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Indigenous Peoples and Racism within Educational Environments: An Overview of Occurrences in Brazil from 2003 to 2023

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I graduated in Social Sciences from *Universidade Estadual Paulista* [São Paulo State University] “Júlio de Mesquita Filho” (1997). I did Master (2001) and Doctorate (2008) on Social Sciences (Anthropology) from *Pontifícia Universidade Católica* de São Paulo – PUC-SP [Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo]. Since 2014, I am Assistant Professor at the *Universidade Federal de São Paulo* – UNIFESP [Federal University of São Paulo], Brazil, where I am one of coordinators of Kaapora Chair of Traditional and Non-Hegemonic Knowledge. Throughout my career, I have conducted anthropological research in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples — particularly the Kaingang, Krahô, and Maxakali — focusing on racism, the social role of alcohol, violence, and the colonial subjugation of marginalised groups.

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Abstract

Several analyses focus on racism in Brazilian society, but only a few have delved into how it specifically affects Indigenous Peoples. This work aims to address this gap by analysing the racist episodes in the educational environment reported in *Violence against Indigenous People in Brazil*, a series of analytical reports published annually by CIMI (Missionary Indigenist Council). After reading and systematizing all reported events, it was possible to identify how widespread this phenomenon is, as cases in the educational environment were documented every investigated year, across all educational levels and various types of facilities. These data reveal that racism against Indigenous Peoples can manifest in different patterns, and be perpetrated by both public servants and private agents. However, irrespective of the diverse contexts, racism remains a constant form of violence against Indigenous Peoples in Brazil.

Keywords: racism; Indigenous Peoples; educational establishments; Brazil; human rights.

Subject classification codes: include these here if the journal requires them

Introduction

There are several research on racial relations in Brazil; but only a few address incidents involving Indigenous Peoples. While several factors contribute to this gap¹, the present initiative seeks to bridge this divide. Aligning with recent studies about racial relations and Indigenous Peoples (Belaviqua 2017; Lima 2017; Milanez et al. 2019; Peixoto

¹ Some studies justified this choice by pointing to the small proportion of Indigenous people within the total Brazilian population (IBGE 2019, 4). Additionally, Brazilian thought typically applies the concept of race to Black people, reserving the notion of ethnicity for Indigenous Peoples (Arruti 1997, 9).

2017a, 2017b; Ribeiro 2022, 2023; Troquez 2022), this study focuses on cases of racism in educational environments targeting Indigenous Peoples.

The analysis is grounded data from *Violence against indigenous peoples in Brazil*, a series of analytical reports published by CIMI (Missionary Indigenist Council)². Since 1996, CIMI has been compiling episodes of violence against Indigenous Peoples, covering the entire country. The organisation utilizes various sources, primarily relying on journalistic articles issued on digital platforms, and information provided by CIMI's missionaries agents. Published annually, these reports began compiling racist incidents against Indigenous Peoples in 2003, with the latest edition focusing on incidents from 2023 (CIMI 1996-2024).

After reading all the episodes, it was possible to identify some resemblances among certain elements of them. However, no prior classification was used in this work; instead, similar events were assembled into particular groups through a careful examination of the material. At times, a set was constructed, but the group proved too vague and had to be broken down. On other occasions, the category was too small and needed to be compared with others, exploring common points to create a larger group. In short, each category emerged from reading and comparing the episodes, with each group formed according to the similarities identified (see Table 1).

Initially, an attempt was made to classify each event into a single group. However, this proved impossible, as the groups were not formed based solely on the

² The Cimi is related to the CNBB (National Conference of Bishops of Brazil), a permanent institution that congregates the Catholic Church Bishops in Brazil. Created in 1972, it was established from a shift in missionary action, with the principal goal of "denouncing the structures of domination, violence, and injustice" against the Indigenous Peoples (Cf <https://cimi.org.br/o-cimi/>, consulted 24 February 2024 at 15:30, translation by the author).

same type of manifestation. Some were organised by the form of racist expression (such as hate speech, anonymous comments made on websites and social media, verbal aggression, and physical aggression), while others were grouped by the type of agent responsible for the racist act (public servant or private individuals). Two additional categories were based on the location of the racist incident (school environment or urban space). Additionally, several racist incidents exhibit multiple attributes, and since there was no compelling reason to prioritise one aspect over another, each episode was included in all relevant categories.

This paper results from an in-depth examination of all 66 incidents that occurred in educational environments. This includes racist situations that occurred in classrooms, other school buildings, educational and administrative facilities, and the circumstances related to the commute of Indigenous students to schools.

In fact, the formal education institutions are essential in modern life, as the vast majority of the population spend several years in these establishments. In Brazil, 93% of the adult population are literate (IBGE 2023a), and with all the time spent on these activities, the school environment plays a central role in the development and replication of social values and attitudes.

This aspect has always been investigated by the social scientists, albeit with different approaches, even in the earliest periods of the discipline. Émile Durkheim (1956, 71), for example, emphasised that education “consists of a methodical socialization of the young generation” by adults, responsible for forming the social being that live in each of us. To Talcott Parsons (1959, 297), in turn, the coexistence inside school class “is an agency through which individual personalities are trained to be motivationally and technically adequate to the performance of adult roles”.

According to Pierre Bourdieu and Claude Passeron (1990), the school system can produce and perpetuate various social inequalities. However, other approaches postulate that a critical education is the better way to address this issue. Paulo Freire (2005, 47), for instance, stated that “to surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity”.

Various social movements have embraced this latter perspective, leading to a growing demand for members of underprivileged groups to access formal education. However, they have discovered that racial oppression persists within educational settings, as highlighted by Moodie, Maxwell, and Rudolph (2019) in their analysis of racism against Aboriginal Peoples in Australian schools, and by Denis and Hampton (2002) in their study of racism faced by students from Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

As can be seen below, the Indigenous Movement in Brazil has been fighting to gain access to formal education in order to improve their lives. They have achieved some success in this effort, with an increasing number of Indigenous people enrolled in schools. Still, they have also been exposed to racism in these environments, making important to examine how this manifest. To address this, information was gathered from the CIMI’s reports, identifying the name of each Indigenous group that experienced racism, the individual or group responsible for these acts, and the type of educational setting where the offences occurred. Subsequently, various forms of racist manifestations were identified, enabling their theoretical analysis. These procedures have clarified the connections between racism in the educational environment and the broader sociocultural context.

1. The Indigenous Movement and Its Struggles to Establish Their Educational Rights

The Indigenous Movement has been demanding access to formal education since its inception. Undoubtedly, a prominent goal for Indigenous Peoples is to reclaim their lands (Luciano 2006), but they have also fought to secure other rights, particularly acceptance of their multiple cultures. In essence, Indigenous Peoples seek recognition for their diversity, freely sustaining their lives as specific entities. Equally important for them is to establish a dialogue with knowledge and techniques developed by the coloniser.

All these elements were present even during the inaugural step of the Indigenous Movement in Brazil, when a small group of leaders met in April 1974, under the support of CIMI (see Figure 1). It was the first occasion when Indigenous Peoples from nine different communities gathered to get to know each other better and speak freely about their aspirations and challenges. The participants did not establish any common demand in this first initiative but a priest named Iasi described the meeting in a short note. According to him:

from the beginning, it was clear that Indigenous knew very well what they were – people – and what their rights were: to own their lands, to live according to their traditions, to have the opportunity to improve their techniques, their knowledge, and, finally, to be able of to face the new living conditions imposed by “development”. (CIMI 1974, 1, translation by the author)

This first initiative did not directly allude to the educational field. Instead, it mentioned aspects whose intervention implies a multicultural educational policy. According to Daniel Munduruku, an Indigenous leader, thinker, and writer:

The [Indigenous Movement] proposed a dream about autonomy, self-sustainability, and self-government. To minimally shape this dream, it was necessary to master Occidental tools, **which were mainly brought by the school and religious institutions** [...] [which were] increasingly present at the Indigenous settlements in Brazil. (Munduruku 2012, 193, bold and translation by the author)

In fact, from the 1970s to the mid-1980s, more than 50 Indigenous Assemblies took place (CIMI 2014b; Bicalho 2010), with Indigenous Peoples from diverse local contexts establishing common ground and coordinating actions on a nationwide scale. Among these efforts, educational demands have consistently been central to their agenda. The actions undertaken on this issue have been fruitful, influencing Brazilian society as a whole and changing how Indigenous Peoples are perceived by the country's population (Munduruku 2012). Additionally, their presence within educational establishments has grown, as will be detailed below. However, this process has had an unintended consequence, as these persons have been exposed to a wide range of racist acts.

2. General Aspects of Formal Education for Indigenous People in Brazil

There were 400 episodes of racism in the CIMI's reports, which represents 19.05 cases per year. These incidents occurred in 24 states and the Federal District, indicating the national extent of the phenomenon. However, this low number certainly does not encompass all racist manifestations against Indigenous Peoples in Brazil.

According to the 2022 Census, Brazil has 1,693,535 Indigenous inhabitants, accounting for 0.83% of the total country's population (203.080.756). The Indigenous self-declared population increased by 88.82% in last Census cycle (IBGE 2023b, 89), as there were 896.917 Indigenous inhabitants in 2010, accounting for 0.47% of the total

population at that time (IBGE 2012). Additionally, 80.5% of municipalities had at least one Indigenous inhabitant in 2010, while by 2022, this figure had risen to 86.75% (IBGE, 2023b: 94). It is unlikely that this minority, living across the country under varying conditions, experienced only a few hundred incidents over 21 years. This discrepancy is likely attributable to underreporting. Nevertheless, CIMI's publications have gathered nationwide data over this period, providing a sample that can illustrate the main trends of this phenomenon.

The episodes in the educational environment accounted for 16.5% of the racist incidents (see Chart 1). Still, there were differences during the years, as these occurrences represented 30.8% of the incidents in 2015, 27.8% in 2019, and 27.3% in 2012; while in 2004 and 2020 this group of cases accounted for 6.7% of the total. There are, however, occurrences within educational environments every year and across all school levels³.

As Chart 2 reveals, the cases in elementary schools account for 31.1% of incidents, while occurrences in the secondary school stage comprise 23% of the total, and in higher education represent 19.7%. Another 19.7% of incidents happened in

³ The public Brazilian school system mandatorily offers 3 stages: preschool (*educação infantil*), elementary school (*ensino fundamental*), and secondary school (*ensino médio*). The preschool comprises the early childhood education of children under 6 years. The elementary stage comprises nine school years for children ages 6 to 14 years old. This school stage is followed by the secondary school, which comprises 3 years (15 to 17 years). Only those who have completed secondary school are allowed to attend higher education (*ensino superior*). That stage is not mandatory, but Brazilian states and the Federal Union have various institutions offering graduate and postgraduate degrees.

multiple educational establishments, and in 9.8% of the total, it was impossible to identify the location⁴.

Indigenous students were targeted on 56 occasions, an impressive 84.8% of racist cases in the educational environment. Nonetheless, the entire Indigenous community was attacked in 18 incidents, while the Indigenous teachers experienced five acts of racism⁵. There were racist attacks against twenty-eight different groups, while on 19 occurrences, Indigenous People without a specific filiation were targeted. Nine different native peoples suffered multiple assaults, but the Guarani People suffered the most, with 11 episodes (see Chart 3).

Only four racist incidents occurred in private school establishments, which is not surprising, as most Indigenous in Brazil have been studying in institutions settled by or granted by the State⁶. In the Colonial era, the Portuguese Crown delegated this task to religious congregations, notably the Society of Jesus (Ferreira Jr 2010). However, these missionaries were the legitimate State representative, and their schools were official institutions. In this sense, as Márcio Silva and Marta Azevedo pointed out, “the political submission of the native inhabitants, the invasion of their traditional lands, the pillage

⁴ Some descriptions detailed the location and educational stage, but others only provided the school's name. In these situations, I considered all the school stages offered. When only the city's name was present, I attempted to retrieve the school's name and the school stage it offered, but in some cases, it was impossible. Therefore, the sum of mentions by educational stage may not align with the number of cases in the school environment.

⁵ It is important to note that a single case can impact different people, be made by multiple agents, and occur in more than one place. Therefore, the sum of affected subjects, agents responsible for these acts, or locations may not align with the total number of cases.

⁶ According to the 2022 School Census, only 34 private schools offered classes for Indigenous Peoples, representing just 0.95% of the total provision for Indigenous education (Brazil 2023)

and destruction of their wealth, etc. have been, since the XVI Century, the result of some practices that linked political control methods to the civilizational school activity” (Silva and Azevedo 1995, 149, translation by the author).

Brazil became a republic in 1889, and the state separated from the Catholic Church. However, a secular national education system was established only in the 20th century. After that, despite some clerical activities, the secular school became the official state model and the prevailing reality throughout most of the country.

However, not all Indigenous communities had permanent schools, as all public services were offered by the official indigenist department, first by SPI (Indigenous Protection Service) and since, 1969 by FUNAI (Indigenous National Foundation). The indigenist agency did not dispose of enough personnel and resources to execute all its tasks. Furthermore, indigenist education replicated most of the colonial practices, with the main school goal of integrating the Indigenous Peoples into the “national communion”. In these terms, a seminar about Indigenous education in the late 1970s years concluded that the "present situation is unstable and chaotic, which leads to fear of the complete dismantling of State obligations to defend the Indigenous People" (Silva 1979, 158, translation by the author).

Indeed, a consistent educational system for Indigenous Peoples began to take shape after the Brazilian Constitution was promulgated in 1988, following the efforts of the Indigenous Movement, which emerged during that period (Bicalho 2010; Luciano 2006; Munduruku 2012). This legal milestone was the first to assure Indigenous Peoples the right to preserve their traditional way of life. It also guaranteed the right to differentiated education, as the Brazilian Constitution affirms, in the 2º paragraph of article 210, that “Indigenous communities are also able to use their mother languages and their particular learning processes” in school (Brazil 1988, translation by the

author). Additionally, the school curriculum should respect and incorporate principles from diverse Indigenous Peoples, in order to create "an education that allows those voices 'silenced at the curriculum' to be heard" (Troquez 2022, 109, translation by the author). In short, as shown by Grupioni:

Indigenous school education became a relevant political demand for the Indigenous Peoples, the Indigenous movement, and those who supported them. It is no longer a secondary agenda and has become more relevant as long as it mobilises different actors, institutions, and resources [...] In the present day, we do not debate if the Indigenous Peoples must have a school or not but, rather, what kind of school they should have (Grupioni 2000, 143, translation by the author).

The teachers should receive training according to each Indigenous collectivity because the "teaching and learning processes, as well as worldviews, are also diverse", in the words of Indigenous teacher Fausto Mandulão (Mandulão 2006, 217, translation by the author). In that sense, the Brazilian government established a public policy to train Indigenous teachers in dialogue with Indigenous communities and their ancestral knowledge (Grupioni 2006; Sampaio, Isidoro & Paula 2018).

Moreover, other aspects of the Brazilian educational system also changed, as article 231 of the Constitution establishes that Indigenous Peoples have the right to possess "their specific social organization, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions, as well their original rights over the lands they traditionally occupy". This implies that Brazil has multiple cultures, and all cultural manifestations must be recognized and celebrated. Thus, in 1996 a new Law of Guidelines and Bases of Brazilian National Education (LDE) was promulgated (Brazil 1996). After two changes in that law, in 2004 and 2008, it became mandatory for every elementary and secondary Brazilian

school to teach the history and culture of Africa, African-American Brazilians and Indigenous Peoples. In that sense,

when Brazilian Indigenous and Black descendants of Africans ask for the teaching of their respective histories and cultures throughout the educational system and demand that education be made accessible for their people, they are thinking of more than recognition and reparations. They would like to affect and influence the education of all Brazilians by adding a multicultural perspective to Brazilian education. (Silva and Araújo-Olivera 2009, 526)

Other marks reinforced this movement, notably, the ethnic-racial quotes law, created at the beginning of the 21st century (Lehmann 2018). In short, a new national Indigenous educational policy started in the 1990s, aiming to address some of the Indigenous Peoples' demands. From that point, the Indigenous school is "based on principles such as bilingualism, specificity, and interculturality aiming, among other things, to guarantee the physical, linguistic, and cultural survival of Indigenous People, to support their exercise of rights, and to make it possible for them to communicate and interact with other ethnic, racial, and social groups" (Silva and Araújo-Olivera 2009, 528).

These changes imply that the Brazilian State has assumed several responsibilities toward Indigenous Peoples, with an increasing number of Indigenous persons accessing formal education. Only in 1999, the Indigenous School Census (Brazil 2001) was concluded. According to this first nationwide research about schools on Indigenous Lands, there were 1,392 schools within these territories, with 90,459 Indigenous students enrolled. However, the 2022 National School Census shows an increase in numbers, with 3,597 school establishments offering Indigenous education, 3,541 of which are located on official Indigenous Lands. This number represents around

2% of total basic educational establishments in Brazil, with 300,658 students enrolled, the vast majority situated in rural areas (268,096).

Unfortunately, this public policy not only resulted in positive effects but also created numerous difficulties. Moreover, it raises disputes about who is recognised as a member of an Indigenous Peoples, both by Brazilian authorities and private agents. Unsurprisingly, there is a spontaneous tendency to establish the Indigenous identity based on racist prejudices, as it will be shown below. Additionally, it is necessary to verify if the educational staff is adequately prepared to handle differentiated education. Let us start by examining the last point.

3. Questions Related to The Implementation of Diversified Schools Within Indigenous Communities

According to CIMI's reports, **public servants** were involved in 40 of racist acts, accounting to 60.6% of incidents in the educational environment (see Chart 4). They refused to offer proper public service on 23 occasions, representing 92% of omissions that occurred inside the educational environment. Teachers committed 20 episodes, accounting for half of those made by public servants. They perpetrated 8 racist acts in elementary schools, which represents 34.8% of total occurrences at this school stage. Teachers also account for 29.4% of racist incidents in secondary schools (5 of 17). On the other hand, the school's administrative staff committed 21.2% of the racist acts, while 19.7% of them was made by higher-level bureaucrats, allocated to cabinet secretaries in the states, or the Education Ministry.

It is worth noting that several racist acts were committed by more than one agent. For example, in 2009, Guarani students enrolled in elementary school were

insulted by different persons. The incident occurred in Caarapó, a city of Mato Grosso do Sul state, where:

They report that the scholar bus does not wait for their children several times, even when they are at the bus stop at the correct time. In a situation, the bus driver did not stop even after realising that some children were running after the bus.

Discrimination continues in the classroom by other students and even by the teachers (CIMI 2010, 91, translation by the author).

The episode illustrates how Indigenous Peoples are not welcomed within common places, such as the educational environment. In that sense, it is worth examining the recruiting and training process for educational staff, to verify if any precautions have been taken to avoid discriminatory behaviour.

In fact, in the 1990s, several public policies for Indigenous Peoples were conceived and implemented, with numerous individuals hired to work on them. However, the majority did not receive adequate training to address this challenge. Others had already employed in educational establishments but were reassigned to work with Indigenous communities without sufficient preparation. Additionally, anti-racist guidance was not common when those public policies were implemented, after the end of a long dictatorship in Brazil. In that sombre period, there was no respect for civil rights, and multiple murders and other violence against the Indigenous People occurred (see Brazil 2014). Over time, the Brazilian government has developed a recruitment and training policy for individuals working in Indigenous affairs, though it falls short of encompassing even the school staff⁷.

⁷ In 2022, Brazil had 1,833,276 teachers in public schools, the majority of whom were in municipal establishments (1,216,071) where resources are limited, making anti-racism training less likely.

Nonetheless, proper public servant training cannot solve all these problems, as a normative change alone is unable to alter personal attitudes. Notably, several public servants are recruited from regions near Indigenous communities, often from areas with intense conflict against the Indigenous Peoples (Ribeiro 1986). Additionally, numerous Brazilian sociocultural environments can manifest severe discrimination against Indigenous Peoples (Cardoso de Oliveira 1996). In short, those who have been raised and/or lived in these places can participate in different racist acts.

As a result, it is unsurprising that individuals unassociated with school establishments accounted for 21.2% of total cases, participating in 7 out of 12 events that occurred at multiple schools. This can be seen in the 2014 incident against Kaingang People at Faxinalzinho, in Rio Grande do Sul state, when:

the Indigenous people report facing daily persecution, threats, and prejudices since the conflict involving the Kandóia community and small farmers began. According to Cleci Kaingang, all Indigenous workers were dismissed from their jobs without any valid reason. When Indigenous Peoples walks around the city, they are called names in racist attacks. At school, the teacher prohibited Indigenous students from speaking their language and, due to persecution, some children no longer want to attend classes (CIMI 2015, 110-1, translation by the author).

On the other side, students committed 31.8% of racist acts, with incidents at all educational levels, and within school establishments held by municipalities, states, and federal authorities. Almost all acts committed by students targeted fellow Indigenous students (18 out of 21 occurrences), as it can be seen from the 2015 episode that happened in Boa Vista, the capital of Roraima state, when:

a group of four indigenous students at the Federal University of Roraima [...] denounced the fact that they were being discriminated by other students. The other

students mocked the Indigenous students' customs and characteristics, shouting rude and insulting words and discriminating [against] them for the way they ate and dressed and for their physical features. Some got up from the table where they all were saying that they would not mix with Indians (CIMI 2016, 116).

Let us take a closer look at how the public educational system is formally structured in Brazil. The responsibility for elementary and secondary school levels lies with states and municipalities. According to the 2022 School Census, there are 151,882 basic schools in Brazil, of which 122,469 offer elementary education, and 29,413 offer secondary education. Municipalities are responsible for 62.4% of elementary schools, with states running 17.41%. On the other hand, states are in charge of 67.83% of secondary establishments, while municipalities are responsible for only 0.73% of these schools. Federal institutions represent only 0.04% of elementary schools and 2% of secondaries. The private institutions, by their turn, offered 20.15% of elementary schools and 29.39% of secondaries (Brazil 2023).

In this context, Indigenous schools in Brazil are predominantly administered by municipalities and states. Consequently, it is not surprising that the majority of racist incidents have occurred within these school systems (see Chart 5), as 40.9% of racist episodes occurred in municipal establishments, while 43.9% happened in state establishments. Prefectures were responsible for 12 out of 23 elementary schools with reported racist incidents but only 3 out of 17 at the secondary level. However, 14 out of the 17 secondary school incidents and 10 out of the 23 primary school racist events occurred at state-run educational institutions. In that regard, "the success of legal measures that take into account the rights of marginalized groups is influenced by the prejudices and representations which underestimate and demean them. Thus, municipal and state powers responsible for implementing the law often fail to generate the

necessary conditions for the objectives that it is proposed should be attained” (Silva and Araújo-Oliveira 2009, 528).

Only 16.9% of the episodes happened in federal institutions, where that the majority of establishments are universities. 2008 registered the first incident at the university level, but 10 of the 11 episodes at that educational level happened after 2015, as it also took some time for Indigenous Peoples to gain access to higher education. Additionally, almost a fifth of students' racist acts occurred in higher degree courses (4 out of 21). Furthermore, 3 of 4 of the anonymous occurrences happened in federal universities, as we can see after a 2017 case, occurred in the city of Cruzeiro, at Acre state, when:

the pedagogy student at the Federal University of Acre, Floresta campus, was surprised by a typed letter left next to her belongings during a class break. Loaded with hatred and prejudice, the person claims that the indigenous girl will never pass a public examination and that she has an enemy in the course, whose goal is to torment her until she gives up the course. An excerpt from the letter reads “I do not know who had the brilliant idea of mixing normal people with indigenous people. Because that’s a disgusting race. Take off your mask, girl. Stop being that obnoxious, filthy person that you are.” (CIMI 2018, 110).

After seeing another example of a segregationist attitude, these occurrences indicate how hostile the academic environment can be to Indigenous people.

4. Types Of Racist Manifestations in The School Environment

The most common racist incident in educational environment was **verbal aggression**, with 30 episodes or 45.5% of occurrences (Chart 6). These group include face-to-face

situations where the condition of Indigenous Peoples is attacked through the use of swear words, mockery, and other derogatory expressions that reinforce prejudices. Even if not all descriptions detail the expressions used by the aggressors, some episodes manifest disdain for the Indigenous condition, often calling those insulted as "fake Indigenous". In other cases, the main claim is to separate Indigenous Peoples from others, presuming they are unfit to coexist with "normal" persons.

We can see some of those images in a 2008 case against the Terena people in Campo Grande, the capital of Mato Grosso do Sul state, when:

two individuals were leafleting, summoning the students for a mobilization against the Indian Statute and speaking pejorative phrases such as "Indians have to live in the forest because they transmit diseases". Knowing that there was an Indigenous woman in the group, the attackers started yelling at her, humiliating her in front of everyone. Twice the young woman tried to file a complaint at the mixed Public Security unit, and the agents who attended her refused, claiming that what had happened "was nothing" (CIMI 2009, 91, translation by the author).

This incident not only involved a ferocious verbal insult but also highlighted how racial or ethnic status can affect access to public service. The aggression was downplayed by police officers, but it likely would have been treated differently if the victim had been identified as a "white" woman. This leads us to reflect on the **service omissions derived from Indigenous identity**, the second most frequent racist manifestation, accounting for 37.9% of incidents in the school environment. 92% of these occurrences were committed by public servants, either when Indigenous status was not recognized or when their identity led to the refusal of access to a public service.

As shown above, the 1988 Brazilian constitution unprecedentedly assured rights to Indigenous Peoples, and this has even been impacting Brazil's racial and ethnic

composition. During the 1990s, the Indigenous population increased by 10.8% per year (IBGE 2005), in a movement that was described as “atypical” in an IBGE publication (2012, 4). Nevertheless, according to some studies (Perz, Warren, Kennedy 2008; IBGE 2005, 2023), this growth was associated with **ethnic reclassification**, defined as someone change their racial-ethnic declaration between each census cycle – i.e., when a person decides to identify as “Indigenous” while before he/she had self-stated as “*pardo*” [mixed-race], or vice-versa. It had been possible as the Brazilian context of the 1990s was characterized by “a more appropriate moment to the Indigenous, who were emerging from invisibility in a quest for better living conditions, especially seeking access to government incentives” (IBGE 2012, 4, translation by the author).

However, the growth among Indigenous inhabitants was less remarkable in the next Census cycle, as this population was 734,127 in 2000 and increased to 896,917 in 2010. Thought, the number of self-declared Indigenous people had another significant increase in the last Census, with an annual growth rate of 7.4% between 2010 and 2022 (IBGE 2023b, 89) – while the overall Brazilian population growth was much tighter in the same period, , with a total increase of 6.5%, or a mere 0.52% per year. In summary, these data suggest that ethnic reclassification has been shaping the composition of the Brazilian population, at least in recent decades. This shift in self-declaration marks a departure from a historical trend, as Indigenous people previously concealed their identities to avoid colonial violence. Today, however, they are actively fighting for the recognition of the multiple ways of their identity.

In this context, some racist incidents could represent an attempt to interfere with this process. By making it more difficult for Indigenous people to assert their identity, particularly by associating specific physical or cultural traits with Indigenous Peoples. We can see it in a 2005 episode, when a teacher from an elementary school in São

Sebastião, Alagoas state, denied the Indigenous character of the victim because she “has not straight hair” (CIMI 2006, p. 123, translation by the author).

In summary, these manifestations aim to establish racist stereotypes as a prerequisite for the full recognition of an identitarian status. In contrast, the Indigenous Peoples have complex and diverse ways of life, with various practices and patterns guiding their self-declaration and how they structure their communal belonging. In this sense, numerous Indigenous leaders and thinkers have been protesting against this lack of recognition, as exemplified by the words of Indigenous activist Taily Terena:

we [the Indigenous People] recognise ourselves as a unit, but not for what we have on the outside but for what we have on the inside: belonging and respect for Mother Earth. It is necessary to understand that within what is usually categorised as "Indigenous," there are Kayapó, Terena, Pataxó, Xavante, Kaingang, Tikuna, etc. The Indigenous populations of Brazil (and the world) are of different colours, ways of life, and forms. In Brazil, there are black, white, dark, blonde, curly-haired, thin, fat, tall, and short Indians, and of the most diverse personalities... We need to break with the image of the Amazonian good savage, in which we are defined by the strong, healthy body of red skin, straight black hair, and black eyes (Terena 2019, 74-5, translation by the author)

However, even when the Indigenous condition is unquestioned, not necessarily adequate educational service is offered. Typically, the multiple Indigenous Peoples' way of life is not respected, with the prohibition of speaking the Indigenous language as a common incident, as it can be seen in a 2011 episode in Campo Grande when “three students were prohibited by the school direction of speaking their mother language, the Guarani, while in the school unit facilities. According to them, they signed a minute book formally assuming this commitment” (CIMI 2012: 90, translation by the author).

Indigenous teachers can receive similar treatment while working, as demonstrated by the 2008 incident in Alta Floresta D'Oeste, a city in Rondônia state, where “the pedagogical advisor, to evaluate the performance of the indigenous teacher in the classroom, and for not knowing the Tupari mother tongue, prohibited the teacher from using the indigenous language in his classes” (CIMI 2009, 92, translation by the author). Hence, these racist episodes reveal the deep of the issue, as the educational environment replicates multiple aspects of colonial relationships, despite the efforts of Indigenous Peoples to express themselves in their many languages (hooks 2015).

On the other hand, **hate incitement** was the third most frequent racist manifestation, with 16 incidences (24.2% of the total). The typical occurrence is a racist speech given by someone in a prominent position. Different agents committed those acts, but teachers had particular importance in the educational environment, accounting for 37.5% of these actions. We can see it in a 2017 episode against the Arara people in Careiro da Várzea, a city in Amazonas state, when: “the teacher at the school in Vista Alegre made racist speeches against indigenous people, saying that ‘she did not like Indians because Indians stink’” (CIMI 2017, 110). This incident demonstrates that the racialization of Indigenous Peoples is not solely based on skin colour, as is frequently the case with black and mixed-blooded persons in Brazil. Instead, it was the body smell that was used to undermine the Indigenous condition.

Physical aggression accounted for only 13.6% of cases; however, some of these incidents had the most severe consequences, as illustrated by a 2016 episode in Porto Alegre, the capital of the Rio Grande do Sul state. On that occasion, “the Indigenous veterinary student was punched and kicked by a group of engineering students in front of the student’s dorm, sustaining serious injuries to his body. The indigenous student was insulted by the other students, who would have asked what indigenous people were

doing in that dorm. The indigenous student tried to argue but was attacked” (CIMI 2017, 102). In short, these occurrences highlight the severity of the struggles to respect the status of Indigenous peoples in contemporary Brazil.

5. Exploring Some Principles Concerning Racism Against Indigenous People

After carefully exam the data shown, it is impossible to denies that racism is deeply ingrained in the educational environment. Unfortunately, no Indigenous person seem to be exempt from this issue, as incidents have been reported across all school levels and in institutions managed by municipalities, states, and the federal government.

Remarkably, an overwhelming 89.4% of the compiled episodes occurred in urban contexts, which sharply contrasts with the location of Indigenous schools, as 89.16% of these are situated in rural areas. However, this does not imply that all these racist incidents occurred in the 32,562 urban Indigenous schools. Rather, the data suggests these events are intertwined with a broader social framework, closely linked to urban life in Brazil.

In recent articles (Ribeiro 2022, 2023), I have examined how racism impact Indigenous Peoples in urban contexts, affecting the construction of their identities. Racism can fracture collective belonging, and in the absence of these bonds, it becomes easier to impose adverse social conditions on isolated individuals, as emphasized by Bonfil-Batalla (1979) about the Mexican context of 1970s. In that sense, “it is precisely this collective enunciation that racism tries to silence” in the present situation (Ribeiro 2023, 80, translation by the author). By pressuring people to define themselves as mixed-blood, this may contribute to the reproduction of hierarchies and other forms of exploitation.

In fact, **racial insults** play a prominent role in this process. If we encompass verbal aggressions, anonymous racial insults on the internet, and hate speech, we have 39 out of 66 episodes in educational environment. While these actions may take different forms and involve varied content, they often exhibit common patterns. When Antônio Guimarães (2000, 12, translation by the author) studied racist insults in Brazil by the end of the last century, he found that “the function of the racial insult is to institutionalize a racial inferior. This means that the insult must be capable of, symbolically: a) making the insulted person return to an inferior place already historically constituted, and b) re-instituting that”.

The racist insults examined in this article share a similar connotation, with a one-third of the acts involving swearing at Indigenous Peoples, or the repetition of racist slurs and prejudices. In 11.5% of these incidents, the aggressors mocked these peoples. In other cases, the perpetrators labelled them as bandits or as incapable of self-governance. Additionally, in two incidents, expressions of outright hate were observed. In summary, this demonstrates that racist insults impose the image of Indigenous Peoples as second-class beings.

Nevertheless, 15 racist insults were intended to expel Indigenous Peoples from public spaces or hinder their regular participation within educational environments. These incidents demonstrate an effort to portray the Indigenous People as incompatible with everyday life in public spaces, particularly in urban contexts.

Indeed, the denial of the Indigenous Peoples has shaped much of Brazilian identity (Ribeiro, 2015). In a broader sense, it reflects what Darcy Ribeiro (2000, 94-112) termed the **De-Indianization** process, which was particularly significant during the early stages of colonisation. According to him, this process refers to the lack of an identitarian status for mixed-race individuals born out of colonisation process. These

persons could not be fully recognised as Portuguese, nor could they be integrated into the Indigenous systems of belonging. In other words, they were perceived as lacking a clear identity, essentially seen as empty entities in that regard.

Therefore, the official narrative derived from this context only included the Indigenous Peoples in the early period of the Brazilian Nation, emphasizing the role of Native women in the proliferation of the new mixed-blooded inhabitants (Freyre 1986, in especial the chapter II “The native in the formation of the Brazilian family”). As a result, Indigenous Peoples have been perceived as static beings, excluded from the present time, with “the most common representation of Indigenous Peoples always situates them as something referring to the past, whether it be the beginning of the humanity or the early chapters of Brazilian history”, as João Pacheco de Oliveira (1999, 196, translation from the author) highlights.

Countless Brazilian inhabitants have been formed by this notion, rendering the contemporary condition of Indigenous Peoples becomes inconceivable for them. As a result, they struggle to tolerate their presence in educational institutions and urban commonplaces, leading to the calls for the expulsion of Indigenous Peoples as a seemingly “spontaneous” response to the current situation.

This segregationist perspective is exemplified in a 2013 incident involving the Tenharim People in the Amazonas state. The episode unfolded during a local conflict, leading the residents of Manicoré City to publish a manifesto stating that: “they no longer want any Indigenous people studying in the community’s schools, and they want the [Indigenous] settlements to be removed from the banks of the Transamazônica highway ‘so that there is no longer any contact with the community’” (CIMI 2014a, 73, translation by the author). In that regard, the difficulties in providing differentiated education align with efforts to eliminate cultural distinctions.

Public servants committed almost three quarts of racist incidents within the school environment. Furthermore, they account for more than 90% of omissions related to the provision of differentiated education. In other terms, public agents have been actively acting to eradicate the cultural multiplicity of Indigenous Peoples.

Among public servants, **teachers** play a prominent role, accounting for nearly half of racist incidents committed by these agents. Thirteen of 20 incidents involving teachers were racial insults, often occurring within classroom settings. These incidents can become routine, seamlessly blending with the teachers' regular tasks and perpetuating colonial prejudices against Indigenous Peoples. Most importantly, teachers' actions can affect individuals in their formative years, exposing them to an array of racist imagery and practices. Consequently, these actions can embed racism in various local contexts, even if only a small portion of these professionals engage in such incidents. In simpler terms, racist incidents involving teachers are a key factor in the reproduction of the inferior status attributed to Indigenous People.

Without intervention, this racial dynamic can persist indefinitely, even within institutional mechanisms intended to improve the lives of marginalized communities. In essence, to respect the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, it is crucial to confront the process that frames them as inferior.

6. Final Words

The present article illustrates how racism can manifest in various forms and situations, imposing violence across multiple contexts. This process occurs even within spaces and institutions with the potential to promote a more egalitarian life, such as those in the educational environment. Perhaps a first step to counteract this could involve giving voice to Indigenous Peoples, especially to the students, in order to assess how these

incidents have been affecting them. After all, as indicated by bell hooks (2015, 43): “oppressed people resist by identifying themselves as subjects, by defining their reality, shaping their new identity, naming their history, telling their story”.

Some testimonies emphasize the trauma and pain inflicted by racism. It can be seen in the words of Jaciara Martim, a Guarani student who stated: “The prejudice that I faced in the classroom was too big, I used to stay isolated, not only because I was timid, but especially because I was an Indigenous person. Nobody wanted to be around me” (Martim apud Rangel, Vale 2008, 255, translation by the author). In short, racism has been isolating Indigenous Peoples, by categorising them as inferior beings.

In that sense, it is crucial to consider racial relationships as a central aspect of the Indigenous Peoples’ condition. Access to formal and differentiated education can represent a vital step toward addressing various issues tied to the colonial condition, as it can help Indigenous Peoples to take control of the narratives about them and share their diversity with the world.

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Table 1. Classification of Racist Episodes by year.

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Racist Expression	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TOTAL	
Reported Episodes	15	30	20	12	9	16	14	13	20	11	23	20	13	17	18	19	18	15	21	38	38	400	
Hate Speech	1	8	5	3	5	9	1	7	7	4	9	9	5	8	5	8	7	7	7	22	9	146	
Anonymous comment (Internet)	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	3	1	3	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	11	8	62	
Verbal Aggression	3	10	8	3	2	4	6	6	6	1	5	4	4	8	3	8	5	3	7	19	23	138	
Physical Aggression	2	5	1	3	0	1	0	2	2	1	2	4	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	7	5	39	
Omission	9	7	10	2	2	5	6	4	8	3	6	3	3	3	5	1	2	6	9	11	14	119	
Public Servants	9	20	15	8	7	8	4	6	13	5	13	11	5	10	7	9	9	13	8	22	16	218	
Embarrassment by Private Individuals	5	6	4	4	5	8	10	7	7	8	8	13	10	6	11	13	9	8	16	19	29	206	
School Environment	3	2	4	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	2	4	3	5	1	1	6	5	66	
Racism on Urban Environment	12	20	16	12	8	14	12	11	16	9	17	18	12	15	16	15	15	13	18	32	33	334	

Figure 1. Registration from the 1st Indigenous Assembly in 1974

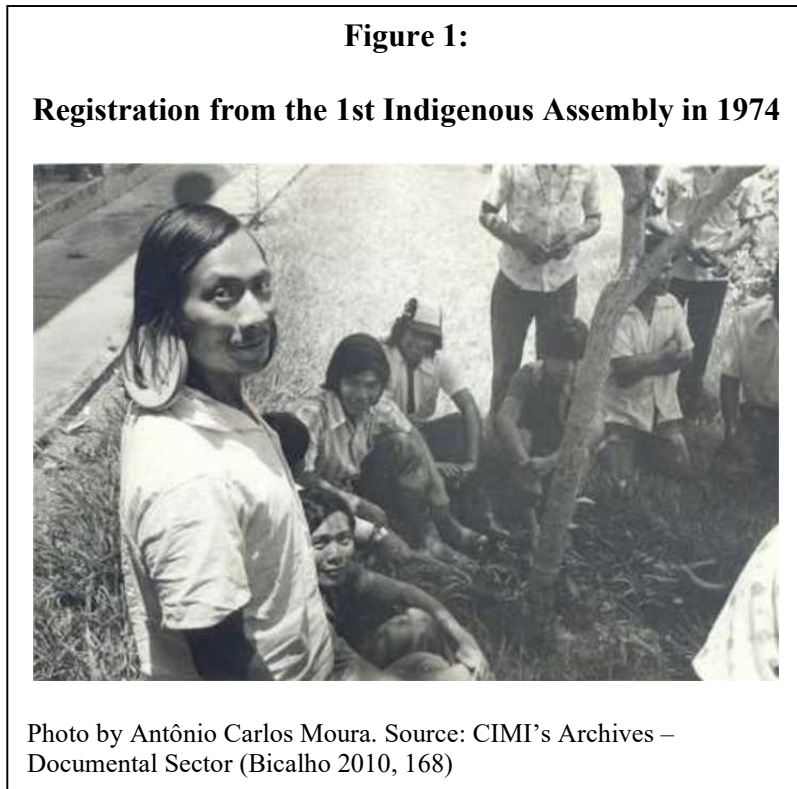


Chart 1. Comparison between the cases in the school environment and the total episodes per year

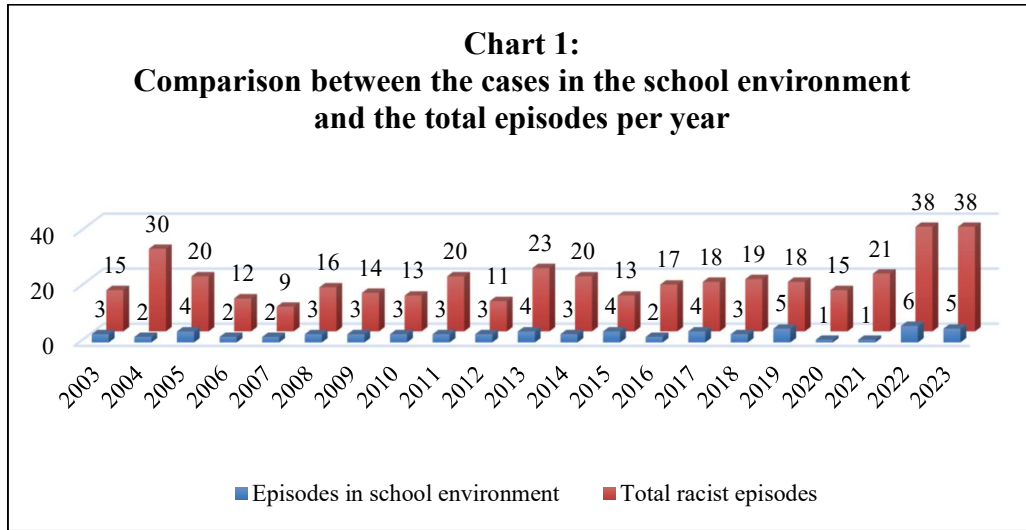


Chart 2. Number of Episodes by the Type of School Establishment

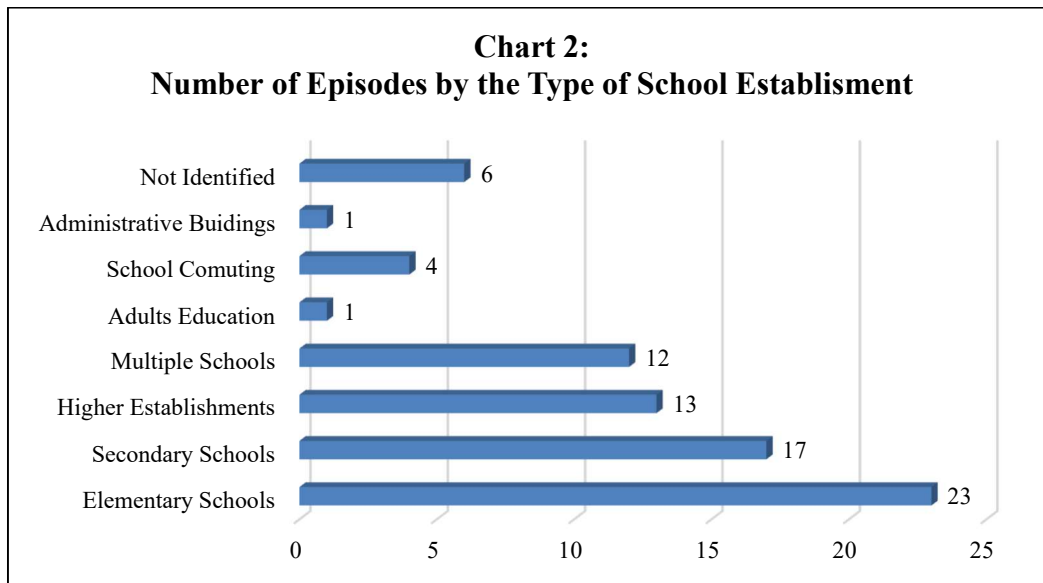


Chart 3. Indigenous Peoples who suffered racist attacks in school environment - by number of incidents

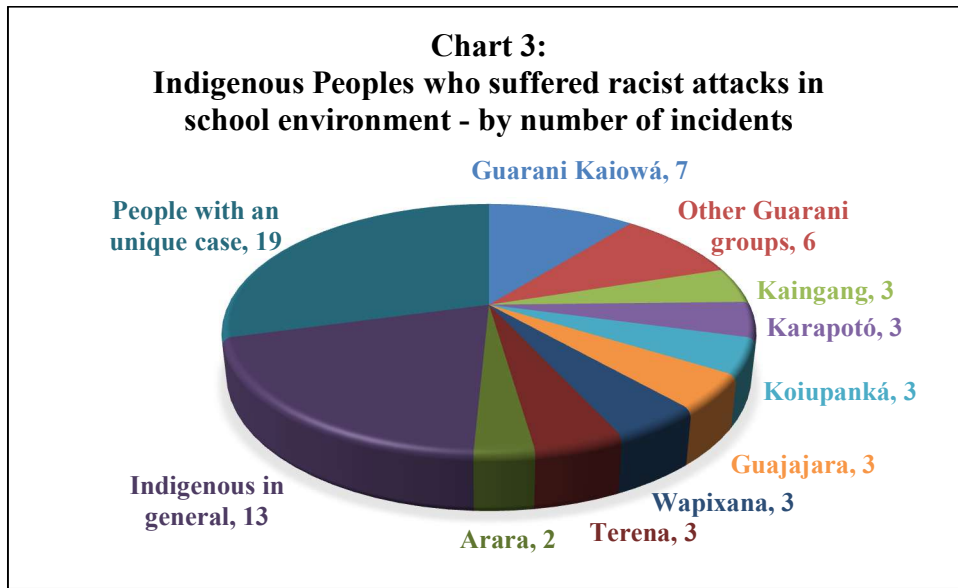


Chart 4. Agents Who Committed Racist Acts in School Environment

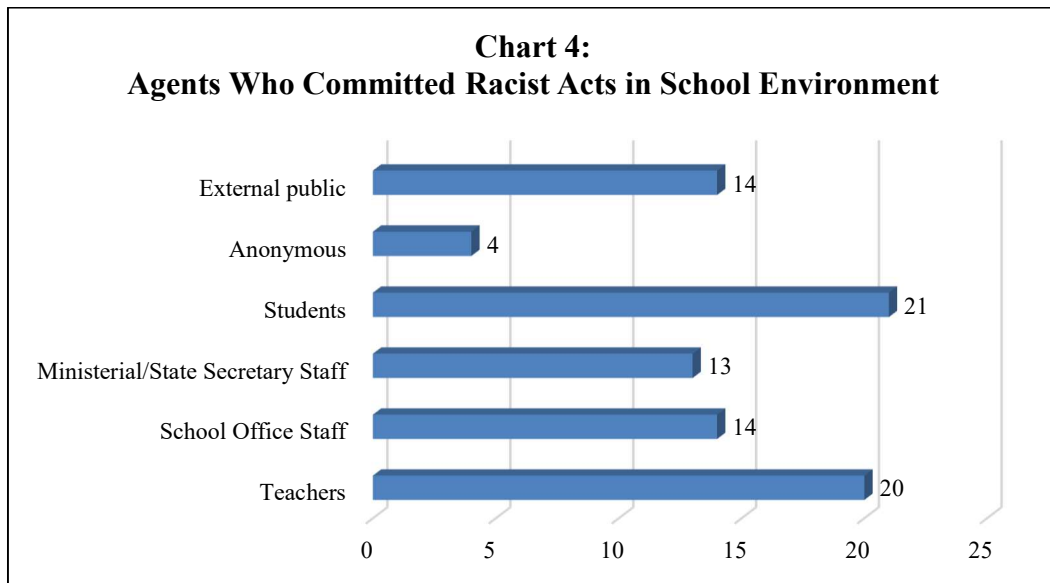


Chart 5. Total Cases per Establishment Type

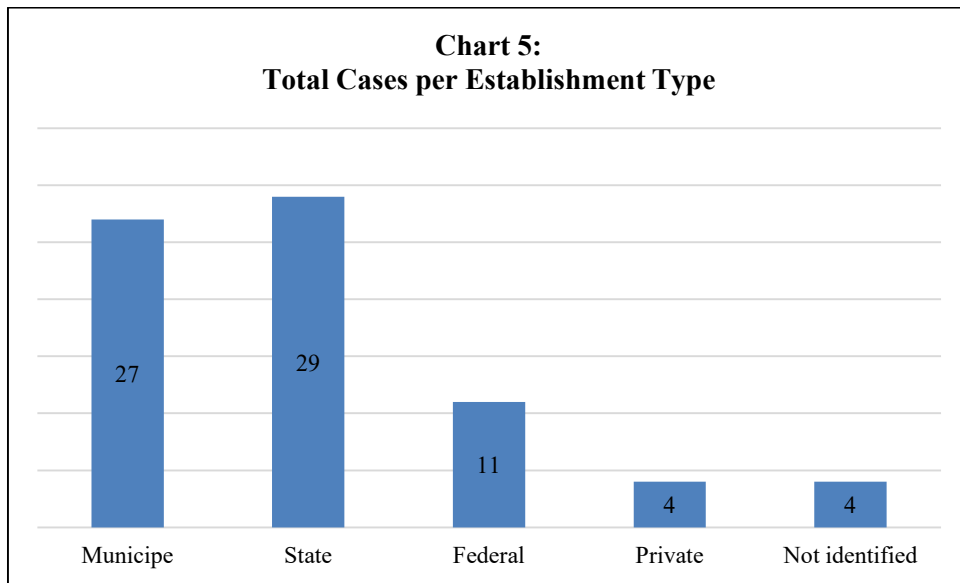
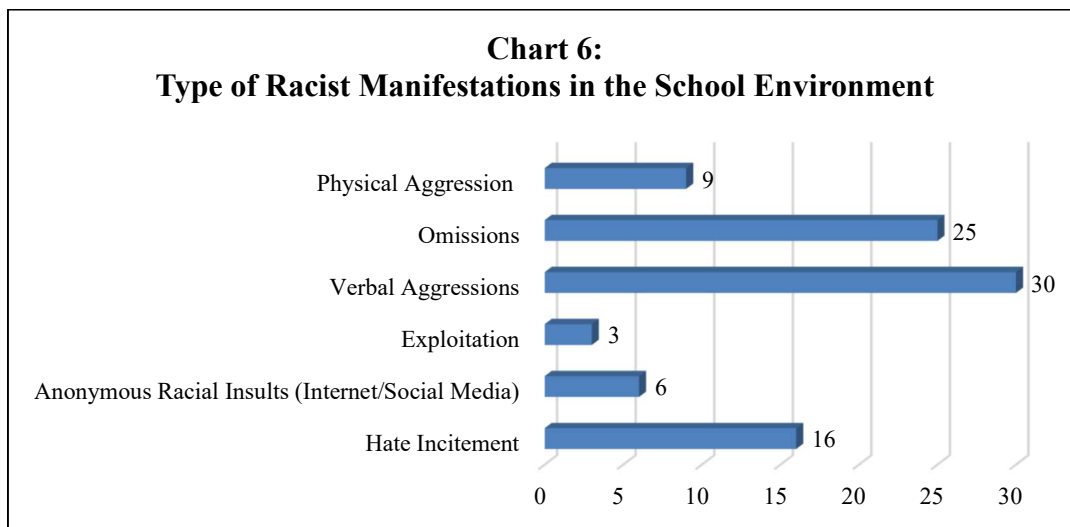


Chart 6. Type of Racist Manifestations in the School Environment



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