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Domestic Violence and Racism against Black Women

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Abstract: This qualitative research study, which involved interviews with black women victims of domestic violence, was aimed at verifying if there were any inscriptions of the ideal of whiteness introjected in their subjectivities and at evaluating the contexts in which racism and domestic violence appear in their lives. The importance of this type of study is in highlighting the existence of the myth of racial democracy in Brazil, in its perverse face, by showing how the ego ideal of whiteness is propagated unconsciously through ideology as a way of subjugating the black racial-ethnic group to the dominant one. The study emphasizes the high rate of domestic violence against black women and the urgency of public policies for the prevention of these crimes and the protection of the victims.

Keywords: Black Women; Racism; Domestic Violence; Ego Ideal; Psychoanalysis.

Violência Doméstica e Racismo Contra Mulheres Negras

Resumo: A pesquisa qualitativa realizada com três mulheres negras vítimas de violência doméstica procurou verificar, por meio de entrevistas, se existiram inscrições da introjeção do ideal de brancura em suas subjetividades e avaliar em que contextos apareceram o racismo e a violência doméstica em suas vidas. A importância desse tipo de estudo está em destacar a existência do mito da democracia racial no Brasil, em sua face perversa, ao demonstrar como o ideal de ego de brancura é veiculado inconscientemente por meio da ideologia como forma de subalternizar o grupo étnico-racial negro ao dominante. Coloca-se em destaque o alto índice de violência doméstica contra mulheres negras e a urgência de políticas públicas para a prevenção desses crimes e proteção às vítimas.

Palavras-chave: mulheres negras; racismo; violência doméstica; ideal de ego; psicanálise.

Introduction

This article was written based on research whose overall objective was to verify inscriptions of the introjection of an ideal of whiteness in the subjective constitution of black women who are victims of domestic violence. Few research studies have questioned the appropriation of the black body as an element of psychic suffering and narcissistic imbalances. The relevance of these studies lies in understanding how the introjection of this model of racism helps in the attempt to subordinate the black ethnic-racial group to the dominant one. Racist violence takes away from the subject the possibility of exploring and extracting all the infinite potential of creativity, beauty and pleasure that he or she is capable of; in black women, gender violence is added to this.

The presence of racist violence and domestic violence in the life history of the black women interviewed was also investigated. The scientific methodology of this qualitative research was divided into two stages. The first was a review of Freudian texts to investigate the concept of ego ideal and a survey on racism and domestic violence. The second involved the elaboration of a free and informed consent form and semi-structured interviews with three women volunteers. The individual interviews investigated racism and domestic violence and developed three axes for analysis: the first was how the participants see themselves; the second was how they see blackness

in others (family and strangers), and the third axis was domestic violence. With the data gathered in this procedure, categories of analysis were established (Laurence BARDIN, 2009) based on the discourses of the women participants, thus seeking to construct narratives that would make it possible to visualize the proposed objectives. The article describes part of the work done in this research.

Racism and Violence against Black Women

Data from research on violence reveal a specific and veiled “strand”, which is racism, and urgently point to the need for studies aimed at the black population, since, despite being the most violated, it is invisible socially. In several countries, black women comprise the majority of victims of human rights violations - Brazil is no different. In our country, black women represent 53.6% of the victims of maternal mortality (considered by specialists as an avoidable occurrence through access to information and care from the prenatal period to delivery), 65.9% of the victims of obstetric violence and 68.8% of the women killed by assault. In 2013, there was a 9.8% drop in the total homicides of white women, while homicides of black women increased 54.2% (INSTITUTO PATRÍCIA GALVÃO, 2016). Analysis of these figures raises the hypothesis that black women do not effectively receive the support of the State (Suelaine CARNEIRO, 2017).

According to data from the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies (SPM), in the first semester of 2016, *Ligue 180* recorded a total of 555,634 calls, of which 59.71% were made by black women, the majority of the complaints made by the victim herself (67.9%). This number is alarming and tallies with literature regarding the loneliness of black women. For Claudete Souza (2008), this loneliness is an “individual, community and collective experience, since it is part of a historical, social and political construction embedded in the gender and ethnic-racial dimension” (p. 57). Ferreira (2018) states that this loneliness is established through sexual relations and also affective relationships among women and their families, exposing an affective rejection permeated by socially imposed ideals (Lorena FERREIRA, 2018). Financial dependence on the partner and the absence of a support network or family connection are risk factors for domestic violence; the first of these is often an explicit consequence of racism (difficulty in entering the labor market because they are black women), constituting overlapping violence. It is noticeable that, today, they are selectively victimized. In relation to the reporting of violence and the Maria da Penha Law, white women are usually better served while black women are side-lined (the rates of violence against white women tend to decrease but against black women they tend to increase). There is a whole structure of segregation and selectivity of violence (Rute PINA, 2016).

Regarding violence against women, Lourdes Bandeira (2014) states that this type of violence does not refer to attitudes and thoughts of annihilating someone considered as equal or seen in the same conditions of existence and value as the one who practices it. On the contrary, the motivation for violence is the expression of inequalities based on the condition of sex, which begins within the family, where gender relations are constituted through hierarchy. However, there is no denying the situations in which marks of race, age, class, among others, modify the position in relation to that of the family core (BANDEIRA, 2014).

Violence such as *machismo* and racism serve a greater purpose in dehumanizing women, denying them the condition of people and transforming them into “things”, hence the “animalistic” nicknames such as “*bicha fedorenta*” [stinky bitch], “*macaca*” [monkey], “*gambá*” [skunk]. The depersonalization becomes real when these women seek out the agencies of protection without their own or their children's identification documents: they were torn up, burned or are in the possession of their assailants. The lack of documents symbolically attests to their inexistence and the deprivation of authority over their children (Benilda BRITO, 1997).

One of the ways in which racism appears in cases of violence against women is in relation to sexuality. Lia Zanotta Machado and Maria Tereza Magalhães (1998) point out that during conflicts, men's accusations fall on female sexual conduct and the suspicion of cheating. This presumption of betrayal is considered a form of racism because of “the association of black women with deviant sexuality, because it is exacerbated, and with prostitution [...] also reported in the research by Burdick (1999), Moutinho (2004) and Giacomini (2006b)” (Bruna PEREIRA, 2013, p. 94).

For José Moura Gonçalves Filho (2017), racism is eminently a historical and therefore social phenomenon: the struggle of one group against another. Thus, the humiliation of a black person is practiced in a way that is never restricted to him/her alone; the attack on “a black person” is always an attack on the collective, on all blacks. The racist attack is an exemplary attack, against one group, and represents the interests of the group that is attacking.

In Brazil, the absence of gender and racial samples in research in the field of psychology and psychoanalysis regarding the theme of violence is striking, as it is in political and theoretical debates. However, it is impossible to deny that if gender violence affects all women, then black and indigenous women suffer from an added layer: racial/ethnic violence. The sum of both leads to mutual reinforcement, which indicates the need for differentiated attention in the approach, confrontation and solutions (Fátima OLIVEIRA, 2003).

Jackeline Romio (2013) emphasizes the need to amplify the understanding of the variables active in violence against women, as well as the specificities of domestic violence in the case of black women, who are exposed to diverse risk factors, such as family conflicts, religious intolerance, social vulnerability due to the dangerous areas where they live, racism, socio-economic inequalities, sexual violence, conflicts in conjugal-affective-sexual relations, lack of security in society at large, besides the extrapolation of conjugal violence beyond marriage and other particularities.

Fifty-eight point eighty-six percent (58.86%) of domestic violence cases involve black women as victims. Research shows that domestic and family violence against black women is a complex phenomenon made up of several factors that amplify each other (OLIVEIRA, 2004, p. 44-49; Jurema WERNECK, 2010). Gender-based violence, for example, adds to racial/ethnic violence, which, beyond its sum, mutually maximizes them (OLIVEIRA, 2004). Werneck (2010) believes that in this amalgamation, racism is anchored in capitalism and patriarchy, which gives it a historical, political and also societal uniqueness. For the author, therefore, it is necessary to face the structural aspects of violence as a whole, since each type of violence to which black women are exposed is associated with the others, acting exponentially, in overlapping violence and vulnerabilities. Moreover, according to her, the main mistake of the (little) research carried out in this area has been to approach each type of violence in an isolated manner, with a strong emphasis on domestic violence, making it impossible to confront the other vectors of violence and the articulation between them (WERNECK, 2010).

Experiencing domestic violence is, in most cases, a trauma. For Gabriela Lima and Blanca Werlang (2011), the trauma goes against the attempts at psychic elaboration and inscription; in other words, it concerns a pain that is impossible to be represented psychically and has as a consequence a strong impact on the process of subjectivation. When the anguish and pain of this trauma reach an unbearable level, a feeling of rupture of the self arises in the subject, which approximates the experience of death. As the excess that characterizes it cannot be elaborated, the act becomes the only means of expression. Sándor Ferenczi (1992) points out that the child who experiences displeasure later, due to the compulsion to repeat, can relive it incessantly.

Psychosocial Aspects

It is important to investigate how the violence of racism acts on the psyche of its victims, because it also has its symbolic facet. For this, we rely on a review of the literature, searching at the root of the processes that form the subject's identity for the possible implications for black people of growing up and being formed in a racist society.

According to Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis (1995), the Ego Ideal is an instance of the personality resulting from infantile narcissism allied to identification with parents, their substitutes and collective ideals; it is a model to which the subject seeks to conform. Jurandir Costa (1986) adds that its ideal function is to favor the emergence of a subject's identity based on his/her erotic investment in his/her own body. "However, the model of normative-structuring identification that the black subject faces is that of a fetish: the fetish of the white, of whiteness" (COSTA, 1986, p. 106).

The first face of racist violence tends to destroy the identity of the black subject, motivating a persecution of the body itself. Through the internalization of a white Ego Ideal, the black subject is forced to formulate for him/herself an identifying project incompatible with the biological properties of his/her body, which he/she tries to achieve even at the expense of his/her happiness, if not of his/her psychic balance (COSTA, 1986). To achieve the Ego Ideal is a requirement of the Superego; the measure of the individual's inner harmony is determined by the level of approximation between the current Ego and Ego Ideal (Neusa SOUZA, 1983). Every identifying ideal of the black person, if he or she is identified with the ideal of whiteness, becomes the ideal of a return to the past, where he or she could have been white, or in the projection of a future in which his or her black body and identity will disappear. This process culminates in a future in which he/she ceases to exist: his/her aspiration is not to be or not to have been; the black person, in the desire to whiten, ends up wishing for his/her own extinction (COSTA, 1986).

The ideology of color appears as the surface of a body ideology. If the first feature of racist violence is the identification of the black with a white Ego Ideal, the second is to establish, through color prejudice, a persecutory relationship between the black subject and his or her body. The third element relates to black thought which, infested with racism, ends up making pleasure a secondary element for body and mind. Hence, in this type of psychic and unconscious trajectory, for the black psyche in ascension, the important thing is not to think and see what could give pleasure, but what is desirable for the white. Since the white does not desire the black body, thought will ensure that it does not exist as a mental representation (COSTA, 1986). In the construction of a white Ego Ideal, the first basic rule is negation, on the part of the black: the expurgation of any "black spot" (SOUZA, 1983).

Regarding the concept of identity, Sigmund Freud (1969) indicated certain paths, although he did not reach a conclusion, as he used this sense several times during his work, but did not theorize about it. Philosophy also introduces his notion of identity, which refers to an instance of

oneself. Michel Foucault (1994), on the contrary, shows that the process of building "ones-self" can be accompanied historically, according to the modes of care and knowledge of self that mark the history of Western humanity. Returning to psychoanalysis, Eduardo Cunha (2000) proposes that it is in the private field of fantasies that the subject gradually builds his or her singularity, using the models learned from those with whom he or she identifies and who provides them with the words and affection necessary for development (CUNHA, 2000).

Renato Mezan (1986) affirms identity as an element that is acquired little by little and is situated at the crossroads between something that comes from us, referring to our psyche, and something that comes from outside, the external reality. He believes that personal identity is built on living with others, adding that, according to Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, what exists in external reality is human society, with its norms and institutions (MEZAN, 1986).

Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (2002) built the concept of intersectionality to explain the intersections between various phenomena of subordination and discrimination. In her words:

The association of multiple systems of subordination has been described in various manners: compound discrimination, multiple burdens, or double or triple discrimination. Intersectionality is a concept of the problem that seeks to capture the structural and dynamic consequences of the interaction between two or more forms of subordination. It addresses the manner in which racism, patriarchy, class oppression and other discriminatory systems create inequalities that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, classes and the like. Moreover, intersectionality addresses the way the specific acts and policies create burdens that flow along these axes constituting the dynamic or active aspects of disempowerment (CRENSHAW, 2002, p. 177).

Crenshaw (2002) pointed to the need to consider the various ways in which gender intersects with other identities and how these intersections make certain groups more vulnerable, such as the specific marginalization of women from ethnic or racial groups and the gaps in information about them. She points out that the reality of intersectional vulnerability for women from ethnic groups is not yet fully known. Gender is not the only factor in discrimination and needs to be studied along with other factors, such as race and class, which are not independent variables, but rather interconnected.

Raquel Barreto (2018) writes that, for Lélia Gonzalez, racism is an ideological construction with social and economic benefits for whites from all classes and that Brazilian culture is black.

Lélia Gonzalez (2018) highlighted the role of black women in the constitution of Brazilian identity as black and the articulation of the double phenomenon of racism and sexism:

For us, racism is symptomatic of what characterizes Brazilian cultural neurosis. In this sense, we will see that its link to sexism produces violent effects on black women in particular [...] It involves the notions of *mulata*, domestic servant and black mother (GONZALEZ, 2018, p. 191-192).

In order to break away from the reproduction and repetition of models of black women from texts that approached them from a socioeconomic perspective and revealed the complexity of racial problems, Gonzalez (2018) proposed dealing with what was left out that, according to her, challenged the explanations. The *mulata* [mixed race female] is revealed in the instances of sexual, racial, and gender violence against black women, raped by the masters from the manor house, and through Carnival, the great national party that reinforces with symbolic weight the myth of racial democracy, focusing especially on black women; the housemaid denounces the other face of the same violence. The *mulata* and the domestic servant are the same subject, victims of racist and sexist violence.

It is in the figure of the black mother that Lélia Gonzalez asserts, based on Lacanian theory, that the truth arises from misrepresentation; she is the mother, the one who breastfeeds and looks after, tells stories to and teaches white children to speak, and thus performs the maternal function, subverting the dominant race, and for this reason, our language is *Pretuguês* [Black Portuguese]:

This child, this *infans*, is the so-called Brazilian culture, whose language is *pretuguês*. The maternal function relates to the internalization of values, to the teaching of the mother tongue and a series of other things that will be part of our imagery. She passes on to us the world of things that we will call language. It is thanks to her and what she passes on, that we enter the order of culture, exactly because it is she that names the father (GONZALEZ, 2018, p. 205).

Gonzalez (2018) is interested in understanding how the identification of the dominated and the ruler came about since she believes that racism is an introjected symptom that is due, in part, to what Brazilians experience when wishing and projecting themselves as white or descendants of Europeans. Alex Ratts and Flávia Rios (2010) point out that Gonzalez, like other authors, called this process "whitening" or "bleaching":

Abdias Nascimento, in *Genocídio do negro brasileiro* (1978), compares it to notions of assimilation and acculturation, and lists elements that comprise it: the absence of memory and history of Africa or adequate references to African and black in the educational system, including universities; the "aesthetics of whiteness", that is, the predilection for the white model of beauty, art and culture and the concomitant rejection of African and black; the insistence on the interpretation

of Brazilian racial relations as harmonious and without space for black political and cultural expression; the reproduction of racial (and sexist) stereotypes; and, finally, the desire to be the Other: white, European, colonizer, Western. (RATTS; RIOS, 2010, p. 43-44).

Along these lines, we can broaden our reflection on the effects of the symbolic violence of racism on identities, which may surface much later, in the form of symptoms the individuals themselves might not recognize as having any causal relation with experiences of humiliation, exclusion and discrimination (Maria Lúcia da SILVA, 2017); hence, the difficulty of the theme addressed in this research.

For Souza (1983), the family context is the place from which the Ego Ideal is constituted; later, it is in life experiences at school, at work, etc. that the Ego Ideal will be reinforced, the foundations of which have already been erected, acquiring meaning and effectiveness as the ideal model for the subject. In a multiracial, racist society of white hegemony, the *a posteriori* occurs at the moment when the black person faces the concrete conditions of oppression in which he/she is immersed.

It is known that the subject is constituted by the look of the other. It is worth thinking about the hypothesis that the first moment in which a baby experiences the effects of racism is in contact with the desire and the gaze of the parental figures, a gaze that can be subsequently and incessantly reinforced by the different gazes that he/she will encounter throughout his/her development. Pejorative representations influence the black child's psyche and are harmful because they teach him/her to have a degrading gaze upon himself/herself. The psyche exists in a body attacked at all times by gazes, pejorative nicknames, jeers, cursing and even physical aggression (SILVA, 2017). These assaults are practiced not only by peers of the same age, but even by adults towards children, as in the recent case where the daughter of actors Bruno Gagliasso and Giovanna Ewbank, a little black girl of only three years of age, was the victim of racist comments made by a person in a video publicly shared on a social network in November 2017 (O GLOBO, 2017).

For many black people, bearing this characteristic is experienced with great difficulty, since negative images, constructed by discriminatory power and conveyed through discourses on what it "is" to be black were absorbed through introjection. In this way, it becomes very hard to live with a body socialized as ugly, hair socialized as bad, and so on (SILVA, 2017). In order for the trauma of discrimination to be assimilated, psychic accommodations are needed to make life at least bearable (MEZAN, 1986).

Eliane Cavalleiro (1998), observing the end of a school day, counted three times more white children being kissed by teachers than black children: ten white children for three black ones. In the course of her fieldwork, the author noticed that the teachers made reference to skin color to differentiate their pupils, with expressions such as "*moreninha* [little brown girl], *branco* [white], *japonesinho* [little Japanese]", even though there were no references to non-white children in Brazilian society on the posters and on children's books displayed at school. Jean-Paul Sartre had already pointed out, in 1965, that teachers propagate hundreds of language habits that affirm the superiority of whites over blacks; students learn to say white as snow, to mean innocence, and the blackness of a soul, a look or a crime (SARTRE, 1965). The school has been the locus for the emergence of shame; according to Vincent de Gaulejac (2006), shame "upsets, it creates discomfort, so it is preferable to avoid it".

Silva (2017) argues that children's narcissism is nothing more than the product of their parents' narcissism. Thus, perceiving the importance of the role of parents in the development of the baby's psyche and in the adult he or she will become, as well as considering the place the child will occupy in the family, is of extreme importance for understanding the subject in its entirety; however, this is still not enough to explain the effect and the impact of racism on the construction of identity and in identification processes (SILVA, 2017).

When talking about identity, it is necessary to consider that it is constructed in a process that begins with a complex system of social relations that existed even before the subject's birth. In this way, identity is a political issue, since no one living in society is immune to ideology, absorbing it, incorporating it and reproducing it.

Marilena Chauí (2008) defines ideology as an involuntary objective and subjective phenomenon, produced by the objective conditions of individuals' social existence. It is used as a resource by the dominant class to exercise domination so that it remains a privilege, but is not seen in this way by those who are dominated. According to the author, bourgeois ideology will produce ideas that lead people to believe that they are unequal in different instances and for different reasons, such as in terms of talent, will power (since those who work honestly become rich and the lazy get poor), nature (since society gives everyone the right to work, giving them equal chances to improve), social conditions (equal under the law and the State) (CHAUÍ, 2008). Among all these assumptions, there are hidden facts that are very important to understand the context. They are that the opportunities for work are not the same for everyone, since some people offer their work and others offer "vacancies" to work, as well as the reality in which the State, despite being democratic, defends, through the law, the interests of the dominant class, thereby defeating the principle of equality.

Racism consists in characterizing a human group or justifying the behavior of an individual as resulting from the "race" (ethnicity) to which they belong, using natural/racial attributes, which are considered the main elements that morally and intellectually characterize each individual. Accordingly, racism is posed as an ideology and racial thinking is formed, which confers the dominion of one group over another, such as Jews, blacks, or Muslims, with its only agenda being the assignment of negative attributes to them; in particular, scientific arguments are used to affirm this division between superiors and inferiors when, in reality, these are power relations legitimated by the dominant culture, leading to discrimination and the persecution of those considered inferior (MUNANGA *apud* CAVALLEIRO, 1998; SÃO PAULO, 2008; Michel WIEVIORKA, 2007).

Extreme identification with dominant social values promotes an impediment to the encounter with the other and forms a propitious ground for the introjection of prejudice; the latter, an individual manifestation, but of social origin, takes place in relations based on generalizations already consecrated through stereotypes of culture. Thus, hostile attitudes towards a certain object are as much a response from the psychic content of the prejudiced subject as of the culture in which he or she lives. Culture offers values that, when introjected, are mediated by the individual and, to a certain extent, modified by him or her through their own filter; this means that individual values are not always compatible with reality and, for this reason, prejudice is related more to psychic aspects of the formation of self, which activates the defense mechanism of introjection, than to characteristics supposedly existing in the target of the prejudice (CROCHIK *apud* Marian FERRARI, 2006).

Returning to Maria Beatriz Vanucchi's remarks (2017), in which social violence is a construction that aims at fulfilling the self-preservation needs of groups, she states, in this context, that not even the institution of Law, whose function is to ensure equality through the regulation of excesses, is able to include everyone. The reasons are the prohibition of destructive impulses that never eliminate their pressure, since whatever is repressed will return, and also because the law is made by people, of whom those with greater power and visibility legislate and execute the norms that guarantee their interests. Therefore, the law always leaves the mark of the exercise of domination, which persists as an irreducible element in human relations. Some always have more protection and belonging than others, and this therefore generates the determination of who is of value to the group or not, making the latter "scapegoats"; against them, the unleashing of aggression is allowed (VANUCCHI, 2017).

It follows that each collective formation makes its victims and defines a target for its violence. In this way, it would be naïve or idealistic to imagine a proposal for a social organization that would eradicate the brutality of humanity, although this does not mean that we should not intervene in the processes that culminate in certain ways and configurations that violence acquires in different social formations (VANUCCHI, 2017). This is an ethical commitment that perceives human productions as being changeable and of a political dimension.

Society causes many traumas in black subjects by denying them recognition of the historical consequences of which they are survivors. Kabengele Munanga (2017) attests that Brazilian racism demobilizes its victims, diminishing cohesion by dividing them into blacks and mixed race. Creating this ambiguity of the mixed race hinders the process of identity formation, since many are still not politicized and aware, no longer assuming their blackness and preferring the ideal of whiteness, which they believe would provide the exclusive advantages of whiteness. In addition, the figure of mixed race people is heavily manipulated by Brazilian racial ideology in order to hide problems from society and fight affirmative policy proposals that benefit those who consider themselves to be black (MUNANGA, 2017).

Thus, the living pain of these traumas provokes silence, shouting and crying. Often, the psychic strategy used is to capture the thought for the psychic work of avoiding suffering. However, the denial of racism in current discourses also raises doubts as to the veracity of the violence caused by gestures and discourses that reaffirm social stratification. The unspoken, which is acted out by social exclusion in various recurring situations, such as on the streets, in buildings and places whose access is indirectly restricted to whites, can culminate in the limit of the experience of de-realization. To give voice to what is muted is to move the sphere of representations, of how images are made, to witness and treat this social nightmare. The daily violence of "cordial racism", typical of Brazilian culture, denies blackness and maintains blacks in the condition of victim of violence. By choosing to politically affirm their blackness, black activism movements present a starting point for leaving behind this condition of victimization: they establish different lines of strength beyond pain, through the adoption of an identity project anchored in the valorization of its features (VANUCCHI, 2017).

Methodology and brief description of results

The scientific methodology of this research is qualitative and was divided into two stages. The first involved theoretical work on racism, domestic violence and the concept of the ego ideal in psychoanalysis. The second consisted of a signed informed consent form and an individually applied semi-structured interview. With the data obtained in this procedure, categories of analysis were constructed (BARDIN, 2009) from the statements of the participating women, in an attempt to

build narratives that enable the visualization of the proposed objectives. Through the categories, three axes were constructed for analysis: the first was how the participants see themselves; the second was how they see blackness in the other (family and strangers) and the third axis was domestic violence.

Individual interviews were carried out with three participants (named A., AC. and J.) selected by the professional team from a Women's Reference Center (CRM) in a city in the state of São Paulo (Brazil); the criterion: black women who were victims of domestic violence. However, it was also possible to note further similarities among the participants: age group (ages 30 to 33), low schooling (only one of them had completed elementary school and had not finished high school), and at the time of the interviews, all three were either unemployed or underemployed (participant A. was trying to sell premium saving bonds in the city center), receiving one Brazilian Real per bond sold, while also trying to sell bread door to door; AC. was cleaning, sometimes accepting cartons of milk or "food packages" - greens and vegetables - in exchange for her services).

Regarding religion, the three participants identified themselves as being Evangelical; they all had a high number of children, but some of the children had died. Two participants had six children and one of them, five, with multiple partners in all three cases. This data is relevant because in their testimonies it is evident that the children are under the care of their mothers, the fathers not being very present, rendering the personal and professional life situations of these women more difficult and complex. Due to the number of people who depend on them for financial support, the quality of the work accepted by them diminishes more and more, devaluing the value of their labor and generating another risk factor for violence, which is economic dependence on the partner. For Lilian Santos (1999), domestic and family violence linked to the economic factor sets a precedent for women to be subjected to violent acts because of their economic dependence on their partners. Without this financial dependence, women could gain greater respect from their partners and also feel secure when it comes to breaking off a violent conjugal relationship (SANTOS, 1999). Two participants had stayed at the *Casa Abrigo* (Shelter House) and one lived in the back of her mother-in-law's house. In relation to housing, two depended on the help of the municipality (one was in the *Casa Abrigo*, and another had her rent subsidized by social benefit); the third lived in a wooden extension made in her mother-in-law's house, with two rooms and an improvised bathroom for seven people.

In the participants' life stories, they had all suffered the following types of violence: trans-generational, verbal, physical and psychological and had a history of family violence. One of the participants had also suffered property violence and two of them had experienced torture, along with sexual violence.

All of the women interviewed reported having suffered lifelong racism; one of them even within her own family. There were also contradictions regarding the ideals of beauty in women and men, such as the description of beauty not matching their own traits, or the color of their skin being described as "*marrom*" [brown] or "*morena*" [dark].

In order to give voice to these women, one of the interviews, that of participant "J.", will be described in more detail. Trans-generational violence appeared repeatedly, as her mother also suffered domestic violence at the hands of her father who beat her constantly and "J." witnessed the assaults, which ended when her father passed away when she was around the age of five. Her mother remarried and her stepfather also threatened to assault her, besides verbally abusing participant "J." and her siblings calling them 'blacks' and 'monkeys' (verbal violence), even though he was black himself. "J." remembers that when she was 12 years old her stepfather tried to beat up her mother and she faced up to him; since that day the assaults had stopped, because the couple started going to church and her mother stopped drinking, according to the interviewee.

In childhood, she also suffered violence from a 19-year-old uncle (they all lived together with their grandmother), who beat "J." and her siblings out of jealousy. In her words, "he threatened her with matches": he put lit matches between her toes and those of her siblings and told them to wait for Batman to appear. The uncle would also choose a brother to beat up and make an older brother watch and laugh, and then he would make them take turns so that the one watching would be beaten and the other one would have to watch and laugh. In another scene of violence, she described how this uncle would order his nephews to shout from behind a very big wall, and if he did not hear them, they would be beaten. Concerning her second partner, "J." suffered physical, sexual, verbal and psychological violence from him and neglect and trans-generational violence from his mother-in-law. She asked her mother-in-law to call the police whenever she heard the beatings, but at such times, she would call her own son and tell him not to hit her daughter-in-law. On one occasion, "J." asked her mother-in-law: *X., for God's sake, what needs to happen before you call the police? Y. is going to kill me!* to which X. answered: *If he kills you, I'll give him up.* When the couple returned to their own house, he beat his wife "J." even more.

J.'s companion insulted her in various ways during sexual relations (verbal violence) and forced her to have sex (sexual violence): *Why don't you give it to me? Why don't you want to give it to me? You've got someone else! Are you giving it to someone else, you slut?* She would react and he would beat her even more.

The physical assaults, according to "J.", started with Y's jealousy. "J." complained about the beatings and her partner replied that it did not hurt, and that he had also been beaten up in prison. Among the violent acts committed against her were burning marijuana cigarettes on her skin, throwing cold water on her and spitting in her face to keep her awake. He would wake her up with slaps on the face and shout: *Why are you sleeping? Don't you like me? You're not supposed to sleep; you're supposed to stay with me! Come on, hug me!*

Jealousy with physical abuse also appeared in another scene described by her, where Y. accused her of coming on to the tenant, as a pretext for physically assaulting her; he hit her on the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet, and pulled her hair. During the interview, she said that her hair is long, but that currently she has little hair as a consequence of the attacks, and that when she combs it, even if only with her fingers, several strands fall out. "J." mentioned another time she was assaulted because her partner was convinced she had dropped a pillow on purpose, and that his mother had tripped over it. He said Y. got angry, telling "J." to pick up the pillow, grabbing her by the hair, before making her kiss her mother-in-law's feet, while shouting: *Kiss my mother-in-law's feet, why don't you want to kiss them? My mother is a queen! If she had fallen and got hurt, I would have killed you!* While J. had her head lowered to kiss the feet, Y. stepped on her head.

Y.'s jealousy led him to accompany her to all her medical appointments, saying he did not want the doctor to lay a hand on her. He threatened to hit the doctor if he touched her body. Because of these threats, "J." started to be seen by nurses instead of the obstetrician.

After the birth of her son, Y. was jealous of the baby. "J." reported that one time while she was playing with her son, lifting him up high, facing her and saying 'Mommy loves you!' Y. yanked him out of her arms, gave him to her mother, shouting at "J." that the *'only love of your life is me!'* before sending her to the house below, separating her from her child. At that moment of the interview, "J." cried a lot, closed her eyes, put a hand over her face and stopped talking. She stayed like that for a few minutes; the interviewer took her other hand and held it while remaining silent. Needless to say, there was a feeling of total helplessness in the air and an absence of words to express the sheer violence narrated until that moment.

We would like to add that Y. is the second partner of "J." With the first, whom we will call L, she also went through a lot of violence. He drank and went out with other women. She went through four pregnancies; he also physically assaulted her and kicked her in the belly, and two of their children died: one baby was stillborn and the other lived only one day, dying of multiple organ failure. That partner died of cancer and was HIV-positive. Although they were no longer married when he became ill, "J." helped to take care of him in his terminal phase and continued to do so until his death. She mentioned this with a smile on her lips, as if to say that despite everything that had happened, she remained by his side in those final moments.

Regarding her school experience, "J." said: *I didn't like it much because I was humiliated. I have a low bladder. The teacher wouldn't let me go to the bathroom, and when I peed in my pants, he would make me write on the blackboard so everyone could see and laugh at me.*

As for her description of a beautiful woman, she does not look like her, except for skin color, for which she said "brown", and the hair. Her hair is long, just like the ideal woman's, and it seems to be very important to "J.". In one of the meetings with the interviewer, she revealed that her hair was thin due to Y.'s assaults; she did this with an expression of sadness and dissatisfaction. She said she did not think she was pretty, that she would fix her teeth, have silicone implants and that she was teased for being thin, as well as for her teeth; she felt responsible for the distasteful jokes she suffered.

Regarding her blackness, "J." declared herself to be *parda* [dark-skinned] at the beginning of the interview, when we were gathering the socio-demographic data. Afterwards, in the questionnaire about blackness, she said that her family is black-skinned and that she is too, and that she considers herself so because of her father's indigenous descent, and her mother being black. In another part of the interview, "J." says that her stepfather used to call her and her siblings monkeys but that did not make sense, because he was also black. "J." claimed that being black had no influence on her life, but said there was prejudice because of people's color. She said that literature indicates that most people do not consider themselves racist, but that she knew someone who was, and that among blacks many claim not to suffer racism, but she knew people who had experienced it.

A brief part of J.'s narrative helps us to determine the degree of violence and racism present in her life and enables us to express the different forms of violence committed against the women described in this research. We would like to highlight that the stories of the other women interviewed are not included in this article, but they can be described at a later date. In addition, we believe that care and sensitivity are needed in the construction of these narratives, all of which are very violent, and an approach that encompasses the intensity of the experiences lived by these women is required.

Final Considerations

The women interviewed in this study told their life stories, marked by the presence of racism and domestic violence, always with an intense suffering and difficulty in naming their experiences. All of

the interviewees narrated stories of racism in their childhood, two of which were in school, data which converge with the literature according to Cavalleiro (1998) and which should put parents and educators on high alert, since schools are places of intellectual and citizen formation, where attendance is mandatory for an average of eight years and which end up reproducing racist ideals.

Only one participant reported an experience of racism in her own family. The psychic consequences for the child victim of parents' projection are grim and violent, as explained in this article. Projection is taken to mean when a family, notionally, puts an ideal of white beauty on their children, whether to negate or pejoratively affirm blackness. In the case of the aforementioned participant, the racism took the form of verbal degradation, attacking her Negroid physical features and impacting the construction of her identity (SILVA, 2017).

All the interviewees had suffered verbal, psychological and physical violence committed by their partners, as well as reporting trans-generational violence (presence of violence throughout the history of the family genealogy) and history of family violence in their lives. Two of the three participants said they had suffered torture and sexual violence, and it is worth noting that there is a high rate of domestic violence against black women, who account for the majority of cases, as opposed to against white women for whom reported numbers have fallen. (INSTITUTO PATRÍCIA GALVÃO, 2016).

In the discourse of the interviewees, it is evident that they see themselves as black in relation to description of skin color. However, complexities emerge in the narratives, since expressions like "*morena mais escurinha*" [a little bit darker-skinned], "*pele marrom*" [brown skin] etc. appear throughout the interview, as well as certain comments indicating the desire to make physical changes that are compatible with the white body, such as "do a nose job", "straighten the hair" – which demonstrate the ego ideal being influenced by the culture's ideology of whitening. The stances of the participants in relation to their "racial identity" are not exactly certain, except for one of them, who stated the influence of an activist aunt who taught her about the positivity of blackness. In the interview, when naming people they considered beautiful, five white celebrities and four black celebrities were cited, which we may consider, in theory, an attempt to balance an ego ideal with an identity construction closer to a self-image that would mix black features with the social values of white beauty.

The Superego is partly constructed by paternal *imagos* (an unconscious imaginary scheme that selectively guides the form in which the subject apprehends the other) and partly by society. It demands the realization of the Ego Ideal, which, in turn, is the result of infantile narcissism allied to identification with parents. Having said that, the degree of suffering of the black person submitted to the requirement of an identifying ideal of the color white, incompatible with him/her, can be measured; even more so when it is known that the conflict is external, through social pressures and discrimination, and also an internal, intra-psychic conflict, because there is a suffering felt by the individual who perceives the difference between the Ego Ideal and his/her self-image when it is incompatible with the dominant ideology of beauty associated with white. Lia Schucman and Mônica Gonçalves (2017) collected data in interviews regarding people who, although they recognize themselves as black within interracial families, try to minimize their Negroid traits. One interviewee reported that as a child, with her mother's approval, she slept with a clothes peg on her nose in order to make it thin. In this case, just like her family, it was necessary to deny blackness in order to legitimize affection. For the authors, in most cases, the family by loving, or to love the black subject, often denies blackness. Instead of reworking their racism to overcome it, family members remove the loved one from the stigmatized group. Freud's concept of "negation" is used to interpret this behavior (SCHUCMAN; GONÇALVES, 2017).

In conclusion, the research described in this article demonstrates the importance of further studies to investigate the suffering of black people who are victims of racism, especially at school, and also the manner in which these people incorporate the white ego ideal of the culture as a way of adapting to, and at the same time denying, the violence they suffer. It is also necessary to investigate the phenomenon of domestic violence against black women in order to improve protective measures and public policies aimed at victims.

Even so, research and intervention work are also necessary to provide black people with a politics of resistance to the violence they suffer and, above all, an awareness of the white ego ideal conveyed in the culture that allows them to resignify their color, their body and their social place. Vanucchi (2017) claims there is a long way to go and that it begins with the use of the word. "The word to speak, witness and overcome the pain, using language in its function as cultural tool, which can design other outcomes" (p. 68).

Cuti (2017) adds that, since the word "black" has been uttered to offend, at the moment the offended one assumes it and calls him/herself black, they give it another meaning, making a positive out of a negative. If the word loses its power to offend, the offender loses an important instrument in the practice of discrimination and in the psychic maintenance (the prejudice) of racism. Furthermore, the word "black" will never leave the offender alone, because it summons in itself the power to recall a history of enslavement and colonialist oppression, challenging the conviction of the psychic illness

that is racism. By this argument, not socially employing the word “black” is to break its power to transform from a negative to a positive meaning; it is to abort, in the words of the author, the process initiated by blacks themselves in search of their civic identity. (CUTI, 2017).

The need for public policies that acknowledge the existence and violence of racism and that act to remedy the damage of so many years of oppression and prevent it in the future is also reinforced. The convergence of data from Cavalleiro (1998) with the discourse of the participants interviewed in this work, which reveal the reproduction of racist violence within schools, also shows that the fight against racism should begin there, in the same environment. This fight should be against the violence of racism not only against blacks, but also against all ethnic groups living in Brazil, promoting the appreciation of the difference that each group represents in its culture, and also teaching respect and tolerance.

Black women who are victims of domestic violence need psychotherapeutic spaces to tell their stories and be heard. Thus, by hearing their own voices, recalling memories, they rebuild their lives in the fabric of a narrative in which suffering is acknowledged and violence is witnessed by another person who actually recognizes it. Is it possible to walk again, now going in another direction? The hard work of dealing with the symbolic violence entangled in the subject's entrails, the result of unconscious identifications and the oppression of the social domination of a white and European ideology is just beginning. The psychotherapeutic process is one of the facets necessary in the struggle of these women as a task of resignifying suffering and understanding the reason why black people assimilate and reproduce what is Euro-white, but also of appreciating what is Afro-black. The other side of this struggle is in the Brazilian schools and universities, places where educators need to make space for these stories of violence and to denounce the myth of racial democracy. As such, the idea of an African America or *Afrimerican*, according to Lélia Gonzalez (2018), would be assumed as being a part of Brazilian identity, in which the influence of the African participation in cultural and social formation is no longer repressed. We speak Portuguese, but mainly *pretuguês* [black Portuguese].

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BACKGROUND

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**Erratum**

In this article, the authors' names appear on the page one, in the caption at the top of the even pages, in the mini-biography and authorship contribution at pages 12 and 13. In all these places

Where it reads:

Christiane Carrijo Eckhardt Mouammar

It should read:

Christiane Carrijo