced by the concepts “knowledge” and “beliefs.” The model indicates the importance of making a distinction between beliefs and knowledge since, as the discussion in this chapter has shown, personal and social beliefs play a central role in the (change of) practices. Accordingly, considering beliefs and the relationship between beliefs and knowledge is of great importance when trying to understand (possibilities of) change in education.

Hence, the factors linked in the model by dotted lines were expected to play a part in the dynamics and enactments related to Law 10.639 involving actors in the pedagogical arena. Those

64 While on this point my work shows similarities with the theory of Ball, it should be noted that this author describes the relation between the context of influence, the context of text production, and the context of practice as “interrelated,” or “loosely coupled” (Ball, 1993: 16). In this study, instead, the relation is seen more as “interaction” and (partly) “overlapping.” Thereby I build on the insights from Gale (1999: 404), who observes that – by presenting the three contexts as separated from each other – Bove, Ball, and Gold (1992) seem to hinder their own attempts to break away from the rigidity in policy production they identify in the work of others, where policy is considered “simply something done to people” (Bowe et al., 1992: 15). Gale, instead, prefers to understand the relation between the three contexts as “fluid.” It is about “different descriptions of the same social reality – as textual elements discursively selected and ordered to differently construct them” (1999: 404). While this exact description does not completely correspond with the sometimes highly conflictive character of the relationships between and also within the different arenas, the idea expressed by Gale that at some moments “contexts of policy text production […] can also be understood as contexts of practice and of influence, depending on the emphasis within any one hegemonic moment” (1999: 404) applies in this study.
issues and factors are – on the actors side – five factors linked to beliefs (own role perception, personal experiences, own racial consciousness, identity, opinion versus the law, and the directives), and three factors linked to knowledge (knowledge on racial inequality and racism, knowledge on the law and the directives, and reflection on own and social beliefs). On the structural side three main contextual factors (training, “local” and “external” factors and ideologies, norms and rules) and several related sub-factors were identified.

**Figure 2.4  Conceptual framework: the policy process concerning ethnicity/race and education in Brazil**
The discussion in this chapter on the strategic relational approach made clear – and the models above also visualize – that actors are considered part of a social structure in which certain practices are more difficult to realize, and where certain beliefs are shaped, supported, and/or given meaning, while others are not. The school context in particular is recognized as a context characterized by a density of (inter)actions in which individual professionals (such as, for example, those in the school administration, the educationists, coordinators, and teachers) often will have to develop pedagogical practices ad hoc, responding to life situations in the institution or in the classroom. Therefore, it is easy in this context to rely or fall back on personal beliefs, even more so if certain beliefs also reside in or are reinforced by the social belief structure within the institution and the society in a broader sense. However, based on the strategic relational approach, and taking up elements from other theories discussed in this chapter, actors and their actions are also considered strategic. It is through the actions and strategies applied by actors that “local” or “external” characteristics in fact have an effect in certain situations. For understanding how and why actors reproduce or transform particular education practices, I embark from the idea expressed by Dale that different factors should be considered as jointly forming the (changing) context in which both education policy and practice is made (1983: 201-202). In attempting to understand the processes of initial formation and transformation of the curriculum with regard to ethnicity/race by actors within the school, it is then the interaction between different factors, and structural and discursive selectivity, that should be taken into account.
Chapters 4 and 5 address sub-question A, and the related model, while Chapter 6 addresses sub-question B, and the associated model. In the conclusions of this book (Chapter 7) both models will be critically examined. This theoretical framework served as the point of departure for methodological choices made in conducting the research. In the next chapter, these methodological choices and the methods used for gathering data and conducting analysis will be presented.