Addressing ambivalences of movie usage in School Sociology from the practices of Teacher Development Program

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Abstract:
Drawing from experiences in a teacher development program in southern Brazil, this text discusses the limits and possibilities of using films in sociology lessons. The tripartite responsibility of the Brazilian public education system (federal, state, and municipal) and the reduced emphasis on sociology classes contextualize this discussion. Conducted in one of Brazil's few federal basic education institutions, the interventions applied Wright Mills' sociological imagination and concepts of estrangement and denaturalization to highlight sociology's political nature. Teaching sociology in schools demands balancing spontaneity and scholastic rigor. In the classroom, we used four films from different countries to create dynamic lessons, fostering students' sociological imagination by connecting movie plots, personal experiences, and sociological theory. However, structural shortcomings, such as inadequate infrastructure and teacher training, hinder the effective use of films in many schools. While films are a valuable tool, their potential is limited by systemic issues that, due to neoliberal policies in Brazil, are unlikely to be resolved soon.
Keywords: *sociology teaching; pedagogic residency; Brazil.*

1. Introduction

This text explores the potential and limitations of using films in sociology classes, informed by experiences from the practices in the Pedagogic Residency Program (PRP) at a Federal Public School in southern Brazil during the first half of 2023. The discussion encompasses the theoretical and practical implications of working with this type of media, using foundational social theorists (like Althusser and Wright Mills), some works that address the Brazilian educational context and its idiosyncrasies, and literature that debates the specifics of School Sociology[1] (Mocelin, 2020).

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1 *Sociologia Escolar* (translated as School Sociology) encompasses the curricular contents, pedagogical practices, social actors and contextual elements that are included

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This discussion of pedagogical experiences serves two purposes. First, it addresses an important gap in the Social Sciences[2] *Licenciatura*[3] curriculum at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), where only two courses currently examine theories and practices of sociology teaching prior to the mandatory internship[4]. Thus, presenting and discussing such topics is both intellectually valuable and pedagogically meaningful. Second, there is a Brazilian teaching common sense which frequently argues about using films in classrooms. While numerous anecdotal accounts highlight how cinema can make lessons more engaging and dynamic, we must recognize that employing the seventh art requires careful consideration to maximize its gnoseological potential in School Sociology.

Building on this foundation, this text has two objectives: 1) to examine and discuss the limits and possibilities of working with movies in the sociology classes, and 2) to present a concrete practice and materials that emerged based on this analysis. Methodologically, the intervention followed a structured sequence: the movies were shown to the class, and then, after one or two sessions, we discussed the sociological concepts and theories.

This paper is divided into five parts. Following this introduction, Section 2 contextualizes some aspects about the school where the activities took place, the curricular status of sociology in Brazilian schools, and the PRP and Brazilian Education. Section 3 encapsulates the theoretical framework that underpinned the activity and the debate. Section 4 then discusses the results, which encapsulate the movies and sociological contents covered in those lessons and discusses the students' reaction to them. The fifth and concluding section synthesizes key findings and their implications for movie usage in sociological education.

2. Contextual Elements

The contemporary Brazilian education system is a tripartite responsibility involving the Federal Government, the Federal Units (the States) and

in the daily routine of the sociology lessons that take place within Brazilian schools (Mocelin, 2020).

2 In Brazil, most of the Sociology courses are actually Social Sciences courses in which there is also Anthropology and Political Science courses.

3 In Brazilian higher education there are three paths of Graduate Degrees: *Tecnólogos*, usually applied/vocational skills for the work market (e.g, Graphic Design or System Analysis and Development); Bachelors, they tend to teach the skills and abilities to form an academic researcher, professor or professional (e.g, Biotechnology, Engineering or Food Industry); and *Licenciatura*, the Brazilian Teaching Degrees (e.g, Mathematics, Biology, Social Sciences, History). Graduates may proceed to Post-Graduate studies (Master's, then Doctoral).

4 To receive a *Licenciatura* degree, all students must complete at least one semester of mandatory supervised pedagogical internship. During this period, students must contact a school and then assist the teacher then assuming responsibility and even teaching some lessons.

the Municipalities[5]. Each of the three levels of Brazilian schools falls under the responsibility of either the States or the Municipalities. On the other hand, the Federal Government has the obligation to fund and coordinate the process. Brazilian Education is formally divided into two main levels: Basic Education (normally serves from early childhood through secondary education) and Higher Education (Universities and Colleges). This analysis is going to focus on the specific organization of Basic Education.

Basic Education comprises three stages. The first is Child Education, which serves children from four to about six or seven years old and is primarily a Municipal responsibility. The second part is Elementary School, which is divided into nine years of education and serves children around the ages of seven to fifteen. This stage is further divided into two parts: Elementary School I, which comprises years one to five and it is solely a Municipal responsibility; and Elementary School II, from years six to nine, which is a State and Municipal joint responsibility. Finally, there is Secondary Education, which is a three-year period for teens aged 15-18 and is a State responsibility. Higher Education, in contrast, is a Federal responsibility (Lei n. 9,394, 1996).

It is important to note that responsibilities can sometimes overlap; for example, a Municipal responsibility may also be fulfilled by the Federal Government or the State, and vice versa. It is not uncommon to find Federal Schools, State Universities or Municipal Schools offering Secondary education. The legislation only states that a government level must be the primary emtity responsible for guaranteeing the offer of each of the specific steps mentioned above. Furthermore, Brazilian Law allows individuals to prosecute the governing entity (Federal Government, State Administration or Municipality) in order to force it to provide education when one's children's right to education is not being fulfilled (Cury & Ferreira, 2010).

Historically, the disciplinary status of sociology in Brazilian basic education has been historically unstable, periodically being included or excluded from the national curriculum (Silva, 2010). In the current structure, sociology classes are mainly a mandatory subject in High School. Nevertheless, Brazilian High Schools have been undergoing a neoliberal reform since 2017 following the 2016 legal coup (Cássio, 2019). This reform had temporarily taken away the obligatory presence of subjects like sociology, philosophy and arts, while there is an obligation to teach "knowledge and practices" regarding those areas (Ministério da Educação, 2018).

This pedagogical restructuring also introduced new subjects, such as Life Project, World of Work (which differs from sociology of work lessons) and Entrepreneurship (in various forms) that diluted precious sociology's curricular space, reducing the number of sociology lessons. These pedagogical changes reflect neoliberal governance and discourse (Rebonatto Neto, 2024) and, as Laval (2019) argues, align with global efforts to transform education systems into factories for an uncritical labor force. Fortunately,

5 In Brazil, the municipality is equivalent to the counties in the USA or *comune* in Italy.

these measures were revoked (Nogueira, 2024), yet the precarious historical curricular status of sociology (Silva, 2010) suggests this reprieve may represent merely a temporary victory rather than a permanent resolution.

However, the school in which the interventions were conducted is a distinctive case within Brazil's educational landscape. As a federal school, this institution enjoys a curricular autonomy, enabling it to develop its own curricular structure through an original interpretation of national pedagogical instructions. As a result, this school has two weekly hours of sociology lessons in every one of the three years of high school and is exempted from teaching the subjects introduced by the 2017 reform. Also, the school is institutionally and physically integrated as part of a federal public university, granting it a physical and human structure that can be compared to private schools. These advantages include reliable technological infrastructure (such as projectors, computers, stable energy, and internet connection) and specialized facilities (like auditoriums and laboratories). That said, despite these structural benefits, the school still manifests some of the deficiencies common to public schools in Brazil: lack of drinking fountains, old or malfunctioning technological apparatus, lack of soap or toilet paper in the bathrooms, old tables and chairs, and non-functioning ventilators and air conditioners.

The school's admission policy is also different: students are accepted through a lottery system. This process also has affirmative action provisions modeled after Brazil's quota policies for the public universities and civil services. Specifically, students with low income[6], racialized backgrounds (black, mixed or indigenous), and/or disabilities have 50% of the seats reserved for them. Consequently, this school's classes are diverse having people who have different social experiences.

The participation of Social Sciences students from the UFRGS was facilitated by the PRP. This federal initiative PRP was[7] administered by the Brazilian Higher Education Personnel Improvement Coordination (*Coordenadoria de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* – CAPES) and aimed to subsidize a more in-depth insertion of the students from the last half of the *Licenciaturas* courses in Brazilian public schools by paying monthly stipends[8]. Each edition of the program had an 18-month placement period. During this time, *Licenciatura* students would be dually mentored by both a professor (coordinator of a subject of the program within the university) and a teacher. Initially the student would

6 This low income lime is set at 1.5 Brazilian minimum wages. Since the minimum wage was R$1,412.00 (around US$ 275.00/€ 245.00) in May 2024, this low income line was close to R$ 2,118.00 (around US$ 413.00/€ 366.00).

7 In late 2024 the program was discontinued. with its target demographic being incorporated into Brazil's Institutional Teaching Initiation Scholarship Program (*Programa Institucional de Bolsas de Iniciação à Docência* – PIBID), another teacher development initiative.

8 The students were paid R$ 700.00 (or around US$ 135.00/€ 120.00). The school teacher and the professor were also paid: R$ 1,100.00 and R$ 2,000.00 (or around US$ 210.00/€ 185.00 and US$ 390.00/€ 345.00) respectively.

only accompany and assist the school teacher in classroom activities, gradually assuming teaching responsibilities, including lesson planning and delivery.

The PRP aimed primarily to retain *Licenciatura* students in order to form teachers and encourage them to work as such. Also, the PRP tried to enhance the mandatory internship of the *Licenciaturas* by 1) providing financial support for students that are working with and as teachers and 2) extending the duration and continuity of the practices given to a school of said internship, since the regular internship is an amalgamation of one semester classes in which the student may switch schools. Furthermore, this initiative tried to operationalize the tripartite mission of Brazilian universities: learning, research and extension (CAPES, 2022).

The pedagogical activities analyzed in this study were developed within the PRP and conducted with a first-year high school class of students during the first semester of 2023. Using four internationally diverse films (three feature-length and one short film from Brazil, the United States, Denmark, and Norway respectively). These movies were chosen in order to explore core sociological themes, including social deviance and gender/sexuality studies. This film selection served as the primary pedagogical tool to achieve our objective: cultivating students' sociological imagination (Mills, 1972).

Under the joint guidance of the school's sociology teacher, we designed these activities to help novice sociology students – encountering the discipline for the first time – make meaningful connections between their personal experiences, broader socio-historical phenomena, and the sociological concepts presented. This approach operationalized Mills' (1972) fundamental premise about sociology's purpose: to elucidate the intersection between individual biographies and historical processes.

3. Theoretical framework

The main theoretical concept on which our pedagogic practice was grounded during the interventions was sociological imagination. C. Wright Mills (1972) conceptualized sociological imagination as the ability that the sociologist has to establish links and correlations between macro-level historical phenomena (typically covered in history lessons) and personal microx-social experiences, such as biographies and the stories of ordinary day-to-day life. Within this framework, sociology classes are positioned as a space in which this ability may be developed by the students with the help of the teachers.

In pedagogical terms, the practice of sociological imagination in sociology lessons has implications for students' perception of the world. This perspective allows the students to perceive themselves as agents in society, giving them the systematic tools to develop their critical thinking skills about current cultural artifacts, social values, and personal experiences. In

short, to properly help students develop social imagination, it is imperative to have the participation, or at least the interest, of the students.

A pedagogic approach based on sociological imagination requires stance from the teachers in order to enable their students to exercise this capability. Educators must recognize the students in the way that Paulo Freire (1996) proposes: the people that he/she teaches are not passive receptacles in which the teacher deposits knowledge. Students are active individuals with prior knowledge and experiences, which may be naive or inaccurate about aspects of reality, but they are not a *tabula rasa*. As Freire (1996, 2000) states, Education is not analogous to banking. While perceiving their interlocutors and activity in this manner, teachers need to recognize that they do not carry "The Truth" that will enlighten people in the dark. Teaching is guiding students in order to enable them to critically analyze their reality and collectively build knowledge in order to act upon said reality. If pedagogical practice is based on this framework, the classroom becomes a space where personal experiences are not merely shared but systematically interrogated as sociological evidence (Freire, 1996).

The pedagogical practices were further informed by Brazil's National Curriculum Guidelines for Secondary Education (*Orientações Curriculares para o Ensino Médio* – OCEM) (Secretaria de Educação Básica, 2006), which establish the denaturalization and estrangement of the world as central learning objectives of sociology classes. These processes facilitate students in experiencing society with a sociological approach, allowing them to acknowledge that social phenomena and, by extension, their personal affairs are not natural occurring phenomena. They are social constructions that are historically and socially informed, which means that societies are subject to changes over time. To summarize, that bibliography makes possible to build lessons and interventions that enable students to understand that they inhabit a web of preexisting structures, values, institutions and dynamics that are not in control of any particular individual, but are actually the result of social and historical dynamics. The OCEM also directly links this pedagogical approach to building education and society based on Human Rights and Democracy.

This framework positions sociology – both as a scientific field and a school subject – as inherently political, a trait it shares with the broader social sciences (Rebonatto Neto, 2023). Since sociological inquiry establishes a field of knowledge and research practices in which society, power, and institutions are systematically estranged and denaturalized, some social actors frequently discredit sociology as eminently political or ideological, criticizing its apparent inutility (Bourdieu, 2019). Yet, it is not science that politicizes reality, rather, reality itself is inherently politicized; so much so that, since Weber (2011), even advocating for a sociological analysis of a phenomenon stirs opposing values, parties, and groups. Some of these parties may even try to suppress an analysis and even try to stop sociological scrutiny of aspects of our social lives.

Sociology's political dimension does not equate to an alignment with a particular ideology or political party. In actuality, this commitment implies that sociologists are often forced to make a political statement just to acknowledge that an aspect of social life can be an object of scientific research. That is by itself a political issue, since recognizing a problem as worthy of being looked upon by sociology way is political, because there are groups actively working to try to keep some matters away from the sociological eye (Rebonatto Neto, 2023). To summarize this political commitment of sociology is the acknowledgment that our own field of research and object of study can never achieve a "neutral science" status, nor should it aspire to do so, as it always deals with politically charged topics.

Once biases are acknowledged (even at the genesis of any particular sociological investigation) it becomes imperative for sociology to critically examine interests and biases embedded within its sources. In the particular context of School Sociology, this scrutiny must extend to the materials brought into the classroom. Such an approach necessitates the unveiling of the dominant ideology and the apparatuses through which it operates. Louis Althusser (1980) argues that dominant ideology functions through a variety of State Ideological Apparatuses (ISA)[9]. These are devices that are responsible for inculcating messages, values and moral imperatives of the bourgeois ideology, effectively interpellating individuals into social subjects. Among these apparatuses, it is possible to identify (as key examples) the media, cinema, the legal system, religious institutions and, crucially, the school system itself.

School Sociology is, therefore, an inherently political endeavor: one that enables students to forge connections between their experiences and the historical and sociological processes, thereby exercising sociological imagination (Mills, 1972). Through this practice, sociology lessons create opportunities for students to estrange and denaturalize the values and prejudices they carry, fostering an educational environment rooted in Human Rights and democratic principles (Rebonatto Neto, 2023). Moreover, School Sociology demands a Freirean political commitment from educators, recognizing that 1) their students already arrive in the classroom with knowledge (Freire, 1996) and 2) that education holds the transformative power to change students and, in turn, the world (Freire, 2000). Given these characteristics, sociology lessons are a vital space for cultivating critical thinking skills within Brazilian schools: they provide students with a structured yet dynamic setting to interrogate, reflect, and engage with the social world in a controlled and safe environment.

9 It is crucial to note that Althusser (1980) does not segregate between the public and private sectors when conceptualizing the ISAs. His Marxist framework conceptualize the State as a tool in the bourgeoisie domination over the working class. This social agent and its law, enterprises, media outlets, schools is part of the many ways that this *status-quo* is maintained. Consequently, the state itself becomes fundamentally bourgeois in character, serving as both product and perpetrator of class domination.

Nevertheless, the mere presence of sociology as a subject in the curriculum is not sufficient to foster critical thinking among students. The pedagogic practice of School Sociology itself must be done with this goal in mind. Mocellin (2021), in his study on sociology teachers' practices, identified three ideal types of School Sociology practices. The first type, Spontaneous Sociology, is characterized by an over-reliance on student-centered activities, such as debates, fanzine construction and discussions about students' or educators' personal life. The problem is not the practices themselves, as they can indeed make for engaging lessons. The real question is the lack of theoretical and conceptual elements. This approach reduces sociology to something akin to a casual conversation, lacking the theoretical framework to properly analyze society. The second, Scholastic Sociology, represents the opposite extreme. Whereas Spontaneous Sociology tends to neglect theoretical baggage, Scholastic sociology is solely focused on that. Lessons under this model focus only on theories, concepts, and the biography of canonical authors of sociology, having little to no dialogue between the theories and the empirical reality of students.

Finally, Alive Sociology emerges as a Hegelian dialectical synthesis of the preceding approaches of School Sociology. While it combines crucial elements from both types (like the theoretical elements and the discussion of students and teachers' experiences), this type is not merely the sum of the beneficial elements of Spontaneous and Scholastic Sociology. Essentially, Alive Sociology introduces the importance of rigorous research in the classroom (via school assignment) and recognizes the political nature and themes of the subject.

In pedagogical-practical terms, Alive Sociology must incorporate two central elements from Paulo Freire's educational propositions. First, educators need to take into account students' reality and their knowledge when preparing and delivering a lesson. Freire (1996) argues that the only way to really teach the students is to also learn from them. The best way to do this is to cover themes, give examples, and use vocabulary from the students' backgrounds and lives. In summary, teachers have to make themselves and the topics about which they speak understandable. Second, the educators need to achieve a balance between liberty and the teacher's authority. Being a good educator does not mean being the "good teacher" that lets everything happen in their classroom. It actually means knowing when to ask for silence and to be serious without being authoritarian, disregarding students' contributions and experiences (Freire 1996). In other words, an Alive Sociology teacher must be an educator who encourages students to participate and guides the discussion, without trying to make students' lives harder. In other terms, teachers have the authority, so they must guide the discussion towards the subject's themes; they also have the theoretical baggage, but must link those theories with the students' biographies.

In short, sociology teaching is a deeply theoretically and politically motivated effort in pedagogical practice. To properly teach Alive Sociology, an educator must adopt a pedagogical-critical stance towards theories, prac-

tices, and politics. Such posture demands constant attention, revision, and honesty towards the teachers, themes and contents biases. Without these precautions, sociology risks becoming mere chatter or a dull historical narrative, losing its transformative potential.

4. Results and discussion

The following films were presented to students: *The Storyteller* (Villaça, 2009), *The mask you live in* (Newsom, 2015), *A perfectly normal family* (Reymann, 2020), and *What is a Woman?*[10] (Håskjold, 2020). The first is a Brazilian production depicting the story of Roberto Carlos Ramos, a boy who faced significant social challenges during his life and time at the State Foundation for the Welfare of Minors (*Fundação Estadual para o Bem Estar do Menor* – FEBEM), which promised quality education to poor families' children, but functioned more as a prison-school and gateway to criminal activity than an actual educational facility. Despite these circumstances, Roberto's life changed when he encountered a French pedagogue who cared for him and eventually became his guardian. Through this film, Howard Becker's (2008) concept of social deviance was explored. According to the author, any social conduct can only be a social deviation from the norms if it is conceived and perceived as such. As a result, some kinds of unlawful behaviors are not social deviations, while some legal conducts may be perceived as one. To illustrate, piracy is a felony, nevertheless piracy is not perceived as such, but homosexuality, even not being illegal anymore, is unfortunately perceived as a social deviation in many social contexts.

The remaining movies were used to explore a broader unit on gender and sexuality studies. The second movie, a documentary from the USA that has achieved classical status in Brazilian sociology classes, examines the social construction of masculinities, analyzing problematic aspects of the American masculine norms such as violence, coercive sexual expectations, and the persistent pressure to perform invulnerability. The third is Danish and presents a family narrative centered on a father's gender transition, explored through the perspective of the couple's youngest child as they navigate both internal emotions and external social reactions. Finally, the fourth one is a Norwegian short film which addresses transgender access to public spaces, particularly public bathrooms. The narrative unfolds when a discussion starts inside a pool locker-room about who should be allowed to enter the feminine restroom after a trans woman enters the place about.

In this thematic unit, themes such as the construction of masculinities and femininities, gender, sexual orientation, sexual expression and biological sex were discussed. These themes were presented as interrelated yet distinct social constructs, illustrated by using The Genderbread Person (Killerman, 2017), a pedagogic tool designed to facilitate classroom discussions

10 Not to be confused with Matt Walsh's homonymous far-right documentary.

about these themes. The theoretical framework presented to students incorporated Pierre Bourdieu's (2002) concepts of Symbolic Violence – subtle but structural forms of violence that are perpetrated by dispositions and prejudices, feelings inculcated in the *habitus* – and of Dominant Cultural Arbitrary – the notion that cultural norms are socially constructed rather than natural, and reflect power relations rather than inherent truths.

In subsequent lessons, we examined the debate about gender-inclusive language in Portuguese. According to Fiorin (2022), language is a social construct, which means that the written or spoken code is different across time and space: e.g., 15th century Portuguese and the trans-African dialect *Pajubá*. Language is also "unavoidable" since it is only through language that humans structure thought, actions and reality itself (Barthes, 1978). As a result, language is a power structure that is able to nominate what is perceived as real, material or "a being" and, by opposition, what is not a question, not alive, "not a being". For non-binary people, language is something that, in many cases, does not recognize their existence.

The issue of gender-inclusive language presents unique challenges in Lusophone contexts. Unlike English – which predominantly uses gender-neutral terms – Portuguese relies heavily on gendered grammar, with most nouns, adjectives, and pronouns marked as either masculine or feminine. This binary structure extends to plural forms, where masculine pronouns default to the inclusive form for mixed-gender groups. Consequently, developing gender-inclusive linguistic alternatives in Portuguese involves far greater complexity than in English-speaking countries (Fiorin, 2022).

By using these films and conceptual framework, we developed expository-dialogue lessons that served a double purpose: (1) to guide students' interpretation of the films towards our intended theoretical-sociological goal, avoiding misinterpretations; (2) to encourage students to draw connections between cinematic narratives and sociological theories. In lessons prior to the film-based interventions, the students were really quiet. There were some who spoke, but only to make small, and often jocose, comments about the discussion. Few were those who actually tried to listen and discuss the sociological concepts brought into the classroom. After adopting the film-based approach students started demonstrating heightened interest, often bridging film analysis with personal experiences during discussions. Notably, even typically reserved students actively participated in dialogues deconstructing gender and sexuality as social constructs. One compelling example emerged during our examination of symbolic violence. A frequently disruptive student (who often struggled with classroom norms) demonstrated remarkable sociological insight by comparing gendered violence in vintage advertisements to racist caricatures in early 20th-century cartoons. Thus, this approach appeared particularly effective in fostering students' engagement.

Beyond increased engagement, students also demonstrated consistent academic improvement in subsequent assessments and projects. Their per-

formance indicated not only comprehension of the sociological concepts discussed, but also an emerging ability to critically examine and denaturalize (Secretaria de Educação Básica, 2006) their own lived experiences and cultural assumptions.

These findings suggest that fictional films, while not documentary records, serve as effective pedagogical tools for rendering sociological concepts tangible and relatable. By grounding abstract theories in narrative form, cinema provides students with conceptual anchors: even dramatized scenarios retain enough sociological realism to facilitate critical analysis. Also, the use of movies enables the connection between the concepts that were taught in classes and personal experience (Freire, 1996; Mills, 1972). This mediated engagement may be particularly valuable when analyzing complex social phenomena, as students gradually develop the ability to interrogate both on-screen representations and their own social worlds through a sociological lens.

This pedagogical approach also challenged students' preconceptions of sociology lessons, namely: 1) as being a boring subject that debates only archaic authors or 2) as a time in which the students can do everything they want because they would pass anyway. The students were, in general, eager to learn and really motivated. Consequently, it is possible to assume that such an approach moved away from the spontaneous and encyclopedic practices of School Sociology, becoming more alive; going beyond mere theoretical debates or critique of decontextualized social aspects. Therefore, this approach to movie usage in the classroom enables the dialogue between student and teacher (Freire, 1996) where concrete narratives served as entry points for theoretical exploration. This progression facilitated politicization – drawing from the political commitment of Social Sciences (Rebonatto Neto, 2023) –, denaturalization and estrangement of preconceived ideas about everyday experiences and the topics discussed (Secretaria de Educação Básica, 2006).

While film-based pedagogy offers significant benefits, three critical considerations emerge for its effective implementation in Brazilian classrooms. First, most schools in Brazil do not possess the proper structure and equipment to exhibit movies. Unfortunately, it is known in Brazil that many schools do not have the proper structure to function: e.g., computers, internet, projectors and libraries. Even basic things such as piped water, sewage treatment, and electricity are not a reality for some schools (Soares Neto *et al.*, 2013; Vasconcelos *et al.*, 2021). Second, teachers must maintain critical awareness of films' ideological dimensions. Even alternative or art-house cinema still circulate through some State Ideological Apparatus, so, they often, carry the ideas and biases from the Apparatus through the type of media that circulates and the industry that produced it (Althusser, 1980), frequently reproducing dominant narratives. If not properly recognized and discussed, these values may hinder potential critical thinking opportunities, limiting the potential of using such pieces of media. Third, structured facilitation remains essential. While student interpretations can

often yield valuable insights, unfocused viewing risks devolving into a situation in which personal reactions substitute for systematic analysis or completely deviate from the original pedagogical proposition. Teachers must therefore exercise a Freirean pedagogic authority (Freire, 1996), guiding discussions to connect film content with sociological concepts while leaving space for student perspectives. Doing so is imperative to avoid a(n) (accidental) spontaneous practice of School Sociology.

These cautions highlight the crucial need for adequately trained sociology teachers who are capable of navigating complex sociopolitical discussions without reinforcing existing prejudices. Effective sociology instruction demands educators who can skillfully guide students through the processes of politicization, estrangement, and denaturalization of social phenomena (Rebonatto Neto, 2023; Secretaria de Educação Básica, 2006). However, the reality is that an adequately trained sociology teacher in Brazil is a hard specimen to come by. According to data from the Brazilian School Census (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira [Inep], 2022), only 39.3% of the educators who teach School Sociology have a *Licenciatura degree* in Social Sciences (or one of the specific areas), representing the lowest qualification rate among all school subjects – a full 4 percentage points below foreign language instruction (43.3%), the second lowest-ranked discipline (Inep, 2014).

This dual deficit creates substantial barriers to implementing critical media pedagogy in Brazilian sociology classrooms. Furthermore, the shortage of properly trained sociology teachers not only limits the effective use of films as teaching tools but also compromises the discipline's capability to fulfill the political commitment of social sciences (Rebonatto Neto, 2023) and the pedagogical goals of estrangement and denaturalization of reality (Secretaria de Educação Básica, 2006). Effectively, this dual deficit hinders any kind of potential that School Sociology may have to foster sociological critical thinking among students.

5. Concluding remarks

The students' increased participation and performance in debates, tests, and projects indicate that the use of movies effectively enhanced their engagement in sociology lessons. The students appeared to have gained a good understanding of the topics and concepts covered in the lessons since they started to perform well in all of their sociology school work. Consequently, it is possible to assume that the students did in fact build their understanding of the social phenomena discussed that impact our lives and trajectories. In other terms, they learned to use (in an elementary way) their sociological imagination to connect the movies, the sociological theory, and their lives. Therefore, the movie usage in sociology classes opens a myriad of possibilities for developing funnier and more engaging lessons, and it alleviates part of the theoretical burden inherent of sociology and

the social sciences. Also, this type of practice made possible the practical exercise of important concepts and authors in Brazilian Pedagogical *intelligentsia* – Paulo Freire (1996) – and in the broader sociological field – C. Wright Mills (1972).

However, it is essential to recognize that using films in sociology classes involves more than simply screening them. Educators must actively guide the students' engagement by: (1) deconstructing the films' ideological underpinnings and their relationship to Ideological State Apparatuses; and (2) steering discussions to maintain academic rigor, preventing the reduction of sociological analysis to mere casual conversation. These demands highlight the need for specialized and adequate training of sociology teachers, a requirement that remains unmet and seems very unlikely to be fulfilled. Furthermore, structural deficiencies in the Brazilian public education system – such as inadequate internet access, computers, and projectors – often prevent schools from using films effectively.

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