

## ANTI-RACIST COMMUNICATION

COMUNICAÇÃO ANTIRRACISTA: notas crítico-reflexivas e propositivas

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### Francisco Leite

PhD in Communication Sciences, School of Communications and Arts, University of São Paulo, Research Group – Anti-Racist Studies in Communication and Consumption (ArC2/CNPq). São Paulo, SP, Brazil.

[leitefco@gmail.com](mailto:leitefco@gmail.com)



0000-0003-0710-3339

Mailing address: ECA-USP | ArC2 - Department of Public Relations, Advertising and Tourism. Prof. Lúcio Martins Rodrigues Ave., 443 - Building 3 - Butantã, São Paulo - SP, 05508-010, Brazil.

Received on: 03.05.2025

Accepted on: 05.05.2025

Published on: 07.22.2025

### ABSTRACT

This article aims to articulate a theoretical framework – through a conceptually driven research approach – that facilitates both individual and collective engagement with the theoretical and practical dimensions of anti-racist communication. As a result, this study offers a set of critical and propositional insights that contribute to the field of communication by introducing conceptual references and analytical tools capable of supporting productive dialogues between communication studies and anti-racism studies. Furthermore, it endeavors to promote the development of communicative practices and theoretical perspectives that position anti-racism as a foundational principle for disruptive, subversive, and creative interventions.

**KEYWORDS:** Communication; Anti-racism; Racism; Social change.

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This article aims to outline and explain the conceptual connections between theoretical and practical thinking about communication and anti-racism. It explores how this articulation can shape the concept of anti-racist communication by examining points of dialogue. Furthermore, the article seeks to organize and develop critical and propositional notes that clarify how the connection between communication and anti-racism can contribute to a more attentive and committed form of communication. This approach can boost interventions, such as ideas, policies, and practices, by mobilizing operational instances and flows of meaning production to promote effective anti-racist actions.

In this regard, this conceptual (MacInnis, 2011) and non-exhaustive literature review-grounded work seeks to advance reflections on the following questions: How can we understand the meaning of anti-racist communication? What theoretical and practical concepts bring communication and anti-racism together?

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<sup>1</sup> A preliminary version of this text was presented and discussed at the 31st Annual Meeting of the Brazilian National Association of Graduate Programs in Communication (Compós) in the working group "Communication and Sociability".

The dialogical exercise proposed herein is guided and supported, though not exclusively, by Sodr e's communication theory (2002, 2006, 2019a, 2021), as well as by his reflections on Brazilian racism. Moreover, this study is informed by a substantial corpus of national and international contributions on racism and anti-racism (Carneiro, 2023; Mbembe, 2020; Almeida, 2019; Collins, 2019; hooks, 1992; Kendi, 2019; Bonnett, 2000, among others). The recommendations of Gillborn (2006) are also considered, emphasizing the importance of informing and strengthening anti-racism debates through the lens of Critical Race Theory.

In alignment with these perspectives, this paper also incorporates other "oppositional knowledge" (Collins, 2000, p. 299). Among these are Freire's theory of praxis (2005), Black feminist thought, as well as decolonial and postcolonial studies. The theoretical framework adopted is interdisciplinary, drawing from communication, education, psychology, anthropology, history, philosophy, sociology, and other fields of knowledge.

The text is organized into three sections. The initial section offers a concise overview of the fundamental concepts inherent in Sodr e's communication theory. This theory posits that communication should be regarded as a science of the common<sup>2</sup>, as well as a form of post-disciplinary<sup>3</sup> thought. The second section mobilizes reflections on racial issues in Brazil, emphasizing the concepts of racism and anti-racism. The third part of the paper focuses on the discussion of the theoretical and practical meanings that underpin the idea-intervention of anti-racist communication. To illustrate this point, the text presents some Brazilian anti-racist communication initiatives.

### **Communication: The Radical Organization of the Common**

According to Sodr e (2019a,2021), the integration of the communicational episteme within contemporary contexts necessitates the transcendence of conventional so-

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<sup>2</sup> From an epistemological perspective, Sodr e differentiates between the concepts of "common" and "community", allocating the former term to signify a primordial, ontological disposition inherent to the phylogenesis and ontogenesis of the human being. "The community, in turn, is not the institutional modernization of this primordial common, but something in which we always are, in the sense that we always communicate, within the distribution of spaces and identifications which constitute the cohesive tie. Thus, there are various forms of community [...]. Each one of them results from a subjectivation which, in turn, establishes a new common" (Sodr e, 2019a, p. 160).

<sup>3</sup> Sodr e (2019a) conceptualizes communication as a new type of social science, one that integrates and builds bridges with various other disciplines of social thought (anthropology, sociology, social psychology, economics, etc.). According to his perspective, communication significantly relativizes the objects of these social disciplines. It is the science of the twenty-first century.

biological and linguistic models that perceive communication as a mere conduit for information transmission. Instead, an ethical-political conceptualization of communication is imperative. In this view, communication is conceived as the original connection or organization of the common, as the cohesive binding of community, born from human experiences and sociability.

Therefore, it is a comprehensive field encompassing processes of organization and reverberation of influences within the realm of social cohesion. In the radical sense of the term, as elucidated by Sodr  (2021), communication is defined as the organizational act of sharing or mediating that which is essential to the human common.

This radical perspective is rooted in the Latin notion of *communicatio*. In essence, this approach entails the approximate resolution of salient differences through the utilization of symbolic forms. From this perspective, communication can be equated to symbolic sharing, enacted through mediations (the with) of a being-in-common or a community conceived as original identity.

Accordingly, communication can be understood as a redescriptive science of the human common, encompassing both the intersubjective binding inherent to communal cohesion and the social relations governed by media. It is important to note that communication is not merely the transmission of information or verbal dialogue; rather, it is a modeling form (the organization of real exchanges) and a process (action) of bringing differences into common (Sodr , 2014).

In the context of Sodr 's theoretical framework, communication is defined as the phenomenon that occurs at the threshold of the death of the individual being, thereby giving way to binding and the common (Sodr , 2023a). The object of communication studies, therefore, can be understood as this human common, articulated through three operative levels or dimensions: (1) binding, (2) relational, and (3) critical-cognitive or metacritical.

The so-called binding level is defined as the invisible ties that connect the self to the other, thereby giving rise to the concept of "being-in-common," whether in the context of social struggles for political and economic hegemony or as an ethical endeavor to address communal tensions (Sodr , 2002, p. 223). This binding does not encompass semantics; rather, it incorporates the symbolic. Consequently, it includes energy or force.

According to Sodr  (2019a), the dynamics of binding extend beyond the mere establishment of contact, encompassing the question of how individuals and groups maintain cohesion and social integration. The binding is the attractive tie. This phe-

nomenon can be understood as the original symbolic obligation, a symbolic debt owed to the social group. This commitment is often described as a commitment that is either "life-or-death in nature" (Sodré, 2001, p. 2).

This is a vicarious relationship, defined as a type of connection that may occur consciously or unconsciously, articulated at the symbolic (force and energy), psychic, and affective levels, through the "logic of the heart" and "affective disposition" (Sodré, 2019a).

Sodré (2019b) identifies several forms of binding relationships, including family, romantic, communal, affective, friendship, pity, and compassion relations, among others. This perspective is further elaborated upon by Mbembe (2017, 2020), who emphasizes the role of ideologies of separation in the formation of social ties, albeit in a negative capacity.

These social binding forces, as Mbembe outlines, manifest through concepts such as enmity, subjugation, and the lingering emotional traces of racism. In essence, Sodré (2019b, p. 881) posits that vicarious relationships facilitate the exteriorization of the interior, thereby inducing a reciprocal transformation of the external environment.

In this existential and social insertion, which goes beyond a mere interactive process, people differentiate and identify themselves within the dynamics of binding. This differentiation occurs through recognition and symbolic responsibility toward the collective (Sodré, 2007, p. 9).

The social binding forces, therefore, do not necessarily occur through media, although the media may shape their expression and reinforcement (Sodré, 2015, p. 123). According to Sodré (2001, p. 2), media act upon the externality of these relationships, addressing them in their relational dimension<sup>4</sup>.

This conception posits that the relational level signifies ethical anthropotechnics, or practices of a corporate nature (private or state-run), aimed at fostering relationships or interactions among social subjects through information technologies such as print media, radio, television, advertising, and so forth (Sodré, 2002, p. 234). This level encompasses secondary relations, rearranged and fabricated by media. It is at this level, for instance, that the majority of media studies are found, the internal economy of communication (Sodré, 2015, p. 124).

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<sup>4</sup> According to Sodré, "what sociology today calls the "social relation" is simply the visible surface of this tie or binding, under which differences and oppositions, the latency of the transformations, and the passages from one symbolic form to another all churn" (Sodré, 2019a, p. 212).

Indeed, as Sodr  (2019a) asserts, this instance is the space in which academic plausibility is sought for a new type of social relationship technology, one heavily reliant on market and media. It is crucial to acknowledge the perspective of Sodr  (2002, 2021), who asserts that media function as both the mirror and the cultural mouthpiece of the market. This market, as Sodr  contends, is positioning itself, albeit with social resistance, as the "mouth of the world" (Sodr , 2021). In this context, the concept of the market as the world" fosters the emergence of what Gramscian exegetes have termed the "counter-hegemonic" struggle, or what can be alternatively characterized as social counter-movements. In this opening, communication aligns with the Greek concept of *pharmakon*, ambiguously understood as both "poison" and "cure" (Sodr , 2021).

The notion of *pharmakon* is central to this article and will be explored further in dialogue with the reflections of Mbembe (2020), hooks (1992), and Freire (2005), with the aim of discussing the conceptual foundations of anti-racist communication. In accordance with Sodr 's communication theory, the concept of mediatization is developed within the relational level. Mediatization is defined as the coordinated functioning between traditional social institutions<sup>5</sup>, individuals, and media. For him:

Mediatization is, therefore, a conceptual elaboration used to cope with a new forum of reality orientation capable of permeating social relations through the media and constituting – by means of the accelerated development of the processes of media convergence – a virtual or simulated form of life, to which we have already given the name of media *bios* (or virtual *bios*) (Sodr , 2019a, p. 80).

In this regard, it is important to stress that, according to Sodr  (2002), communication exceeds media; it is not restricted to media activities or the process of mediatization<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> The term "institutions," as employed by Sodr , encompasses a range of social institutions, including but not limited to schools, the state, the family, religion, and various associations. These institutions possess the capacity to function as both a backdrop and as active contributors to the formation of human identity (Sodr , 2006, p. 92). In contrast, he distinguishes organizations as private enterprises and corporations, among which the media has become particularly prominent in contemporary times (Sodr , 2006, p. 81).

<sup>6</sup> From a socio-semiotic perspective, Sodr  notes that the instruments used in its construction include: "signs, texts, practices, strategies, objects, and **forms of life**, or rather, elementary units of signification (words, images, etc.), significant formations, courses of actions subsumed in practices, dominant values, and the coherent centralization of content. [...]. For analysts who adhere to the linguistic paradigm of communication, these instruments are essentially acts of speech or narratives, which attributes a strictly discursive reality to the common. [...]. In the

As previously discussed, the concept of binding refers to more than a simple interactive process; it involves a profound social insertion, ranging from the imaginary dimension (latent and manifest images) to deliberation over practical conduct orientations, that is, values. This aspect unveils the ethical-political essence of the common good, which, as asserted by Sodré, extends the purview of communication beyond the confines of the media sphere, thereby conferring upon it an augmented political and scientific significance (Sodré, 2002, pp. 223–224).

The third operative level of the communicational environment is the critical-cognitive level, otherwise known as the meta-critical level. This level is concerned with the theoretical development and observational approach inherent to the systematization of practices of dissemination and strategies of binding.

In this context, communication is not conceived as a discipline in the strict sense, but rather as a means of contextualizing traditional knowledge about society. It is therefore considered a hypertextual constructum, defined as an interface of knowledges originating from various scientific fields, informed by interpretive positions. The "science" of communication presents itself as a critical activity, one that focuses on sociability, ethicality, and the practices of socialization through culture (Sodré, 2002, p. 235).

Accordingly, Sodré (2019a) contends that communication should be regarded as a distinct social science dedicated to the active generation of knowledge, emphasizing the comprehension of binding and social relationships. This assertion is supported by various theoretical interpellations that have underscored the necessity for a novel system of intelligibility within the domain of social sciences. Such a system must be capable of understanding the diversity and sensitivity inherent to the communicational process, implying:

- (a) the commitment to **redescription** of the relations between man and the neo-technology capable of accounting for the transformations in consciousness and in the self under the influx of the techno-cultural ordering of society; and (b) at the same time, the ethical-political commitment in the sense of enabling a **comprehension** of the sociocultural mutations within a horizon of self-questioning, guided by the affirmation of the essential difference of man, of his singularity (Sodré, 2019, pp. 232-233, author's emphasis).

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sphere of electronic technology, words, sounds, images, and discourse can be converted without depending on strict processes of signification. The media *bios* reveals itself not only as a form of life among others, but also as an existential orientation which attempts to impose itself in universal terms as coupled with the market" (Sodré, 2019a, p. 227, author's emphasis).

The metacritical instance, therefore, refers to self-reflection - or more precisely, to the critique of the philosophical-reflexive nature of communication, since communication suggests a new philosophy, a new way of thinking the person in this new type of society arranged by financial turbo-capitalism<sup>7</sup> (Sodré, 2015, p. 123).

In summary, it is useful to understand communication today as a new mode of organizing social relations, with social binding – the common – as the object of its episteme. In this sense, Sodré (2019b, p. 880) states that communication is a discourse of organization, of reorganization of the world and of consciousness.

From these explanatory keys, Sodré (2019b) also indicates that racial issues and their manifestations – such as prejudice and discrimination – emerge with force within the context of world and consciousness reorganization. This phenomenon is especially evident in societies marked by the colonial legacy of slavery, such as Brazil.

As Carneiro (2023) contends, Brazil has historically engaged in practices of subjugation of Black populations, including epistemicide<sup>8</sup> and altruicide<sup>9</sup> (Mbembe, 2017). Such practices are generally oriented by a pattern of Western-ethnic dominance called whiteness (Sodré, 2019b, p. 878).

This historical cycle of oppression, facilitated by communication, as evidenced by the text, systematically produces privilege and exclusion. As Carneiro summarizes, this disparity becomes evident when we consider that all spheres of power, all dimensions of well-being in society are appropriated by white people, while the entire dimension of human indignity is proportionally inhabited by Black people (Instituto Ibirapitanga, 2021, p. 45).

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<sup>7</sup> Sodré elucidates that this concept pertains to the prevailing model of capitalism in which we currently reside. Capital, in its fundamental essence, displays an inherent aversion toward human beings; nonetheless, its existence depends on them. Conversely, financial capital demonstrates a marked – if not unmitigated – hostility toward human beings. This disposition is rooted in its inherent autonomy and self-sufficiency, rendering human interaction largely superfluous. The financial system can be understood as a speculative enterprise, akin to “a game of roulette, a stock exchange, or capital transfers”. This phenomenon, characterized by its fictional nature, can be interpreted through the Marxian concept of “fictitious capital,” which refers to the process of appropriating value created by labor for the purpose of generating profit (Pereira, 2020, p. 312).

<sup>8</sup> Carneiro (2023) asserts that epistemicide, defined as the sequestration, devaluation, or annihilation of reason, serves as a mechanism for the erasure of Black individuals as subjects of knowledge and the imposition of intellectual subjugation.

<sup>9</sup> According to Mbembe, this concept refers to “the constitution of the **Other not as similar to oneself** but as a menacing object from which one must be protected or escape, or which must simply be destroyed if it cannot be subdued” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 10, author’s emphasis).

This pattern of domination is consolidated through a complex imaginary (Almeida, 2019), or an imaginary economy (Mbembe, 2020; Fanon, 2018), which systematically stigmatizes Black people, positioning them as phobic objects.

This semiotic system is comprised of hegemonic ideas and images (Souza, 2019; hooks, 1992), narratives shaped by racist and sexist logics (hooks, 1992), widely disseminated visual representations and narratives that reinforce negative stereotypes (Mbembe, 2020; Reynolds & Kendi, 2021), and the erasure of Black narratives (Carneiro, 2023).

Collectively, these symbolic elements give form to mental landscapes, discourses, and social representations that underpin the cycle of reproduction of racist imaginaries. These imaginaries are a constant presence in the formation and conditioning of the social psyche (hooks, 1992; Mbembe, 2020). By investing in the reinforcement and updating of collective memory, this complex imaginary also communicates and attempts to justify oppressive contexts, while seeking to perpetuate the matrix of domination<sup>10</sup> (Collins, 2000, p. 460), which upholds structuring racist logics in such a way that they appear to be inevitable, natural consequences.

For instance, media materialities – such as advertising, television fiction, journalism, and even AI algorithms – have traditionally and actively contributed to the dissemination of this semiotic system (Sodré, 2019; Almeida, 2019). For hooks (1992) and Schucman, in dialogue with Carneiro and Lisboa (Instituto Ibirapitanga, 2021), media – through dynamics that involve both the production and reception of its materialities – plays a central role in sustaining, reproducing, and disseminating racist imaginaries. This discussion will be resumed subsequently; for the time being, it is imperative to examine more closely the conceptual notions of racism and anti-racism that underpin this article.

### **Racism: Slavery/Racist Social Form and Raciality *Dispositif***

Employing the tenets of Black feminist thought, Carneiro (2022) underscores the pressing need to acknowledge racism as the prevailing organizing principle of Brazilian

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<sup>10</sup> According to Collins, this concept encompasses the idea of the “overall organization of hierarchical power relations for any society. Any specific matrix of domination has (1) a particular arrangement of intersecting systems of oppression, e.g., race, social class, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, ethnicity and age; and (2) a particular organization of its domains of power, e.g., structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal” (Collins, 2000, p. 299).



society. For the author, racism is an ideology<sup>11</sup> that aims to produce privileges for a social group that is constituted as superior, to the detriment of others deemed inferior.

According to Carneiro (2023), this oppressive context is configured, sustained, and reproduced through the operation of a "raciality *dispositif*" (or "raciality apparatus"). Drawing upon Foucault's theoretical framework, this concept is understood as a disciplinary mechanism that shapes racial relations within postcolonial societies, as well as the relations of sovereignty maintained with racially subordinated nations.

The raciality *dispositif*, in general terms, is initially established as an undeclared racial contract (Mills, 1997) that secures advantages for whiteness. This contract is predicated on a shared complicity in the social subjugation and/or eradication of Black individuals and non-whites in general, whether within Brazil or in other regions of the world. This dynamic is driven by the articulation of disciplinary techniques and techniques of elimination informed by biopower (Carneiro, 2023).

Carneiro (2023) further contends that this *dispositif* has operated extensively in post-Abolition Brazil (since 1888), to such an extent that, through the articulation of multiple elements, it configures raciality as a domain that produces power, knowledge, and subjectivities by denying and forbidding power, knowledge, and subjectivities.

Furthermore, it is imperative to underscore that the raciality *dispositif*, as posited by Carneiro, engenders forms of resistance. These actions can be conceptualized as "impedance practices," which, in addition to exhibiting resistance, demonstrate reactivity and creativity (Corrêa, 2019, p. 14). Such practices frequently emerge from anti-racist initiatives led by witnesses as agents of change (Leite, 2024), who intervene, confront, and prevent the raciality *dispositif* from fully achieving its goals of subjugation, exclusion, and extermination (Carneiro, 2025).

Carneiro's (2023) thought engages with the concept of "altruicide," developed by Mbembe (2017), as well as with the notion of a "slavery social form" or a "racist social form," developed by Sodr  (2023a) to explain Brazilian racism.

In alignment with Carneiro, Sodr  (2023b) proposes an approach that is distinct from that of Almeida (2019), who pedagogically conceptualizes Brazilian racism as

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<sup>11</sup> Carneiro (2023) posits that the concept of the "raciality *dispositif*" is informed by representations of Black individuals that were constructed during the colonial period. These representations, as articulated through discourses and practices, served to justify the establishment of master and slave relationships. In the context of the racialism that prevailed in the nineteenth century, the *dispositif* was instrumental in the ongoing process of articulating and resignifying these relationships. It is precisely during this period that such representations would become firmly entrenched as ideology. For Delgado and Stefancic, ideology can be understood as a "set of strongly held beliefs or values, especially dealing with governance of society" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 176).

structural. According to Sodr  (2023b), this perspective is characterized by an absence of epistemological consistency and scientific rigor, which hinders its ability to grasp the complexity of Brazilian reality.

In contrast, Sodr  (2023b) proposes an alternative understanding of racism in Brazil as a structuring phenomenon<sup>12</sup>, characterized as "color-based fascism," which is genealogically linked to a particular social form. From this standpoint, Sodr  identifies both the historical persistence and the concrete manifestation of racism as the expression of a racist social form, still operative within institutional and organizational structures.

According to Sodr  (2023b), equating structural racism with the social structure itself (i.e., the social order) is not an appropriate approach to understanding the specificity of racism in Brazil, as such a conception tends to suggest social immobility. The author further posits that the conceptualization of Brazilian racism as structural may foster the irresponsibility of racist consciousness and, consequently, impede the progress of anti-racist struggles. Consequently, the notion of structure, by itself, proves insufficient to explain the complexity of racism within the Brazilian context.

In general terms, considering the post-Abolition context – as also proposed by Carneiro (2023) – and emphasizing that racist oppression intensified and expanded from that period onward, Sodr  (2023a) interprets Brazilian racism through the notion of a systematic form (recurrent, yet lacking the legitimacy conferred by the unity of a system or structure) of discrimination based on the racial imaginary.

This concept bears resemblance to the notion of a process, suggesting an interactive dynamic involving discriminatory elements. This dynamic bears a striking resemblance to a fusion, or what is otherwise referred to as a racist social form.

The practices within this process contribute to the reproduction of the logic of subalternity imposed on the descendants of Africans – a logic derived from a specific social class order – yet they no longer constitute an economic, political, and legal structure comparable to that of a fully and formally slave-based society. There is, unquestionably, a "structuring" dimension to the phenomenon in terms of its form, which permeates institutions and shapes subjectivities across broad sectors of Brazilian society (Sodr , 2023a).

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<sup>12</sup> As Sodr  asserts, Brazilian racism is epidermal in nature, manifesting through two distinct structuring equations. The first is **morphological** or **morphophenotypical racism**, which targets the individual. The second is **cultural racism**, which targets a particular form of life, characterized by its unique customs and beliefs (Sodr , 2023a, author's emphasis).

From a para-structural perspective<sup>13</sup>, the concept of racist social form, as articulated by Sodr  (2023b), deviates from the conventional notion of a structured society. Instead, it encompasses the notion of an operative image of society, whose hegemonic substance is coloniality.

In essence, this social construct represents the image that ruling classes have historically sought to project of themselves – identifying as white. This dynamic image functions by engendering oppressive effects and multiple interdictions, manifesting in discursive productions and social practices directed at Black individuals.

In alignment with this perspective, Mbembe (2020) employs Fanon's (2018) theoretical framework to examine racism directed toward Black individuals, utilizing the concept of the *imago*. According to the aforementioned author, the ideology of whiteness has produced a specific representation of the Black individual that Black people themselves have come to internalize and faithfully reproduce, even in the most ordinary circumstances.

Within the confines of this interpretive framework, the concept of the *imago* entails the perception of the Black individual not as a human being, but rather as an object. More specifically, they are regarded as a phobic object – that is, an object that inherently evokes fear and dread. The initial apprehension of this object is mediated through the act of visual perception (the gaze) (Mbembe, 2020, p. 142).

In this context, the racist social form can encompass the concept of *imago*, as asserted by Sodr  (2023a), who suggests that this social form ultimately implies a mask or cosmetic layer for racial discrimination. This discrimination, which can be considered more than merely "structural" in the strict sense of the term, is in fact both concrete and vital. It is noteworthy that this social form is characterized by a denial and concealment of the former slave society, both in public and private spheres.

This denial involves a refusal to acknowledge or recognize the historical and cultural legacy of Africans, while the concealment refers to the deliberate efforts to hide or obscure this history and culture from public view. The denial or silencing of racism is a fundamental component of the racist social form in contemporary Brazil, whose ambiguity is an inherent variable (Sodr , 2023a).

In essence, the act of denial serves to exclude the public visibility of individuals who are descendants of enslaved people. The phenomenon is indeed being denied, yet

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<sup>13</sup> Within the "parastructure," racism is characterized as institutionally systematic rather than fully systemic. This approach presents a multifaceted challenge to understanding, encompassing both rational and affective processes, particularly in elucidating the transmission of discriminatory mechanisms (Sodr , 2023a).

simultaneously, through racist practices, differences in color and custom are being employed as mechanisms of exclusion. The racism of domination, which ensured the segregation of Black people under the slave regime, is transfigured into a racism of exclusion – aimed at preserving, under a different guise, both the irrelevance of Black individuals and the slaveholding sense of lordship (Sodré, 2023a).

In light of this, the racist social form creates the "racial relation" in the wake of a historical residual distrust or an existential aversion toward the dark-skinned person. This relation marks material and psychic spaces in intersubjective relations, while simultaneously generating convenient images that deny racism *stricto sensu* (Sodré, 2023a).

As this article seeks to demonstrate, the operational levels of communication are situated at the interfaces of intersubjective and interpersonal relations, which are shaped by racial dynamics. These operational levels include the binding level (affect, representation, and action) and the relational level (mediatization, media *bios*). This point will be revisited in the following pages.

In short, Brazilian racism, understood through the lens of the racist social form, according to Sodré (2023a), is based on an imagistic criterion (or phenotypic appearance), rather than a strictly psychological one, as the concrete and perceptible material that sustains it. However, as previously mentioned, this social form constitutes a living image of slave society, one that acts and produces racist effects primarily through institutional and organizational practices that encompass sociocultural dimensions.

This image, articulated by a complex racist imaginary – composed of ideas, narratives, representations, and so on – is created by the discourses of the white Brazilian elites. This symbolic repertoire is then transcribed and disseminated among the popular classes in ways that shape their worldviews, consciousness, emotions, and behaviors.

In this sense, as a speculative theoretical exercise, it is possible to conceive that the racist social form fuels and drives the operation of the *raciality dispositif* (Carneiro, 2023) in Brazil, given that this form operates with images and emotions. These images have been demonstrated to establish and shape behaviors, that is, to structure affects, attitudes, and practices (Sodré, 2023c). In this context, it is also pertinent to inquire: How has this racist social form been sustained, manifested, and perpetuated within Brazilian society?

As Sodré (2023a, 2023d) contends, racism in Brazil functions as an operative form of discrimination, perpetuated by institutions and organizations (whether public or private) that seek to cultivate and maintain collective memory of racial rejection and discrimination against Black populations.

Accordingly, the manifestation of racism as a social form occurs on a microscopic level within society, theorized as "molecular racism" (Sodré, 2018). This phenomenon permeates institutional and organizational entities, interweaving itself into social relations that extend beyond systemic levels to the microscopic. How is this achieved? According to Sodré (2018), the manifestation of social attitudes and behaviors, the organizational structure, and the selective policies governing access to valuable social opportunities – such as recruitment for the labor market, admission to quality schools, and selection of individuals for media representation, among other contexts – are indicative of molecular racism.

It is noteworthy that Sodré's reflections further refine Hasenbalg's (1982, pp. 96–97) conceptualizations of racism in Brazil. Hasenbalg's argument asserts that Black individuals encounter a cumulative cycle of disadvantages that hinders their social mobility. They encounter a structure of social opportunities characterized by greater inequality in comparison to their white counterparts.

In a similar vein, Gomes (2020) underscores the importance of recognition – so that changes can become possible – that racism and its cycle of cumulative disadvantage take root and reverberate in the power spaces of institutions and organizations, such as the media industry and its expressive materialities.

In light of these realities, Almeida (2019) argues that the only way for an institution to combat racism is through the implementation of effective anti-racist practices. These practices must be capable of dynamically responding to manifestations of racism and reflecting meanings and opportunities of equality to both internal and external publics.

In this context, Sodré (2023a, 2023d, 2019a) specifically emphasizes the need to intensify the fight against racism in community spaces of institutions, with the goal of significantly impacting both original ties (binding level) and secondary social relations (relational level), through "dynamics of the approximation of differences".

These dynamics acknowledge that racism operates as an organizational barrier within the domain of the sensitive, where ways of seeing<sup>14</sup> and feeling are constituted. It also manifests as a persistent shadow (Mbembe, 2020). This notion will be revisited subsequently, in the section addressing reflections on anti-racist communication.

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<sup>14</sup> For Mbembe (2017, p. 111), to see is not the same as to look. You can look without seeing. And it is not clear that what one sees is in fact what is. But looking and seeing have in common the fact that they solicit judgment, enclosing what is seen or the person who is not seen in inextricable networks of meaning – the beams of history".

However, Sodré's focus on community-based institutional contexts is not without its limitations. He emphasizes the necessity of anti-racist practices extending beyond the confines of these institutional domains. Conversely, such practices must be expanded and integrated into other social spheres, notably corporate environments – and especially the media industry – where racist practices and imaginaries are often disseminated through the production and distribution of various material outputs, such as advertisements, journalistic content, televised fiction, and cinematographic works.

But ultimately, what is anti-racism? What are its theoretical and practical implications, as well as its forms, functions, strategies, and impacts? How can anti-racism be meaningfully connected to communication? The following pages present a series of reflections that propose potential answers to these questions.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to emphasize that these directions signify an open-ended and inconclusive line of reasoning that fosters collective action within the domain of communication studies. In light of these considerations, which activate relations of shared responsibility, it becomes possible to advance in a balanced way toward engagement and exploration of some key dimensions of anti-racism.

## Anti-racism

The notion of anti-racism, a concept that emerged in the 20th century<sup>15</sup>, refers to those disruptive and subversive forms of thought and/or practice that seek to confront, eradicate, and/or ameliorate racism. In essence, “anti-racism implies the ability to identify a phenomenon – racism – and to do something about it”. It has been used to denote ideologies and practices that aim to promote racial and ethnic equality (Bonnett, 2000, p. 3).

Complementarily, Dominelli (2008) defines anti-racism as a state of mind, a sentiment, a political commitment, and a form of action to eradicate racial oppression and transform unequal social relations. In a similar vein, Kendi (2019) underscores that anti-racist individuals or institutions are those that support policies aimed at combating racism through their actions or by expressing anti-racist ideas.

Dawson *et al.* (2020) expand this understanding by highlighting that being anti-racist also involves building trust, being willing to engage in difficult conversations, critically reconstructing history, understanding biases and their origins, authentically connecting with others, practicing active listening, and taking responsibility for ideas and practices that combat racism.

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<sup>15</sup> However, according to Bonnett (2000), a historical analysis reveals the presence of anti-racist actions in various regions worldwide well before this period.

Bonnett (2000), as well as Berman and Paradies (2010), propose an understanding of anti-racism that goes beyond a narrow view of it as merely an individual or collective expression of resistance (a defiant spirit) against racism. These authors emphasize that anti-racism is not limited to opposing racism but also entails engagement in creating sustainable and equitable societies, fostering modern economies, and consolidating principles of political legitimacy that are widely accepted at the international level.

In this regard, it is imperative that such principles and initiatives guide the formulation of policies and interventions across different social spheres, with a focus on restitution, reparation, and the promotion of racial and social justice (Mbembe, 2017).

From a critical perspective, Carrim and Soudien (1999) posit that anti-racism must maintain its focus on the macro-socioeconomic forces and policies that shape institutions and organizations, as well as on the ways in which these forces influence and permeate individuals' everyday lives. Furthermore, they assert that critical anti-racism, in its responsive praxis, must:

[...] ensure a 'de-essentialized' sense of people's identities, in that it would acknowledge and incorporate the notion of "difference" within and among people [(Hall, 1992)]. It would also pierce the bipolarity of Whites versus Blacks, and thereby get to grips with the various and varying ways in which racism is experienced within and across racialized groups of people (Carrim & Soudien, 1999, p. 186).

Within this framework, Gillborn (2006, pp. 18–19) draws attention to the multiple pressures, originating from political, market-oriented, and academic rhetoric, among others, that threaten to dilute the critical content of anti-racism. These forces tend to reduce anti-racism's potency to a merely reformist level. At best, this would be a palliative that makes an unequal system appear slightly less exclusionary. At worst, it would be an empty expression used by policymakers who are not committed to structural and effective transformations.

In opposition to these pressures, and without proposing a fixed model or rule-book, the author emphatically argues that:

[...] anti-racism must remain a critical perspective concerned with a radical analysis of power and its operation through racialized processes of exclusion and

oppression. [...]. Racism is complex, contradictory, and fast-changing: it follows that anti-racism must be equally dynamic (Gillborn, 2006, p. 26).

Building on this, Gillborn (2006) advocates for greater awareness of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and its adoption in anti-racism studies to revitalize its critical foundations. Due to the scope of this paper, it will not be possible to explore the CRT framework in depth. However, the following discussion presents some of its main assumptions and tools to highlight its relevance and potential contribution to the arguments developed herein.

The CRT emerged in the 1970s within the field of legal studies in the United States. It is a progressive movement of activists and scholars who study and seek to transform the relationship between race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 3). Valdes, Culp, and Harris (2002, p. 5) note that in recent years, this framework has transcended U.S. borders and disciplines as scholars from various fields and countries have begun to engage with its extensive body of work.

Drawing on the reflections of Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000), Ferreira and Queiroz (2018, p. 211) identify five central principles shared by critical race theorists: (1) the centrality of the concepts of race and racism, (2) challenging dominant ideology, (3) committing to social justice, (4) recognizing the importance of experiential knowledge, and (5) adopting an interdisciplinary perspective.

The prevailing themes within CRT studies, as articulated by Ferreira and Queiroz (2018), encompass a comprehensive array of subjects, including: a critical evaluation of liberalism; revisionist interpretations of civil rights legislation and the discourse on progress; structural determinism; the intersectionality of race, gender, and class; essentialism and anti-essentialism; cultural nationalism and separatism; legal institutions; critical pedagogy and the representation of marginalized groups; and critique, self-critique, and counter-arguments, among others.

Additionally, Gillborn (2006) identifies three fundamental theoretical tools of CRT: (1) Storytelling and counter-storytelling: strategies aimed at questioning and casting doubt on the validity of historically accepted premises or myths, especially those upheld by racist policies and practices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017); (2) Interest convergence: Derrick Bell's thesis posits that the dominant group exhibits tolerance for progress toward racial justice solely in instances where it aligns with the group's own interests (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017); and (3) Critical White Studies: It is defined as a field of inquiry that examines the social construction of whiteness from a critical and racialized perspective (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).



At this juncture, it becomes pertinent to deliberate on the applicability and contributions of the CRT framework to the analysis of Brazilian contexts. The central question that emerges from this exercise is as follows: How, then, can this theoretical framework be mobilized to understand and intervene in realities shaped by racism, such as the Brazilian one?

Ferreira and Queiroz (2018) provide significant guidance on this matter, contending that the critical appropriation of CRT can prove advantageous for the examination of racial issues in Brazil. Nevertheless, the authors offer a word of caution:

The necessity – and concomitant possibility – of the importation of a model is outweighed by the importance of the adapted and purposeful application of a framework that can serve as a useful lens for reflecting on the national reality. At this juncture, [...] by taking into account the racial context and the role of law [and other fields of knowledge] in maintaining inequalities, [CRT] raises questions that are also relevant in Brazil when discussing the racially hierarchical structure of society and its institutions [...] (Ferreira & Queiroz, 2018, pp. 223–224, free translation).

In alignment with this understanding and taking the British context into consideration, Gillborn (2006, p. 2) posits that CRT proffers a consistent and provocative array of critical concepts and theoretical tools that "[...] establish a foundation for more substantial critical anti-racist analyses." These contributions become especially relevant for confronting and mitigating the risks of diluting and weakening the critical content that anti-racism – in its various grammars, forms, strategies, functions, and impacts (see Table 1) – must entail and preserve.

### **Key Aspects of Anti-racism**

Bonnett (2000) presents his understanding of the main aspects of anti-racism across micro-, meso-, and macrosocial levels and identifies six modes of applying this concept. According to the author, these approaches may intersect or overlap: (1) everyday anti-racism, referring to actions taken by ordinary people to combat racism in everyday interactions and popular culture, (2) multicultural anti-racism, involving practices that affirm diversity to foster empathetic imagination, creation, and solidarity, (3) psychological/cognitive anti-racism, related to the ways in which racism is identified and challenged within individual and collective consciousness, (4) radical anti-racism,

which confronts the structures of power and socioeconomic privilege that sustain and reproduce racism, often through a Marxist lens; (5) anti-Nazi and anti-fascist anti-racism; and (6) the representative organization, which encompasses initiatives by public or private institutions to ensure that their staffing, organizational cultures, and practices reflect the representativeness and participation of the communities in which they are embedded.

In this context, Wade and Moreno Figueroa (2023) explain that depending on their goals and specificities, anti-racism can be developed through various forms, either by drawing from explicit (radical) grammars or alternative ones.

According to these authors, considering these possibilities is essential to avoiding a situation in which anti-racist actions are ruled out because they are deemed "not radical enough," even though they could be useful. Based on their research, the authors explain the reasons for this strategic perspective:

Our work in Latin America impressed upon us the importance – not only for Latin America but more widely too – of appreciating the diversity of anti-racist actions, including ones that remained firmly within, and indeed actively reproduced, the structures of capitalism and liberal governance and ones that did not put racism at the center of their agendas, using instead an alternative grammar of anti-racism. These all have a contribution to make. Their contributions could, however, be strengthened by suggesting elements that derive from a radical, racialized perspective (Wade & Moreno Figueroa, 2023, p. 15).

In consideration of the aforementioned guidelines, and without the imposition of preliminary constraints, the literature has identified a range of strategies, functions, impacts, and pivotal pieces of evidence that are frequently associated with and can be produced by anti-racist interventions.

Pedersen, Walker, and Wise (2005) conducted a literature review and identified eight promising pathways for the implementation of anti-racist strategies and practices: (1) Combat false beliefs; (2) Involve the audience in the construction and implementation of anti-racist practice; (3) Invoke empathy for others; (4) Emphasize commonality and diversity; (5) Focus on changing behaviors as much as changing attitudes; (6) Meet local needs, (7) Evaluate properly; and (8) Consider the broader context rather than focusing on the individual.

Hage (2016) contributes to this discourse by underscoring six pivotal roles that anti-racism could play: (1) Reduce racist incidents; (2) Promote a non-racist [in fact,

anti-racist] culture; (3) Support victims of racism (e.g., assistance and counseling); (4) Foster the empowerment of underrepresented racial/ethnic groups; (5) Transform racist relationships, encouraging coexistence and mutual respect; and (6) Foster an a-racial culture<sup>16</sup>.

Lynch, Swartz, and Isaacs (2017) conducted a review of over fifteen years of research on anti-racist education, a topic directly aligned with the present article. They recommend that anti-racist impacts should generally mobilize three interrelated components: (1) Making systemic oppression visible (visibilising), (2) Recognizing personal complicity in oppression through unearned privilege (recognising) and (3) Developing strategies to transform structural inequalities (strategising).

Drawing on recent meta-analyses, reviews, and experimental studies conducted both in the field and in laboratory settings, Ben, Kelly, and Paradies (2020) outline a framework that highlights four anti-racist practices commonly adopted by institutions or organizations: (1) Intergroup contact; (2) Training and education; (3) Communications and media campaigns; and (4) Organisational development (both internal and external actions). According to these authors, approaches aimed at strengthening institutional commitments can overlap and/or be implemented in combination.

Consequently, Ben, Kelly, and Paradies (2020) have underscored the dearth of literature addressing these practices, highlighting the absence of comprehensive understanding and robust evidence concerning the efficacy of anti-racism initiatives.

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<sup>16</sup> Hage (2016) defines "a-racist culture" as a social space characterized by a radical indifference to race. However, Hage's use of the terms "a-racist" and "no-racist" in a positive sense requires critical analysis, as they resemble the idea of "color blindness" (Crenshaw, 1997). Kendi (2019) warns that "color blindness" is similar to the idea of being "not racist," as the colorblind individual fails to see race or racism. The language of color blindness and "not racist" masks or camouflages racism (Davis, 1997, p. 264). Multiculturalism (Apfelbaum et al., 2012) and interculturalism (Kastoryano, 2018) have been suggested as alternatives to "color blindness."

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Furthermore, these scholars emphasize the limited likelihood of success for anti-racist practices designed to promote racial and ethnic equity, reduce prejudice and discrimination, and address the contingent effects of racism, including in the field of communication studies.

**Table 1**  
*Key Aspects of Anti-racism*

<b>Grammars</b>		
(WADE & MORENO FIGUEROA, 2023)		
1. Explicit grammars of anti-racism 2. Alternative grammars of anti-racism		
<b>Forms</b>	<b>Anti-racist strategies</b>	
(BONNETT, 2000)	(PEDERSEN, WALKER & WISE, 2005)	
1. Everyday anti-racism 2. Multicultural anti-racism 3. Psychological/cognitive anti-racism 4. Radical anti-racism 5. Anti-Nazi and anti-fascist Anti-racism 6. The representative organisation	1. Combat false beliefs 2. Involve the audience 3. Invoke empathy 4. Emphasise commonality and diversity 5. Focus on changing behaviours as much as changing attitudes 6. Meet local needs 7. Evaluate properly 8. Consider the broader context	<b>Individual</b>
		1. Providing specific information about racial issues (in particular false beliefs) 2. Creating dissonance about having different values 3. Empathy
		<b>Interpersonal</b>
		1. Intergroup contact 2. Providing consensus information 3. Benefits of dialogue with other People 4. Advertising campaigns
<b>Approaches</b>	<b>Functions</b>	<b>Intended impact</b>
(BEN, KELLY & PARADIES, 2020)	(HAGE, 2016)	(LYNCH, SWARTZ & ISAACS, 2017)
1. Intergroup contact 2. Training and education 3. Communications and media campaigns 4. Organisational development	1. Reducing the incidence of racist practices 2. Fostering a [anti-racist] culture 3. Supporting the victims of racism 4. Empowering racialized subjects 5. Transforming racist relations into better relations 6. Fostering an a-racist culture	1. Making visible systemic oppression (visibilising) 2. Recognising personal complicity in oppression through unearned Privilege (recognising) 3. Developing strategies to transform structural inequalities (strategising)

Source: Adapted and updated from Leite & Batista (2023).

Within the specific context of these practices, Elias, Ben, and Hiruy (2023), similarly to Leite (2021), underscore the peripheral and often symbolic (tokenistic) role that anti-racism has played within organizations. In response to this reality, these authors advocate for reimagining anti-racism as a central organizational value, capable of guiding the development of more authentic and transformative anti-racist interventions.

In this section, it is essential to delve into the seminal contributions of Pedersen, Walker, and Wise (2005), which are in close alignment with the overarching objectives of this text. These authors emphasize that the previously discussed approaches can be operationalized through anti-racist strategies aimed, in essence, at eliminating or, at the very least, positively transforming racist beliefs and behaviors. In this regard, they also propose a critical reflection on the effectiveness of such strategies in reducing racism.

Pedersen, Walker, and Wise's (2005) literature review identified and categorized these strategies into two main dimensions: personal and interpersonal. The authors underscore the significance of cultivating these strategies in a manner that predominantly influences social relations. In accordance with Sodr e's (2019, 2023a) perspective on communication, it can be posited that these initiatives should endeavor to influence the relational and binding levels that undergird and permeate spaces of social interaction within communication processes.

Regarding individual strategies, Pedersen, Walker, and Wise (2005) identify three main approaches: (1) providing specific information about racial issues (particularly in dispelling false beliefs), (2) creating dissonance about having different values (e.g., believing oneself to be egalitarian while harboring aversions toward certain groups), and (3) empathy.

In the context of interpersonal strategies, the authors emphasize the following: (1) intergroup contact, (2) providing consensus information (i.e., the assessment of others' agreement with one's own views), (3) the benefits of dialogue with other people, and (4) advertising campaigns<sup>17</sup>.

The following reflections, succinctly expressed, pertain to the notion of racism and the potential of anti-racism as a critical lens and pathway for formulating actions aimed at confronting and dismantling it. These reflections contribute to the advancement of the theoretical development proposed in this article.

Accordingly, the subsequent section endeavors to explore the following specific inquiries: How can the dimensions of meaning within anti-racism inform and implicate communication? What conceptual notions are associated with the idea of anti-racist communication? What is the relevance of fostering a reflective and practical exercise in constructing communication practices committed to anti-racism?

### **Anti-racist Communication**

To facilitate the connection between communication and aspects of anti-racism – or, more precisely, to reflect on anti-racist communication – this text engages two complementary theoretical propositions. These are employed with the aim of didactically and dialogically accommodating and reflecting the theoretical-practical dimensions of anti-racist communication.

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<sup>17</sup> In the context of anti-racist advertising, Leite (2019) proposes several strategic approaches, including the adoption of counter-stereotypical, counterintuitive, and politically correct representations and ideas, along with a focus on the issue of colorism.

The initial framework is predicated on the interpretive model originally proposed by Sodr  (2021), who postulates an approach to communication through the Greek concept of pharmakon<sup>18</sup>, a term with two opposing meanings: "cure" and "poison." The second proposition is derived from Freire's (2005) theory of praxis, which articulates the triad "limit-acts," "limit-situations," and the "untested feasibility." The following discussion will present and interweave these two approaches.

In articulating the primary proposition, Sodr  (2021) invites the reader to understand communication as a pharmakon, defined as that which civilizationally poisons the classical corporeality of institutions while also offering 'productive' possibilities for alternative forms of social action. In this sense, to conceptualise communication through the lens of pharmakon is to comprehend it as a form of power or an agent of pharmaceutical power, endowed with the "capacity to transform the sources of death into a seeding strength, or to convert the resources of death into the capacity for healing" (Mbembe, 2017, p. 132).

However, when considering the pharmakon, it is essential to acknowledge that it does not conform to a simple binary of poison versus antidote. The specific outcomes of pharmakon administration are contingent upon the entity responsible for its administration, the conditions under which it is utilized, and the specific dosage administered. In some cases, the administration of pharmakon may result in an innocuous or merely cosmetic outcome. Moreover, it should be noted that this approach may not be considered a cure, but rather a means of preventing, controlling, or containing the issue at hand (Chau , 2000, p. 173).

According to Derrida (2005), the pharmakon must be assimilated in its multivalence, taking into account its contradictions, inconsistencies, improprieties, and risks – including a certain judgment as to who may or may not deserve it.

In this conjecture, a close examination of the institutional and organizational mediations that drive the production and dissemination of communicative initiatives, whether or not mediated by the media, is demanded in order to reflect on the dynamics of communicational pharmakon (Sodr , 2021) as they relate to racial issues.

These practices, consistent with the logic of the pharmakon, have the potential to disseminate and resonate throughout society, either as a form of poison (racism – in the form of imaginaries, policies, and racist practices) or as an antidote (anti-racism – through anti-racist imaginaries, policies, and practices).

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<sup>18</sup> Sodr  likely draws on Plato (2007), who, between 427 and 347 B.C., already stated that language is a pharmakon.

The provision of this communicational pharmakon – whether racist or anti-racist in nature – is therefore aimed at reverberating through and effectively mobilizing the domains of social relations, in which relational connections may (or may not) be challenged and transformed (Sodré, 2019a).

It is therefore through the articulation with the healing and germinative principles of the pharmakon, reinforced by the restitutive, reparative, equitable, and creative perspectives of anti-racism, that communication emerges as a possible – and essential – transformative path. In conjunction with other fields of knowledge, communication has the potential to contribute to the process of healing the violence and oppression of racism. These forms of violence continue to affect the sensorial, corporeal, psychological, and affective dimensions of those targeted by it.

To engage with these manifestations, this study draws upon Freire's (2005) theory of praxis, which provides a consistent theoretical foundation to provisionally guide and integrate the critical handling of the communicational pharmakon from an anti-racist perspective. Specifically, this text employs Freire's conceptual triad, which comprises limit-acts, limit-situations, and the untested feasibility.

According to Sodré (2021), Freire's perspective on communication, as outlined in his thought, encompasses a consideration of the concept of the pharmakon. This notion is regarded by Freire as bearing an ambiguous social potential, capable of both fostering division and forging connections that bind individuals.

From this perspective, the interventionist idea of anti-racist communication may be understood through the activation of this discursive conception, which is strongly oriented toward fostering connections (or building bridges). Alternatively, as posited by Sodré (2019a), it can be conceptualized as a communicative praxis that employs dynamics of the approximation of differences to establish limit-acts (Freire, 2005).

As Freire argues, limit-acts correspond to transformative responses that emerge from the critical recognition of limit-situations<sup>19</sup>. These are actions that confront the boundaries of one's reality, such as the barriers, constraints, and obscurities imposed by racial discrimination in Brazil. These actions lead people to challenge oppressive conditions and to create or open pathways toward their transcendence.

Overall, limit-acts can be understood primarily as necessary actions that aim at overcoming and denying what is given, rather than implying its docile and passive acceptance (Freire, 2005). These experiences are configured as confrontations with histor-

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<sup>19</sup> According to Nita Freire, the term "limit-situations" was adopted by Freire based on the contribution of Pinto [1960], who, in turn, drew it from Jaspers [1969], stripping it of its original pessimistic dimension (Freire, 2010).



ically unjust conditions, and they possess the potential to drive social transformation and the expansion of critical consciousness.

From this perspective, and in dialogue with the theoretical framework that informs this article, which conceptualizes anti-racism as an ethical-political gesture, as well as a transformative, disruptive, restorative, and creative practice<sup>20</sup>, it is also possible to understand anti-racism itself as a limit-act.

This understanding entails a praxis-oriented mode of thinking whose aim is to overcome the barriers imposed by the limit-situations present in society, particularly those generated by the operation of the raciality *dispositif* (Carneiro, 2023) and by the racist social form (Sodré, 2023b).

From this standpoint, anti-racist communicational limit-acts potentially constitute a responsive praxis – action, reflection, and transformation – committed to resisting and overcoming limit-situations through an ethical-political mode of action (Sodré, 2019a).

This movement is founded on two pillars: reflective knowledge and the creative potential of action. It aims to facilitate the "untested feasibility," which refers to the construction of new contexts, imaginaries, and narratives. These are intricately woven through dynamics of the approximation of differences and practices of restitution, repair, and justice.

From this epistemological foundation, it is through the mirroring and envisioning of the contestatory and creative possibilities inherent in limit-acts – which can foster and guide the building of the untested feasible – that anti-racist communicational praxis may be incited to meaningfully engage and contribute to overcoming the obstacles and separations (limit-situations) inscribed by racism.

As previously mentioned, these practices could serve as a guide for regenerative interventions (pharmaka), which are primarily, although not exclusively, aimed at the cultural sphere of imaginaries. The objective, as proposed by Sodré (2019a), is to impact the reorganization of the world and of consciousnesses through the activation of dynamics of the approximation of differences and sensory strategies.

### **Dynamics of the Approximation of Differences and Sensory Strategies**

Mbembe (2020) underscores the urgency of interventions aimed at accelerating the dismantling and deconstruction of racist imaginaries – mental frameworks, dis-

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<sup>20</sup> I express my gratitude to Professor José Luiz Braga (2025) for his careful reading of the early version of this text and for highlighting the importance of emphasizing the value of creative (or inventive) action among the transformational practices of antiracism in the present discussion.

courses, and representations – produced and violently imposed under the aegis of European whiteness. The author emphasizes that the repercussions of this *imago* (or negative interpretation) have historically been directed towards Black populations, exerting a profound influence on their modes of existence and their relationship with the world.

Supporting Fanon's reflections, Mbembe (2017) acknowledges that the social process of healing racial oppression will not be realized in the short term. Nevertheless, he posits that the initial steps must be initiated through communication, that is, within and along the trajectory of language and perception, with the objective of mobilizing symbolic dynamics oriented toward the dissolution and reconstruction of meaning.

Such dynamics must be capable of displacing archaic imaginaries while simultaneously invigorating and activating new imaginaries (Mbembe, 2020, p. 17) that support the emergence of the "untested feasibility" (Freire, 2005), that is, future horizons shaped by an anti-racist perspective.

As previously mentioned, hooks (1992) also draws attention to the racist imaginary economy and the profound wounds and traumas that result from its toxins, particularly in the daily lives of Black women. The author similarly underscores the pressing need for reparative practices in response to this oppressive imagery.

In this regard, she asserts that to confront and heal these wounds, Black people and their allies must critically intervene in the image world and transform it (Hooks, 1992). However, as hooks also cautions:

[...] the issue of race and representation is not just a question of critiquing the status quo. It is also about transforming the image, creating alternatives, asking ourselves questions about what types of images subvert, pose critical alternatives, and transform our worldviews and move us away from dualistic thinking about good and bad. Making a space for the transgressive image [...] is essential to any effort to create a context for transformation. And even then little progress is made if we transform images without shifting paradigms, changing perspectives, ways of looking (hooks, 1992, p. 4).

In the face of this intricate context and the challenges it presents, communication – defined as the radical organization of the common, that is, as a shaping force (the organizational making of shared meaning) and a process (action) of bringing differences into relation (Sodré, 2019a) – can be reimagined, repositioned, and mobilized

in alignment with anti-racism as a type of relatively well-marked highway (see Table 1), capable of guiding and accelerating initiatives aimed at transforming racist imaginaries.

Consequently, when contemplating interventions that operate within the domains of production and reception, anti-racist communication necessitates the implementation of gestures that can facilitate and direct communicational practices and concepts of a transgressive and transformative nature – rather than merely reformist ones.

These interventions must concretely seek to combat and dismantle racism, for example, by demanding and prompting change within the institutional and organizational domains of media production, particularly in areas responsible for its "logo-technical practices" (Sodré, 2019a, p. 16), such as film, journalism, advertising, public relations, among others.

In Appendix 1, which was developed in accordance with the aforementioned guidelines, a series of anti-racist communication initiatives undertaken by institutions and organizations in Brazil are presented. However, given the objectives and limitations of this text, these actions are presented here as illustrative examples of the theoretical frameworks discussed. Future critical analyses are necessary to more thoroughly examine the interrelations between communication and anti-racism, as evidenced in this text.

Notwithstanding, it is imperative to acknowledge that within their respective domains, communication logo-technical spaces and other entities must commit to establishing internal and external practices that promote equitable professional opportunities for Black individuals (as well as Indigenous and LGBTQIA+ individuals, among others) and support processes of revision, repair, and transformation of the racist imaginaries traditionally employed in their creative outputs<sup>21</sup>.

Furthermore, it is crucial to emphasize that the logo-technical practices implemented within media communication production spaces play a pivotal role in shaping and disseminating the complex racist imaginary through their initiatives and materialities. Consequently, within these domains of logo-technical expertise, the creation, maintenance, distribution, and management of the communicational pharmakon's multivalence (racist or anti-racist) is extensively promoted through deliberative practices.

At this juncture, it is imperative to underscore the pivotal role of social contestations, guided by anti-racist lenses, that emanate from media reception spaces. These contestations serve as catalysts for the mobilization and pressure exerted on institu-

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<sup>21</sup> Efforts in this direction can be found in Leite (2019), Corrêa (2019), Silva (2020), among others.

tional and organizational media environments, compelling them to adopt anti-racist practices (Leite, 2024).

In this regard, it is imperative to emphasize that the media and its materialities play a critical role in this discussion, as they serve as a platform for the production and contestation of social identifications. As Sodr  (2019b, p. 882) astutely notes, these media spaces function as places where identifications are made, such as the question of Blackness.

In this direction, the promotion of anti-racist communicational interventions guided by radical and/or alternative grammars that critically engage the structures of organizations responsible for governing the media *bios* becomes essential.

The anti-racist communicational pharmakon, developed within institutional and organizational spaces of media production, should primarily aim to affect people's interpretive frameworks and ways of seeing. That is, the worldviews and symbolic forms through which people experience everyday life should be impacted by the anti-racist communication. In this sense, the objective is to intervene in the realm of the perceptive (Sodr , 2019a), seeking to mobilize social relations and intersubjective binding through ideas and practices grounded in dynamics of the approximation of differences (Sodr , 2019a).

From this perspective, Sodr  (2019b, p. 880) suggests that racism can be understood as the limit of the approximation of differences. This phenomenon functions as an obstacle to the formation or re-establishment of the common. In turn, it reflects the racist social form (Sodr , 2023a) and the racist *imago* (Mbembe, 2020), which continue to serve as structuring causes of many issues related to repulsion and resistance to approximation in social relations (Sodr , 2019b, p. 878).

As illustrated in Table 1, anti-racism encompasses various aspects, including multiple points of contact that strategically support the strengthening and development of communicative actions mobilized by these dynamics of the approximation of differences (Sodr , 2019a).

Of particular note is the anti-racist strategy centered on the notion of commonality (Pedersen, Walker & Wise, 2005), which calls for the development of ways to recover and value the common – the binding formed through encounters with difference – and the understanding of that difference as an inherent link of mutual recognition. This strategy is further enriched by the intersecting perspectives of other approaches highlighted in the aforementioned table, which align with Sodr 's seminal work on

communication as the science of the common, articulated in the initial section of this article.

In this regard, it is imperative to underscore that anti-racist communicational practices, guided by the dynamics of approaching difference, should aspire to sensitize individuals engaged in intersubjective and interpersonal relationships affected by racial dynamics. These communicational spheres are the domains in which communication occurs, with a particular focus on its binding and relational aspects. It is within these spheres that racism operates through dynamics of separation, exclusion, and repulsion.

Thus, anti-racist communication can be understood as a counter-movement and a transformative practice. It is oriented toward fostering awareness of racial differences – or, more precisely, toward "difference without separability" (Silva, 2016). That is, it is a difference free from fractal thinking, subjugation, and repulsion.

From this perspective, such a practice endeavors to ensure that these differences align in both the realm of knowledge (cognitive) and the realm of sensory (affective), thereby facilitating the transformation of relationships and consciousness towards the construction and restitution of the common (Sodré, 2019a, 2019b, 2023; Mbembe, 2017, 2020).

In order to nurture this dynamic, it is essential to prioritize the adoption, within its established boundaries, of an "ethics of mutuality and interdependency" (hooks, 2000), as well as a "politics of the similar" (Mbembe, 2017). According to hooks (2000, p. 117), an ethics of mutuality and interdependency can provide pathways for cooperation and the building of solidarity. These pathways can resist and eradicate domination while altering the impact of inequity.

In relation to the concept of a politics of the similar, which finds resonance with the perspectives of hooks, Freire, and Sodré explored in this article, Mbembe articulates it through the following reflection:

[...] there is no relation to oneself that does not also implicate the Other. The Other is at once difference and similarity, united. What we must imagine is a politics of humanity that is fundamentally a politics of the similar, but in a context in which what we all share from the beginning is difference. It is our differences that, paradoxically, we must share. And all of this depends on reparation, on the expansion of our conception of justice and responsibility (Mbembe, 2017, p. 178).

In light of the aforementioned points, it is through anti-racist interventions aimed at reorienting social and relational ties that the racist social form (Sodré, 2023) – which potentially sustains the operation of the raciality *dispositif* (Carneiro, 2023) – could be challenged and dismantled by the communicational pharmakon. Such a process can occur, for example, through the encouragement and cultivation of vigilant consciousness<sup>22</sup> (hooks, 2021) and/or critical consciousness<sup>23</sup> (Freire, 1975, 1982), capable of bringing people closer together and enabling the development of a "common consciousness" oriented toward the celebration of differences (Mbembe, 2018).

In this regard, Mbembe (2020) posits that the process of authentic healing necessitates the reconstruction of this binding, and consequently, of a cohesive element held in common. The reconstitution of the common is initiated by the exchange of words and the breaking of silence. Activated by an intention, it is language that breaks silence and silences. Accordingly, an "intention forms the basis of all communication, but this intention must be sincere. [...]. Creative intentions can emerge from out of the common" (Fanon, 2018, p. 282).

Consequently, it is from this process that creative intentions may be generated, capable of supporting the development of ideas and practices of restitution, reparation, and the promotion of racial and social justice. Anti-racist communications, for example, can be guided by these creative intentions, and their dynamics of the approximation of differences (Sodré, 2019a).

In this Fanonian perspective, Mbembe (2020, p. 192) underscores that it is these gestures or practices that enable human relations. According to Fanon (2018), the existence of humanity is contingent upon the possibility of gesture — and, consequently, relation of care — wherein we permit ourselves to be affected by the face of the other, and where gesture is connected to discourse, to a language that disrupts silence.

In addition to these reflections on the role of gestures, understood as actions, counter-movements, or behaviors in promoting relations, Sodré (2019a) corroborates that it is precisely the relational nature of these practices that can impact the racist social form when mobilized through "sensory strategies."

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<sup>22</sup> According to Hooks (2021), this concept reflects the continuous work required to diminish all forms of socialization that result in behaviors that perpetuate domination.

<sup>23</sup> The concept of critical consciousness, or conscientization, as proposed by Freire, is predicated on the interplay between thought and action, denoting the capacity to transform social relations. Consequently, critical consciousness is not formed through intellectualist endeavors but rather through praxis – that is, action and reflection aimed at transformation. This is defined as the individual's active engagement with reality (Freire, 1982, p. 82).

According to Sodr  (2019a, pp. 135-136), sensory strategies refer to games that establish a connection between discursive acts and the localization and affectation of subjects within the context of language. These phenomena constitute "a communicative regime in which meaning exchanges the logical circulation of values of the statements for the somatic and perceptive co-presence of the actants" within the social relation.

In this particular context, and more specifically concerning issues of race, Sodr  (2019b, p. 880) explains that, in practice, sensory strategies consist of movements and the organization of movements both within face-to-face interactions and in media relations, with the purpose of fostering sensitivity.

Furthermore, it is plausible to consider the educational and pedagogical domains, with the objective of sensitizing individuals from childhood through adulthood regarding the issue of difference. Sensory strategies have the potential to function as mechanisms that facilitate the dismantling of barriers to acceptance of difference. It is imperative to acknowledge that this process does not occur externally to communication; rather, it is an inherent aspect of communication itself (Sodr , 2019b, p. 880).

Consequently, these strategies are both internal and external in nature. As Sodr  (2019b, p. 880) asserts, the social organization that media structures and organizes, as well as the social binding that is articulated through relations and involves the invisible ties of the common.

In light of this understanding, it becomes evident that sensory strategies have the potential to engage and strengthen Freirean ideas of limit-acts and Fanonian concepts of "gesture." By involving operational dimensions of communication, these notions embrace the fundamental premises of anti-racist communication, aiming to combat and overcome the barriers imposed by the limit-situations of racism.

In essence, envisioning anti-racist communication involves comprehending, recognizing, and generating it through exercises that engage sensory strategies capable of arranging, guiding, and disseminating ideas, limits-acts, gestures, politics, and counter-movements guided by the dynamics of the approximation of differences. Therefore, anti-racist communicational praxis must stimulate and promote transformations directed toward constructing the untested feasibility in order to reorganize and affect the meanings that structure exchanges related to the dimensions of social binding and relations (Sodr , 2019a).

In conclusion, it should be noted that although without guarantees, it is expected that anti-racist communicational practices – given their goals and limitations –

will be developed and articulated so as to contribute to the reorganization of meanings as well as to the modification of racist mentalities and behaviors.

Furthermore, it is anticipated that these aforementioned pathways will engage in collaborative efforts to dismantle the organizing principle of racism. As discussed throughout this article, racism continues to operate with considerable efficacy, even colonizing the minds and affects of the very individuals it seeks to dehumanize. In this context, anti-racism articulated through communication constitutes a potent regenerative pharmakon and/or a responsive praxis of transformation, aimed at constructing new pathways and imaginaries for an anti-racist society.

### Final Considerations

The present study has presented critical-reflective and propositional insights with the aim of supporting and encouraging reflective engagement with the theoretical and practical meanings of the anti-racist communication idea-intervention. It is hoped that the reflective openings developed throughout this discussion will stimulate other researchers to incorporate, directly or indirectly, this topic into their work, thereby contributing to the unfolding and deepening of the multiple subtleties addressed herein.

It is suggested that future studies explore the articulation between different logo-technical practices of communication and anti-racism studies. The objective of such an exploration would be to identify grammars, forms, functions, and strategies most suitable for the development of anti-racist communicational actions in these contexts.

Among the identified gaps, particular attention should be given to the need for analyses that consider the adverse effects and challenges involved in implementing anti-racist communicational practices, as well as their potential for measurement. Moreover, issues pertaining to intersectionality and anti-racism directed toward other ethno-racial groups that have historically experienced oppression necessitate enhanced analytical scrutiny. It is also relevant to dedicate efforts to the metacritical level of communication, as proposed by Sodré (2014), which involves reflecting on the meanings of anti-racism within the scope of communication methodologies, research, and theories – an area still underexplored in the field.

It is important to note, however, that significant movements have been undertaken in this direction in Brazil<sup>24</sup>, especially with the unprecedented formation of re-

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<sup>24</sup> In this context, it is imperative to acknowledge the pivotal role played by NEABIs (Centers for Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous Studies) in various universities across the country. A significant number of these centers incorporate communication-related themes into their research



search/work groups focused on racial issues at various scientific events. Noteworthy among these are the Brazilian Congress of Communication Sciences (Intercom), which since 2022 has hosted the group "Anti-Racist Communication and Afrodiasporic Thought," and the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Graduate Programs in Communication (Compós), which, since 2023, has promoted the working group "Communication, Race, and Intersectionalities," fostering debate and the dissemination of knowledge on the subject.

In this context, it is also essential to reach the spaces and practices of teaching and training within the field of communication. These practices must go beyond technical education to more vigorously foster the development of critical perspectives on the transformative potential of communication's logo-technical practices within social relations. Educational studies have already begun to offer some contributions that point toward this direction.

The advancement of these reflections represents a collective and cooperative responsibility incumbent upon the field of communication, with the objective of fostering and consolidating alternative – or novel – references, gestures, counter-movements, and limit-acts that, from critical and collaborative perspectives, challenge, confront, reassess, and creatively transform social and racial relations within the communicational sphere, grounded in anti-racist values and principles.

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agendas. It is also noteworthy to acknowledge the contributions of the Brazilian Association of Black Researchers (ABPN) and its scientific field of "Communication and Media."

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## APPENDIX 1

Brazilian Initiatives in Anti-racist Communication

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.29464022>

**RESUMO**

Este artigo tem como objetivo apresentar, por meio de uma pesquisa de contribuição conceitual, a articulação de um quadro teórico destinado a facilitar e fomentar o exercício, individual e coletivo, de reflexão sobre os sentidos teórico-práticos da comunicação antirracista. Como resultado, são oferecidas reflexões críticas e propositivas que informam o campo da comunicação acerca de referências e ferramentas conceituais capazes de sustentar diálogos produtivos entre os estudos da comunicação e os estudos do antirracismo, além de estimular o desenvolvimento de ideias e práticas comunicacionais que adotem o antirracismo como princípio orientador para intervenções disruptivas, subversivas e criativas.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Comunicação; Antirracismo; Racismo; Transformação social.

**RESUMEN**

Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar, mediante una investigación de carácter conceptual, la articulación de un marco teórico destinado a facilitar y fomentar el ejercicio, tanto individual como colectivo, de reflexión sobre los significados teórico-práticos de la comunicación antirracista. Como resultado, se ofrecen reflexiones críticas y propositivas que informan al campo de la comunicación acerca de referentes y herramientas conceptuales capaces de sostener diálogos productivos entre los estudios de la comunicación y los estudios del antirracismo, además de estimular el desarrollo de ideas y prácticas comunicacionales que adopten el antirracismo como principio orientador para intervenciones disruptivas, subversivas y creativas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Comunicación; Antirracismo; Racismo; Transformación social.