

## Black cultures in the classroom: antiracist pedagogies through art and literature

### ARTICLE

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#### Abstract

The school, as a space for cultural and political construction, has historically contributed to the maintenance of ethnic-racial inequalities in Brazil. This article presents a systematic literature review that investigates antiracist pedagogical practices from basic to higher education, with an emphasis on the use of art and literature as tools for valuing Black and Afro-diasporic cultures. The search, conducted in the SciELO, Web of Science, and Scopus databases, resulted in 11 articles analyzed in full. The studies show that the inclusion of Black art and literature in pedagogical practices fosters identity recognition, the confrontation of racism, and the reconstruction of knowledge within educational settings. However, they also reveal challenges, such as institutional resistance and the lack of ongoing training on ethnic-racial relations. It is concluded that the implementation of an antiracist education requires a commitment to decolonial pedagogical practices and the restructuring of school and university curricula.

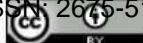
**Keywords:** Ethnic-Racial Relations. School Curriculum. Intercultural Education.

#### Culturas negras em sala de aula do Ensino Superior no Brasil: práticas pedagógicas antirracistas por meio da arte e literatura

#### Resumo

A escola, enquanto espaço de construção cultural e política, tem historicamente contribuído para a manutenção de desigualdades étnico-raciais no Brasil. Este artigo apresenta uma revisão sistemática de literatura que investiga práticas pedagógicas antirracistas do ensino básico ao superior, com ênfase no uso da arte e da literatura como instrumentos de valorização das culturas negras e afrodiásporicas. A busca, realizada nas bases SciELO, Web of Science e Scopus, resultou em 11 artigos analisados integralmente. Os estudos evidenciam que a inclusão da arte e da literatura negra nas práticas pedagógicas favorece o reconhecimento identitário, o enfrentamento do racismo e a reconstrução de saberes nos espaços educativos. No entanto, também revelam desafios, como a resistência institucional e a ausência de formação continuada sobre relações étnico-raciais. Conclui-se que a efetivação de uma educação antirracista exige o comprometimento com práticas pedagógicas decoloniais e o reordenamento dos currículos escolares e universitários.

**Palavras-chave:** Relações Étnico-Raciais. Currículo Escolar. Educação Intercultural.



## 1 Introduction

Throughout Brazilian history, a social model marked by inhumane practices has been consolidated, leaving deep scars on contemporary social relations, especially regarding ethnic-racial dynamics. As the country that enslaved the largest number of people in the world and the last to officially abolish slavery, Brazil continues to deal with the structural and symbolic impacts of this legacy (Ferreira; Camargo, 2011). It is estimated that between 4 and 4.8 million African people were trafficked to the country, subjected to physical and symbolic violence in a process that sought to erase identities and reduce individuals to the condition of merchandise (Fausto, 2013; Ribeiro, 2015).

Abolition, carried out without reparations or guarantees, contributed to crystallizing the marginalization of the Black population, perpetuating persistent stigmas that continue to limit access to fundamental rights such as education (Ferreira; Camargo, 2011). In this context, it is essential to understand race as a social construct that operates as a marker of inequality, sustaining a structure that privileges whiteness (Kilomba, 2008).

Racism, as a historical and social product, is internalized from childhood and is especially reinforced in school (Berger; Luckmann, 2004). Thus, the school environment functions both in reproducing inequalities and in enabling their transformation (Fernandes-Attilio *et al.*, 2023). Studies such as those by Silva *et al.* (2023), Oliveira and Mattos (2019), and Gesser and Costa (2018) demonstrate how schools influence children's self-perception and legitimize social patterns, highlighting the urgency of pedagogical practices that value ethnic-racial differences.

Analyses of teaching materials reveal stigmatized representations of Black people, associated with subordinate roles and the absence of positive role models (Ferreira; Camargo, 2011). These images, combined with discriminatory interactions in everyday school life, negatively affect the educational trajectory of Black students. Data from PNAD (IBGE, 2022) reinforce the implications of this inequality: Black and brown youth complete high school and access higher education at lower rates than white youth.

The Brazilian school system, still shaped by a Eurocentric logic, tends to marginalize Black knowledge and bodies, devoting little attention to the debate on ethnic-racial relations (Patto, 2022). However, anti-racist pedagogical practices have been developed by researchers, educators, and collectives committed to transformative education. Among these initiatives, the leadership of Black women such as Nilma Lino Gomes, Petronilha Gonçalves, and Sueli Carneiro stands out, as their contributions have redefined pedagogical practice.

Within this movement, art and literature emerge as powerful strategies to combat racism, value Black cultures, and promote more affective and plural meanings in the educational space.

In light of this, the general aim of this article is to conduct a systematic review of the literature published between 2020 and 2024, gathering studies that address anti-racist pedagogical practices from basic education to higher education, with a focus on the use of art and literature as tools to construct inclusive knowledge that values Black and Afro-diasporic cultures.

As specific objectives, this study seeks to identify and analyze the main articles that discuss these practices, as well as to systematize the methodologies employed, emphasizing contributions aimed at valuing Black cultures in education. The central question of this research is: what strategies and methodologies involving art and literature have been used, across different levels of education, to build an anti-racist education?

## 2 Methodology

This research adopted the method of systematic literature review, understood as the collection and careful analysis of studies already published on a specific topic, with the aim of consolidating and integrating existing knowledge (Gonçalves, 2005). Such an approach makes it possible to gather evidence in an emerging field, such as anti-racist

pedagogical practices, facilitating the identification of trends, gaps, and convergences in diverse educational contexts.

To ensure transparency and rigor, the PRISMA protocol (*Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses*), created in 2009 to improve the reporting of systematic reviews, was employed. The PRISMA checklist is organized into 27 items, distributed across seven topics: title, abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, and other information (Dourado; Melo, 2022). The corresponding flowchart will be presented in section 2.1, along with the research results.

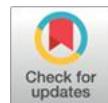
The search was conducted between November 11 and 12, 2024, in the Scopus, Web of Science, and SciELO databases, recognized for their relevance and regional diversity. The research strategy used will be presented below in section 2.1, *Data Presentation*. This strategy was designed to meet the objectives of the study, focusing on the identification of pedagogical strategies that integrate art and literature in combating racism in basic and higher education contexts.

As inclusion criteria, scientific articles published between 2020 and 2024 were selected, provided they explicitly addressed the use of art and/or literature as anti-racist pedagogical tools in school contexts and were published in peer-reviewed journals. Excluded were texts without full access, works in formats other than scientific articles (such as proceedings, reports, or dissertations), as well as studies conducted outside the context of formal education.

This methodological framework ensures coherence and traceability while reaffirming the commitment to Black, anti-racist, and decolonial epistemologies as foundations for reinventing pedagogical practices and the very act of educating.

## 2.1 Data Presentation

The data collection was carried out between November 11 and 12, 2024, in the Scopus, Web of Science, and SciELO databases. Initially, a broad search strategy was



applied, combining various descriptors related to anti-racist education, art, literature, diversity, and pedagogical practices. However, this first formulation did not yield relevant results in the consulted platforms.

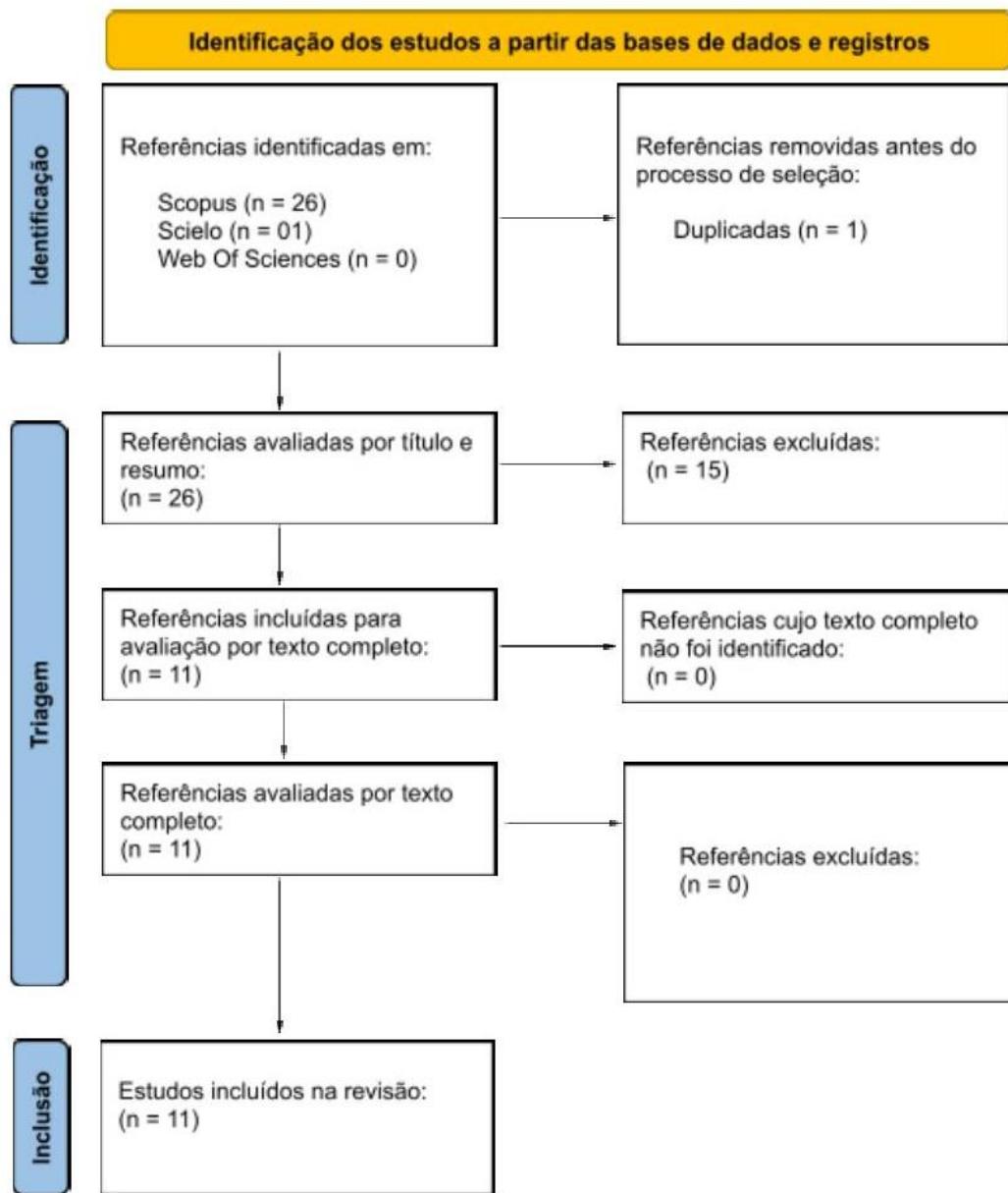
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In light of this, the strategy was simplified by restricting the terms to the core themes of the research: anti-racist pedagogical practices, art, literature, and basic and higher education. With this new formulation, 1 article was identified in the SciELO database, 26 in Scopus, and none in Web of Science. After removing duplicates, a total of 26 unique articles remained.

The initial screening was performed by reading the titles, which led to the exclusion of three articles that did not align with the research problem. The remaining 23 proceeded to abstract analysis, during which 12 others were excluded for not meeting the defined criteria. Among the excluded, one addressed only anti-racist practices without the use of art or literature, another focused solely on the tools without an anti-racist perspective, and ten did not clearly present any of these dimensions.

At the end of the process, 11 articles were selected for full reading and analysis. The complete selection pathway will be presented in the PRISMA flowchart included in the results section.

Figure 1 – PRISMA Flowchart: study selection process



Source: Dourado & Melo, 2022.

The articles chosen for analysis can be identified in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Reference Framework of the Research

Quadro Referencial			
Year	Title	Context	Reference
2024	A Educação Das Relações Étnico-Raciais nas Instituições de Educação Infantil em Minas Gerais	Early Childhood Education	Silva e Oliveira (2024)
2023	A Formação Étnico-Racial Nos Cursos de Licenciatura de Duas Instituições de Ensino Superior Públicas Baianas	Higher Education	Veras <i>et al.</i> (2023)
2021	Ações Afirmativas, Obrigatoriedade Curricular da Educação das Relações Étnico-Raciais e Formação Docente	Higher Education	Meinerz <i>et al.</i> (2021)
2022	Análise da Categoria Conteúdo e Forma da Obra Azur & Asmar: Reflexões Sobre as Relações Étnico-Raciais Dentro e Fora da Escola	Basic Education	Klem e Franco (2022)
2023	Denegrindo o Ensino de Ciências Química um Percurso Para a Formação Docente	Higher Education	Faustino e Benite (2023)
2022	Diálogos Entre as Escolas e os Saberes das Comunidades Quilombolas: a Descolonização/Descolonização do Currículo A Partir da Lei no 10.639/2003	Basic Education	Barzano (2022)
2022	Educação Para a Superação do Racismo no Contexto de uma Escola Pública	Basic Education	Camargo, Ponce e Ferrari (2022)
2021	Encontro de Saberes. A Inclusão de Mestres da Cultura Popular e Seus Saberes no Ensino Superior	Higher Education	Bitter (2021)
2020	Interseccionalidade e Educação Antirracista no Ensino de Português e Literatura	Basic Education	Conceição e Neves (2020)
2023	Metodologia Otra: Challenging Modern/Colonial Matrix with Paulo Freire and Decolonial Thinking	Higher Education	Harari e Pozzebon (2023)





2023	Pedagogia, Práticas Pedagógicas E Educação Antirracista	Higher Education	Silva (2023)
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Source: Research Data, 2025.

### 3 Results and Discussion

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Lima *et al.* (2022) affirm that education is a process that goes beyond the mere transmission of content. The school represents a fundamental space for socialization, the creation of bonds, the expression of ideas, and the construction of identities. In this sense, it plays a central role in shaping the identity of the Black population, although it may also become a space for reproducing racism and exclusion. Ferreira and Camargo (2011) understand racial prejudice as a cultural product, devoid of objective justification, that operates daily within school relations.

The analysis of textbooks, based on studies such as that of Souza, Damasceno, and Souza (2018), reveals the persistent underrepresentation of Black characters, usually associated with subordinate and stigmatizing roles, which negatively affects the self-esteem formation of Black children. Moreover, Ferreira and Camargo (2011) point to relational and affective differences in the treatment of Black students by teachers, reinforcing symbolic exclusion in everyday school life.

These mechanisms operate from childhood, including through language, as Sartre (1965) and Jablonski (2022) warn, by denouncing historically naturalized racist expressions in children's literary works. The construction of Blackness as a threat, ugliness, or marginality contributes to legitimizing the moral exclusion of Black people, as analyzed by Bento (2022) when exploring the "narcissistic pact of whiteness." The author argues that this pact seeks to maintain the privileges of whiteness at the expense of exploiting Black people in spaces of social and institutional belonging.

The consequences of these practices are concrete: school dropout, reduced access to higher education, underrepresentation in positions of power, and greater vulnerability to violence (Almeida, 2020). Despite this scenario, public policies resulting



from the Black movement's struggle have sought to reverse this logic. Such is the case of Law No. 10.639/03 (Brazil, 2003), which mandates the teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture at all stages of education. The BNCC (2018), in turn, reinforces this commitment by highlighting the role of art and literature in valuing Black cultures and promoting racial literacy.

Thus, Afro-Brazilian children's literature emerges as a powerful tool for transformation. According to Silva *et al.* (2023), it fosters racial literacy from the earliest years, helping children develop critical awareness and affirm their racial identity positively. This perspective is reinforced by Gomes (2003), who states that anti-racist education must empower Black people as protagonists of their own history, and by Gonçalves and Silva (2005), who advocate for a school ethically committed to plurality and justice.

Nevertheless, inequalities persist. Only 18% of Black youth aged 18 to 24 attend higher education, compared to 36% of white youth, according to Ipea (2022). Affirmative action policies, such as Laws No. 12.711/12 and No. 12.990/14 (Brazil, 2012; 2014), have sought to expand access, though they continue to face resistance and attempts at dismantlement (Arruda *et al.*, 2022; Palma, 2019).

Finally, as Jesus (2013) emphasizes, inclusion requires more than access: it demands consistent institutional strategies for permanence, support, and appreciation of diversity. The construction of an anti-racist school, therefore, cannot be limited to isolated initiatives but must be understood as a continuous practice of reinventing the educational process.

### **3.1 Finding possibilities for the inclusion of art in the debate on ethnic-racial relations in early childhood and basic education**

The pedagogical practices analyzed highlight the strategic role of art and literature in anti-racist education, particularly in childhood. In this regard, the study by Silva and Oliveira (2024) emphasized that literature and art have been strongly employed as tools to

promote the appreciation of Black identity and cultural diversity. The authors point out the use of children's books featuring Black characters in valued and leading roles, in order to foster the construction of a positive self-concept and encourage the affirmation of Black racial identity from an early age. In addition, practices such as African games and Black dolls contribute to the playful teaching of ethnic-racial relations. On this point, the study by Rêgo, Oliveira, and Silva (2025), conducted with early childhood teachers, shows that reviving traditional games significantly contributes to children's holistic development while also preserving social memory and strengthening cultural identity.

However, Silva and Oliveira (2024) warn of limitations: such initiatives remain isolated and often lack consistent theoretical foundations, with teacher training identified by the authors as one of the greatest barriers to implementing a broader anti-racist proposal.

In the study by Klem and Franco (2022), the work *Azur & Asmar*, in both literary and film formats, was used to foster reflections on ethnic-cultural diversity. The authors emphasize how illustrations and soundtracks enrich the aesthetic experience, fostering empathy and engagement with less disseminated cultures, such as African and Arab ones. Literature and audiovisual media, therefore, served in this experience as instruments for valuing non-hegemonic cultures and combating racism from childhood.

Similarly, Barzano *et al.* (2022) analyzed practices in quilombola communities in Bahia and observed how dialogue between schools and territories strengthens students' identities by valuing local knowledge through art and orality. The implementation of Law No. 10.639/03 was considered central to promoting a decolonizing curriculum and sustaining these practices.

Camargo *et al.* (2022) argue that the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian art and literature in school contexts fosters students' sense of belonging and the deconstruction of racial stigmas. Dance, music, theater, and narratives with Black protagonism proved effective in strengthening self-esteem and recognizing cultural diversity. However, the researchers also identified obstacles such as institutional resistance and the absence of specific

training, reinforcing the responsibility of public authorities to ensure the conditions necessary for implementing education focused on ethnic-racial relations.

Conceição and Neves (2020), in turn, bring intersectionality as a key element in their study. From this premise, the researchers examine how racism and sexism intersect in the trajectories of Black girls. Using the poem “*Ashell, Ashell para todo mundo, Ashell*” in the classroom, they fostered critical reflections, broadening students’ awareness of gender and racial stereotypes. In this case, literature goes beyond language teaching and becomes an instrument of ethical and political formation.

Overall, the studies analyzed demonstrate that art and literature function as powerful tools for confronting racism and valuing diversity, promoting a more inclusive curriculum connected to the lived experiences of Black students. However, they also point to the persistence of structural challenges, such as shortcomings in teacher training and the discontinuity of educational policies, which underscores the need for greater institutional commitment.

The next section turns to understanding how these issues manifest and evolve in the context of higher education.

### 3.2 Identifying pathways for anti-racist education in higher education through art and literature

Based on the findings of Veras *et al.* (2023), in their analysis of how ethnic-racial themes have been addressed in teacher education programs at two public universities, it was observed that only 2.68% of the syllabi at the first institution and 15.05% at the second included content related to ethnic-racial relations. When present, these discussions occurred mainly in disciplines such as History, Music, Theater, and Dance. The authors associate this higher incidence with the fact that art, due to its ability to convey historical and cultural elements, serves as a powerful tool in promoting education for ethnic-racial relations. Literature, in turn, emerges as a privileged means of fostering critical reflection

on the ethnic groups that make up the country, shedding light on their narratives and contributing to the deconstruction of Eurocentric paradigms of knowledge production.

Similarly, Silva (2023), when investigating the Pedagogy curriculum of a federal university, found that racial discussions are largely restricted to elective courses, which limits their formative impact. The author stresses the urgency of integrating such content in a mandatory and transversal way, in order to decolonize curricula and establish new academic and epistemological cultures more closely aligned with education for ethnic-racial relations. In this sense, Silva (2023) also recognizes art as a significant pedagogical strategy capable of promoting fairer and more inclusive representations.

Veras *et al.* (2023) point out that teacher education still lacks a solid structure for addressing the subject, being marked by conceptual and methodological fragility. They highlight the central role of the university in preparing critical educators, stressing the need to integrate subaltern epistemologies into formative processes: "The university [...] has the role of rethinking the hegemonic educational structure and including subaltern epistemologies in formative processes" (Veras *et al.*, 2023, p. 9). Despite the effectiveness of artistic and literary approaches to ethnic-racial education, their curricular presence remains scarce and disproportionate to the total course workload. Furthermore, documentary analysis does not allow for an accurate assessment of how such content is applied in classroom practice.

The study by Meinerz *et al.* (2021) corroborates this scenario by highlighting the lack of institutional structure for the curricular inclusion of ethnic-racial relations. The authors argue that all programs, regardless of field, should prepare future teachers to address the issue. However, this responsibility has been delegated almost exclusively to History, Language, and Arts disciplines. For them, the commitment to anti-racist education must be understood as an ethical, moral, and pedagogical requirement, even in the face of challenges imposed by institutional racism.

In this regard, Faustino and Benite (2023) developed an elective course in a Chemistry teacher education program aimed at preparing future teachers to engage with

ethnic-racial relations. This initiative breaks with the logic of relegating the responsibility solely to the humanities. Beyond institutional limitations, the authors also identify subjective resistances among professors, related to personal beliefs and racist ideologies, as barriers to the implementation of effective practices.

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Along the same lines, Bitter (2022) analyzes the inclusion of popular culture masters as lecturers at the University of Brasília (UnB). The appreciation of orality, corporeality, and collective memory contributed to breaking away from the centrality of written and Eurocentric rationality in knowledge production. In this case, art served as an essential resource for building an inclusive and dialogical pedagogy, capable of articulating traditional and academic knowledge.

Harari and Pozzebon (2023), by proposing the *metodologia otra*, inspired by Paulo Freire and decolonial thought, reaffirm the centrality of art and literature in breaking with colonial paradigms. The authors highlight the concept of *escrevivência* as a pedagogical practice that recognizes subjectivity and gives voice to historically excluded characters and experiences. In this context, literature and art become indispensable allies in the construction of formative practices that value diversity and promote social justice.

In summary, the studies analyzed demonstrate that, although there are relevant and innovative practices aimed at including ethnic-racial themes in higher education, structural, epistemological, and institutional challenges persist, hindering their consolidation. Teacher education, in this scenario, must be understood as a political and critical process, committed to overcoming inequalities and valuing Black and Indigenous cultures within the academic space.

## 4 Final Considerations

The analysis of the selected studies revealed that the consolidation of anti-racist education in Brazil still faces significant structural, political, and epistemological barriers. Despite the progress achieved through isolated initiatives, mostly driven by personal

commitment, such as the use of art and literature in pedagogical practices that value Black and Afro-diasporic culture, the data show that these actions largely remain isolated and restricted to elective subjects or specific areas of the school and university curriculum (Veras *et al.*, 2023; Silva, 2023). This fragmentation compromises the transformative potential of education in addressing ethnic-racial relations, rendering it vulnerable to discontinuity and weakening.

The studies also highlight the urgency of institutional policies that promote the mandatory and transversal inclusion of racial debates in teacher education, moving beyond the logic of individual responsibility and instead fostering institutional co-responsibility (Meinerz *et al.*, 2021). This entails not only curricular reformulation but also the ethical-political commitment of institutions to overcoming the racial inequalities historically reproduced in the educational sphere.

Even so, the analyzed articles reveal promising pathways, indicating tangible possibilities for social transformation through education. Initiatives that value traditional knowledge, such as the inclusion of popular culture masters in the classroom, and the use of different artistic and literary languages as pedagogical tools, as proposed by authors like Bitter (2022) and Harari and Pozzebon (2023), point to concrete possibilities for constructing a decolonial, critical, and emancipatory pedagogy. Such practices strengthen the identity recognition of Black students while also allowing white students to positively engage with Black culture and artistic production. This type of experience is potentially transformative and crucial in combating racism, while also contributing to the redefinition of the meanings attributed to the educational space.

Thus, this research answered its central question by demonstrating that art and literature have been used as powerful and relevant tools in building an anti-racist education, although their presence remains limited and institutionally constrained.

Among the limitations of this research, it is necessary to note the scarcity of studies that systematize educational methodologies in a solid and in-depth manner, exploring their medium- and long-term impacts. Future investigations are encouraged to combine

theoretical analyses with experience reports, case studies, and qualitative assessments of pedagogical practices in different contexts. Furthermore, it is recommended that future research delve deeper into the gaps and intersections between theory and practice in anti-racist education, examining the concrete conditions for implementing such methodologies in everyday educational settings across different levels. Investing in intersectional and decolonial formative practices is essential if schools and universities are to cease being spaces of symbolic violence reproduction and instead become territories of belonging and social transformation.

From the analysis of the studies reviewed, methodologies emerge that intersect artistic practices with critical pedagogical mediation. This is exemplified by the use of various forms of artistic expression, such as visual narratives, storytelling, creative writing, and diverse cultural performances. These approaches are mostly structured around interdisciplinary actions, with an emphasis on valuing racial identity and ancestry.

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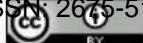
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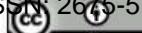
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