RESUMO

O presente estudo versa sobre a temática preconceito racial. Objetivou-se analisar como os jovens negros percebem a violência a qual estão expostos. Participaram do estudo quatro jovens negros que residiam em Cajazeiras, interior da Paraíba. Recorreu-se a entrevista semiestruturada, realizada individualmente. Os dados obtidos por meio das entrevistas foram analisados por meio da técnica de análise de conteúdo, a partir da técnica de análise temática. Os dados empíricos revelaram que os jovens consideram que: foram vítimas de violência física na abordagem policial, violência psicológica e acusação de crime; essas vivências foram marcadas pelo sofrimento; o fato de serem negros, morarem na periferia e serem pobre os torna mais vulneráveis à violência. Considera-se necessário estratégias que contribuam para transformar socialmente essa realidade que tem impactado negativamente na vida desses jovens.


ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the racial prejudice theme. The objective was to analyze how young black people perceive the violence to which they are exposed. Four young black people living in Cajazeiras, Paraíba’s countryside, were interviewed in this study. Semi-structured interviews individually performed were used. The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed through content analysis, using the thematic analysis technique. The empirical data revealed that the young people considered that: they were victims of physical violence in the police approach, psychological violence and crime accusation; these experiences were marked by suffering; the fact that they are black, poor and live in the periphery make them more vulnerable to violence. Strategies that contribute to social transformation of this reality that has negatively affected the lives of these young people are necessary.

Keywords: Youth. Black. Periphery. Violence.

1 Psicólogo, Doutor em Psicologia Social. Professor da Faculdade Juazeiro do Norte-FJN e Faculdade Paraíso-FAP-CE. E-mail: orlandojrvm@yahoo.com.br
2 Psicólogo, Secretário de Saúde do Município de Cachoeira dos Índios-PB.
3 Enfermeira do Estratégia de Saúde da Família – ESF do Município de Aurora-CE.
INTRODUCTION

The composition “Todo camburão tem um pouco de navio negro”1 (“Every police paddy wagon looks a bit like a slave ship”) constitutes as a complaint about the racial prejudices, neglect and abandonment, as it portrays the condition of Black people in Brazil as a target of prejudice and police violence. However, in recent years, some segments of the Brazilian society have defended the thesis of racial democracy. Would this racial question denounced by Yuka¹ an overcome problem? This article sought to analyze how young Blacks perceive the violence to which they are exposed. The present study will consider as young those aged between 15 (fifteen) and 29 (twenty-nine) years, taking as a basis the definition of youth of the Youth Byelaw, in its Art. 1.

Various studies have shown significant growth of violence, especially the lethal, among the northeastern Brazilian states2,3,4,5,6. According to those studies, in this context, young Blacks gain prominence. This portion of the Brazilian population is part of a social segment, which, despite being the majority, works in less valued activities, receives lower wages and has often poor living conditions7,8. These authors add that differences of opportunity and racism deepened the Brazilian social inequality between whites and blacks.

Violence, as indicated previously, affects mainly young blacks, poor and residents in the periphery. Thus, the racial prejudice produces social inequality, since it results from the precarious realities of less-favored territories. It constitutes as a constant threat to the existence of the young black from the periphery. As Sawai9 draws attention, such reality restricts the experience, the mobility, the willingness, and imposes different forms of humiliation.

The violence spread to a point where it became natural, trivial, turning into a common element in the daily life of low-income black populations10,11. In this context, the abuse of authority on the part of members of the justice and police apparatus becomes a reality, which also derives from a system of prejudice against blacks. The racial violence, historically present in the Brazilian reality, brings, and thus far, profound consequences for the blacks.

This complex issue has historical roots and pervades conflicts of power between asymmetric groups. As Ferreira and Camargo12 highlight

Racial prejudice in Brazil was historically constructed from the interaction between two groups: the European colonizer who assumed a worldview considered superior and who, as a result, stigmatized other groups, in this case, non-whites, characterizing them as inferior quality, a belief that acquired the function of justifying the domination over them. (p. 376)

In this context, associations of a black person with qualities devalued in our society were disseminated. This stereotype can affect the identity of all segments of the black population, as it may internalize values socially seen as negative and nourished by attitudes of less value in relation to oneself. The reality of young blacks has been the target of different studies.

Luz Roa13, through ethnographic research, carried out with young producers of yerba mate (verbateros), residing in the suburbs of the cities of Obrero and Montecarlo (Argentina), identified constitution of stigmatized subjectivities, subjects who resist identifying themselves as black. Picanço14 analyzed, using the data from the National Household Sampling Survey - PNAD, how much the expansion of access to education at various levels altered the inequality of chances of young (18 to 29 years) whites and blacks, with higher and lower income in the access to higher education in Brazil. They identified that young blacks accumulate disadvantages with racial discrimination, resulting in fewer resources to competition.

Benício et al.15 analyzed the problem of homicides of adolescents and young adults in Fortaleza, capital of Ceará, located in northeastern Brazil. This object was analyzed both from the perspective of adolescents and young people, as professionals of social policies that work with such segments. These authors identified the increase of homicides resulting from the strengthening of factions and their territorial disputes, the policy of mass incarceration and erroneous investments in public security policies.

Rizzini and Limongi16 also exemplified the perceptions of young people about violence, through studies in a favela in the city of Niterói– RJ, especially after the deployment of Pacifying Police Units (UPPs). Soares and Ribeiro17, through bibliographic research, identified that the poor young blacks are more susceptible to the label of criminal by the police and the Judiciary. According to the authors, this question reinforces social inequalities and blocks the development of democracy, as the criminal justice system produces the criminal selectively.

Gomes and Laborne18 and Sinhoretto and Morais19 present statistical data on homicides of the black youth. Gomes and Laborne18 interpret these data in the light of the discussions on the whitecism and racism. These authors understand the violence as a poly-causal phenomenon and discuss racism as the macro-cause of this situation. They stress the role of the black youth in denouncing the situation of violence lived by them, going beyond the idea of extermination and politicizing it as genocide.

The violence issue, and how it affects more heavily young blacks, is not a new issue, nor little explored. However, it is a problem that persists and continues victimizing many young people. In addition to few studies contemplating the specificities of Paraíba state, especially in inland cities, as is the case of Cajazeiras – PB. Faced with the need to address the specificities of the inland of Paraíba, the present study intends to contemplate the subjective dimension of the racial issue, as it sought to give visibility and voice to young blacks from the peripheral neighborhoods, inviting them to problematize the everyday violence to which they are subject.

The theoretical support used for the present study was the Historical-Cultural Psychology of Vygotski20. The author in question understands that subjectivity cannot be analyzed disregarding the objective reality, once the concrete reality surrounding the subject inserted, different historical, political and cultural conditions produce changes not only in the representation of the reality around him/her, but also in his/her interiority.

In relation to this internal and external, social and individual relationship, Vygotski20 considers that the
internalization of cultural forms of behavior involves the reconstruction of the psychological activity, basing on the operations with signs. In this way, we establish relationships with others once we assume roles before someone, whereas that someone will assume roles before us. It is worth noting that the human social relationship is formed historically, through social struggles and relations of power, and in an inseparable manner, culturally.

**METHOD**

This is a qualitative study, with descriptive approach, conducted through a field research.

**Context and participants**

The participants were four young people, male and female. They self-reported as blacks and lived, for at least one year, in Cajazeiras, located in the high backwoods of Paraíba, northeastern Brazil. The number of participants in the study was established by means of the criterion of data saturation.

**Instruments and procedures for data collection**

The semi-structured interview was used, carried out individually. The guiding questions of the research focused on: conception of violence, experiences of violence, variables that interfere in the violence and racial issue in Brazil. Prior to beginning data collection, the research project was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee - REC at the Santa Maria College - FSM. Upon a favorable opinion (CAAE: 59818516.3.0000.5180), the first participant in the study was chosen by convenience criterion and the others were approached by means of the Snowball sampling technique, in this way, one participant indicated another to participate in the study.

After presentation of the research goals, the young people were invited to participate in the study, upon the signing of the Informed Consent Form and authorization to record the interviews.

**Data analysis**

The data were analyzed through content analysis, more specifically through the thematic analysis technique. The technique of validation by two judges both previously trained to do so was used. In this way, two researchers with experience in qualitative data analysis assisted in the analysis of the data from the interviews. With the interviews thoroughly transcribed, there was a floating reading of all the transcribed material and printed, to provide an idea of the content as a whole from the subjects’ discourse. There was a subsequent tabulation, which consisted in grouping similar themes. From the themes Violence Suffered, Violence Experiences and Variables that interfere in the violence, there was a coding, turning raw data from the participants’ interviews into categories representing the discourse of young blacks, clarifying the analyst about the characteristics of the text. The codification originated categories representing the meaning cores. The categories are presented and discussed, following the order from the most to the least representative.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The four young blacks that participated in the study, three were men and one was a woman. Their age ranged between 20 and 25 years. In relation to the occupation, one was own-account worker of handicrafts, one was a stockist at a furniture store, and two other, college students and had no paid activity.

The semantic categories that emerged from the participants’ speeches from the theme of Violence Suffered were: physical violence in the police approach, psychological violence and crime accusation. Regarding the theme Violence experiences, the category Suffering stood out. The theme Variables that interfere in the violence suffered was composed of the categories skin color, place of residence and social class.

**Violence experiences**

When study participants were asked whether they had already suffered some kind of violence, from empirical data, there emerged the categories physical violence in the police approach, psychological violence, and crime accusation. The category physical violence in the police approach reveals, from the participants’ speech, treatments with threats, intimidation, coercion and physical aggression. The category psychological violence denotes experiences of jocular and humiliating treatment by means of racial discrimination. The category crime accusation highlights a violence resulting from the labeling of young black as “thief” accused socially by skin color and incriminated by society. The reports below make clear how the study participants perceived these issues.

**In the police approaches, I have already been punched like twice, they have already approached me with a machine gun. I had no idea what was going on... the cops approached me so aggressively ... I am still afraid of going out any time. I am not afraid of being robbed, I am afraid of being approached (by the police)**

*(Young, man, 25 years old)*

**Of being called monkey or something like that, since the high school, we already suffer this violence, of being neglected, of being mocked, of being labeled like that anywhere**

*(Young, man, 22 years old)*

**What are you doing with my purse? I said, lady, I am doing nothing with your purse, my hands are in my purse, and she “no, I saw you putting your hands in my purse”**

*(Young, woman, 24 years old)*

The empirical data show that this violence is part of the everyday life of young blacks. Regarding the police action, there is an aggravating factor both by the fact of having been the predominant category, as well as being representatives of the State. The empirical data show racial profiling of police actions, which makes young blacks more approached by the police, receiving a more ostentatious treatment. This corroborates studies by Benício et al. and Soares and Ribeiro as they highlighted the social control carried out by the police that discriminate against poor and black individuals, building and
ratifying the criminal stereotype. This was also identified by Sinhoretto, since this author found that individuals approached by the police are preferably males, blacks and pardos, young and with little education.

This author adds that the police work leads to an increase of people imprisoned provisionally and to the overcrowding of prisons of subjects with the same profile: black and poor men. As Flores highlights, the treatment of these subjects is usually aggressive and violent. The simple fact of being black, young and poor, often makes them victims of racism on the part of the police, whose training in its essence allows inferring that the actions of police repression can be geared also to social cleansing, removing the undesirable social subjects.

The psychological violence category denotes that the study participants have been victims of racial discrimination since a young age. According to Schraiber, psychological violence is one that causes damage to the self-esteem, to the identity of the subject. This type of violence disqualifies such subjects, as they daily suffer insults and humiliations, which was also identified by Roa. This suffering of victims resulting from racial prejudice is humiliating.

The crime accusation category reveals that the young black grows with stigma, which makes them, regardless of committing a crime or not, to be seen as suspects. Coimbra stresses that, since the end of the 19th century, the Brazilian elites have built the concept of dangerousness based on the concept that some subjects, as they are poor blacks, residents of the periphery, could develop dangerous acts and join the crime. Such situations of discrimination produce strong emotional impact, as indicated previously. Processes are constructed socially and historically, and are not of human nature. It is the fruit of relations established in our society by blacks and whites, a violence of whites that causes suffering in blacks, as will be discussed in the next theme.

When study participants were asked about how they had felt when experiencing the violence they suffered, the discourses originated the suffering category. This category revealed ambiguous feelings of helplessness and anger, a confusing emotional shock that silences the subject. The statements presented below demonstrate how the participants of the study perceive this issue:

I did not know if I wanted to cry, remain in silence or leave there. I was so messed up, I spent days thinking that over. (Young, man, 25 years old)

You feel like punching the person, but at the same time, not, you have nothing to say. (Young, man, 20 years old)

It is worse than a punch...You feel destroyed, you keep thinking why that happens to you...but no answer comes. (Young, man, 22 years old)

I was so bad, so bad, I had no answer... to say to her. (Young, woman, 24 years old)

The empirical data unveil a pain that arises from the situation of being treated as inferior, the subaltern. These traumatic experiences of racial discrimination experienced since the early ages were also identified by other studies. Such a situation, as Sawaia reveals, the ethical tone of everyday experience, the denial socially imposed to possibilities to a portion of the population to move into public spaces and express desire and affection, which generates a pain resulting from the social devaluation, non-legitimacy. This suffering of the poor and young blacks from the periphery is considered a social pain, generated by social inequality. It is an ethical-political suffering managed in specific historical and social conditions, which transmutes into concrete subjective emotional experience.

Therefore, this suffering does not have its genesis in the young blacks, but in the intersubjectivities socially outlined. As Vgotski highlights, emotion and feeling are not absolute or logical entities of our psyche, but meanings rooted in everyday living, which affect our psychological system through the mediation of intersubjectivities.

Variables that interfere in the violence

The statements of the study participants about the theme Variables that interfere in the violence originated the categories skin color, place of residence and social class. The interviews show that, in the perspective of the young blacks that participated in the study, the skin color has greater emphasis when they suffer some kind of violence, especially the police violence. The skin color, in the perspective of the study participants, is associated with the condition of living in a neighborhood considered peripheral, and with the fact of being poor subjects, which puts them in a condition of greater vulnerability to violence. The snippets of the interviews below demonstrate how the participants of the study perceive this issue:

I saw them mostly speaking of my skin color... people who live in the periphery are more at risk of going through this, this violence issue ... whether we want it or not, as we are from a less-favored neighborhood and are black, we are more at risk. (Young, man, 25 years old)

The social class influences, but the skin color is heavier that the social class....If it is a mid-class white person, with nice clothes, they (referring to the police) do not even approach him, put against the wall, search him (Young, man, 20 years old)

When I tell about where I live, people say.. besides being poor and black, you live where you live (Young, woman, 24 years old)

The empirical data uncover humiliation, discrimination suffered by the participants of the study because they are black, poor and residents of the periphery. About this process of stigmatization of peripheries and criminalization of subjects considered subalterns, for being black and poor, Benicio et al.
highlight the role of the media, through police-related programs that influence the process of recognition of these young blacks as perpetrators of violence, potentiating a subjective adherence to barbarism, and making them targets of militarized security forces.

As Barros and colleagues highlight, one of the effects of the current dynamics of urban violence is the production of “bullied subjectivities”, supported by fears. It consists of processes and practices of dehumanization, objectification and non-dignification of the existence of black peoples. It dehumanizes certain existences, disabling them socially.

These social events are psychosocial issues that affect directly the constitution of subjects who experience and feel the problems of social exclusion. Vygotsky highlights the experience theoretical category as a unit of elements of the means and elements of personality. In this sense, Toassa adds that the experiences are not simple acts of interpretation; they are a consciousness-means relationship, constituting the unity of these two poles. It is a “prism” that refracts partial-total aspects of the means.

These findings disassemble the myth of racial democracy in Brazil, since “from slavery, at the beginning of the colonial period, until the current days, the black and mulatto populations have suffered an institutionalized, systematic genocide, although silent.” The 2018 Atlas of Violence illustrates the racial inequality in Brazil, attesting the concentration of murders in the black population. The data presented in this document show that, in the period between 2006 and 2016, the homicide rate of blacks grew by 23.1%, as of non-blacks decreased 6.8%.

The empirical data accessed through the interviews and the evidence identified in the relevant literature evidence that no one can deny the existence of a problem still to be overcome. The defense of the thesis of racial democracy, therefore, has no foundation. A structural racism is identified, which disables some segments of the population, limiting the experiences of these young blacks, their mobility, imposing different forms of humiliation. As a result of this unfair treatment, young blacks from peripheries experience a pain that arises from the situation of being treated as inferior, subaltern.

The aim here is not to blame the police and minimize the impact of social inequalities in the lives of young blacks from the periphery, but to draw attention precisely to the responsibility of the State before this problem. Analyses involving other social actors, such as police officers, managers and professionals of social policies that deal with young blacks, are a consciousness aspect of the means relationship, constituting the unity of these two poles. It is a “prism” that refracts partial-total aspects of the means.

CONCLUSION

Data accessed from the interviews identified that the young participants considered that, once they are black, poor and residents of the periphery, they are victims of different types of violence, particularly regarding the violence in police approaches and psychological violence. Such reality affects the lives of these young people, causing suffering, because the situations daily experienced in interpersonal relations, marked by the police violence, humiliation, suffering, for being black and poor, directly affects the young people who participated in this study. The passage from the social to the psychological is a dialectical process, and such experiences are mediated by mechanisms that oppress and dehumanize such subjects.

Before the findings of the present study, it is necessary to not only understand this suffering and contemplate it, but also to give visibility to the same, in order to provide it with a scientific character, to the point of being able to boost strategies that contribute to socially transforming this reality. In this way, the universities should focus on the living conditions of young, black and poor people from the peripheries, by means of a performance and production of knowledge attentive to poverty and structural racism that directly affects the lives of these subjects. In order to promote effective changes in these unjust realities, contributing to a structural transformation of the capitalist society.

REFERENCES


