School hierarchies: performance and popularity

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Abstract

This article presents the results of a research that aimed at identifying the presence of a double hierarchical structure in school, the official and unofficial hierarchies. The official hierarchy is characterized by good performance of students in academic subjects. Through it, knowledge is transmitted to students and they develop skills for social interactions, insertion in the labor market and overall progress. However, the educational system contributes to the creation and maintenance of an unofficial hierarchy. Students considered physically stronger, shrewd and popular and those considered physically fragile, less shrewd and unpopular represent this type of hierarchy. Based on a competitive capitalist society, this double hierarchical structure indicates forms of competition during the schooling period. The research sought to verify the existence of these hierarchies and if they are maintained by the students along their schooling period, from middle school to higher education. The official hierarchy was identified by school performance; the unofficial hierarchy was identified by performance in team sports, dating and popularity. A scale was applied to 135 students from public universities who rated their performance through self-assessment. Self-assessment of the performance in sports remains the same in the three levels of education; academic performance is distinguished between middle and high school and higher education. Social skills and popularity receive the same treatment as academic performance, since they seem to change their attributes throughout schooling. Fundamentally, the results confirm the existence of the two school hierarchies, which has consequences for society and for the development of the individual regarding, especially, what kind of performances are valued and devalued in both hierarchies.

Keywords

Critical theory of society – School hierarchies – Competition.

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Introduction

Although school violence is expressed on students and their relationship with colleagues and educators, it should not have its causes reduced to individual characteristics or to relatives, neither to specific issues of a school environment, since social structures mediate the development of the individual, the family and the school. Attributing responsibility solely to the individual or its group is a restrictive way of comprehending how violence in our society is reproduced. Especially a society that has the management of everything and everyone as one of its main characteristics (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1978). It must be emphasized that throughout history society transforms itself; therefore, its institutions must be understood according to the social changes that are home to its conflicts and contradictions.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the school has an important role in the educational background of individuals, on the passing of knowledge and access to cultural assets. These individuals can contribute with changes to society, so it can become fair and egalitarian allowing individual freedom. However, in a state of a purely formal democracy, the equality of all before the law succumbs to economic inequality, "safeguarding to just a few the possibility of a differentiated and progressive intellectual experience" (ADORNO, 2004, p. 134). It becomes evident how excluding the educational process tends to be in our society, compromising not only the intellectual background, but also the development of character traits and sensibility. Given this context, the progressive exclusion of individuals and the spiritual impoverishment caused by the cultural industry (of which the school, trough several of its practices, is part of) are strengthened. This contributes to the establishment of the school as a Halbbildung place.

According to the author, Halbbildung can be expressed by the emphasis on training for immediate adaptation to the maintenance requirements of the current society, based on fear and the need for individual self-preservation. It can also be expressed by training aimed at acquiring knowledge that is considered an end. In the first case, there would be no thought on why the individuals and society are arranged the way they are. On the second, social injustices would not be questioned in their immediacy. According to Adorno (1995b), the training required for an injustice-free society consists of sensible, democratic and emancipated individuals. This implies, necessarily, in an academic education contrary to violence and favorable to the knowledge of what creates this violence. For that, the transmitted culture cannot propose itself as closely related to social interests, neither ignore them.

Such school violence is what Adorno (1995b) also names as school hierarchies. They cannot be thought without recurring to social hierarchies:

> This failure (from school in training non-violent individuals) is also attested by the double hierarchy within the school: the official hierarchy as the intellect, the performance and the grades. Not contemplated by the official hierarchy, physical strength, "being a man" and a whole set of manual skills play a role on the unofficial hierarchy. (ADORNO, 1995a, p. 111).

To Adorno (1995a) the school as an institution contributes to establish and maintain these hierarchies, privileging good grades and the adaptation of the student to the rules in force, but also the physical performance. Both can be characterized as pseudo-training. Casco and Dias (2011, p. 140) mention:

> At school, badly done tasks, low grades, poorly drafted activities, motor incoordination, stumbling to score a goal and poorly structured speaking are often exposed and used as negative examples of those who suffered the impairments that everyone must avoid. They are also targets of scorn and humiliation.

Marked by disciplinary rules and by good performance, the official hierarchy contributes to the desired cultural training that should counter barbarism. The school should fulfill its function so the knowledge presented to the students through the official hierarchy is associated to the development of intellectualism and progress. However, the official hierarchy has a contradiction: the student who got good grades may be an individual who has adapted to the institutional rules, but not necessarily someone who learned more. Additionally, if the school tends to train conformists (one of the types of Halbbildung), a good student might not develop sensibility and criticism to the social demands from an unequal and unjust society. Despite these issues, the official hierarchy still values knowledge and preserves the authority of the teacher. These are important means to promote the development of individuals.

Represented by students considered physically stronger, shrewd and popular and by those considered physically fragile, less shrewd and unpopular, the creation and maintenance of the unofficial hierarchy can also be attributed to the school system. Despite not being explicitly endorsed, teachers and students still prize the unofficial hierarchy. The strength and shrewdness demonstrated by the students at the top of this hierarchy are admired (ADORNO, 1995a). The unofficial hierarchy has its own contradictions, those with good dating skills, who are good at sports, outgoing, shrewd and popular may better interact socially among peers. These interactions might contribute to the individual development and mutual respect, including with those who are more fragile, if fair play and mutual respect are valued. Thus, while the unofficial hierarchy enforces the survival of the fittest, it has attributes that could lead human development towards emancipation.

> Despite the risk of becoming authoritarian and fostering dependency, Adorno (1995b) believes that authority is important to the development of the individual. Incorporating rules and principles and having references of the adult world is necessary for the development of the individual. By incorporating these rules and references in adult life it is possible to create criticism distinguishable from mere delinquency: if constructive criticism is done to destroy something and then rebuild it accordingly, destructive criticism stops at the destruction and does not show any kind of individual or collective consciousness needed to constitute mankind. (ADORNO, 1995e).

Students considered more popular and that disrupt classes might not be critical despite showing marks of indiscipline, while disciplined students who obey school rules and get good grades might have the adequate behaviors for their cultural background to be used as critical thought:

> Empirical research, such as the one carried by my deceased colleague Else Frenkel-Brunswik in the USA, demonstrates the opposite, i.e., namely behaved children became autonomous adults with their own opinions, while rebellious children, once grown immediately meet with their teachers in bars and brandish the same speeches. (ADORNO, 1995b, p. 177).

Thus, the presence of authority during school years is relevant for the future autonomy, which is another reason that shows the importance of schooling to the development of emancipated individuals. However, authority must leave enough distance between itself and the students so they can carry out their own role, otherwise a non-autonomous individual will be developed. As previously emphasized, education can lead to a Halbbildung individual who merely adapts to the rules and social objectives without proper criticism. However, if throughout generations the school does not assimilate the transmitted culture there is no possibility of criticism.

The proper training of students requires a hierarchy of knowledge between the teacher and the student. This implies that the teacher will take the role of the person who knows more about the transmitted subject than the students. Students must overcome this type of hierarchy as they assimilate the taught subjects; the same can be said about the existing hierarchies among the students: if students with better performance collaborate with their colleagues these hierarchies can also be superseded.

However, Adorno (1995d) points out that if violence is socially determined only social change can fully reduce it and, if possible, eliminate it. Education alone cannot change society, but it can contribute to a better understanding of the social genesis of violence and how much it contributes to violence. Overcoming school hierarchies that create unequal relations among students without creating mechanisms to overcome inequality consists of the opposite movement to the one determined by social forces that encourage individual merit and contribute to social inequality (PONCE, 1994).

Classifying and cementing students in one of these two hierarchies, as well as clashing them, is also tied to school mechanisms and processes such as tests, sports tournaments etc. The two hierarchies coexist and are stimulated – although rarely in an explicit manner –, but if the school gives no thought to the processes that happen on the essence of this phenomenon, the school is fueling the competition among the students in such a way that empathy with those at the bottom of these hierarchies (the ones who are considered less popular or intelligent) is denied, and solidarity for them becomes nonexistent. However, the point is that the hierarchies are not exclusive within the school, it is a process present in social relations: "[...] Nazism exploited the double hierarchy outside of the school by pushing one against the other [...]" (ADORNO, 1995a, p. 111).

By reflecting on competitiveness as the central instrument of education, Adorno (1995b, p.162) mentions that "people need to stop being used to elbow each other."

Elbowing someone is a type of barbarism. If the school encourages competitions that rank and separate students between the worst and the best, it is not only contributing to the efficiency of the meritocratic and individualist economical system, but also promoting attitudes contrary to solidarity or even friendship.

Adorno also claims (1995a, p. 111) that "pedagogical research should devote special attention to the latent hierarchy in school." However, most research focused on power relations among school individuals does not address the existence of hierarchies as a structural part of schools. They consider performance in sports, popularity etc. as individual characteristics or intergroup and interpersonal relations. They investigate dating, popularity, good performance in classes and on sports among students without relating these performances (or indexes) to school. The hierarchical structure of the school as an institution or its role on the maintenance and competition between the official and unofficial hierarchies is not identified by these works. As a product of socially mediated interactions, the double hierarchy structure can be inferred by school performance and popularity as indexes, but not reduced to them.

Popularity has a key role in student socialization, influencing their ability to make friends, to be included in activities and on the development of self-esteem. This is highlighted in research that focuses on popularity and socialization among individuals (ADLER; STEVEN; ADLER, 1992).

A strong link between homophobic behaviors and popularity – especially among boys – was found on a study by Poteat et al. (2015). The study tested the association between prejudice and popularity among teenagers. It also found that young people with an elevated status and greater visibility have more power over the entire group.

A study on aggressive popular and unpopular students and their levels of physical aggressiveness when moving from elementary school to middle school found that popularity affected the type of physical aggression practiced by the two subtypes. Higher levels of aggression were shown by the popular student in subsequent years when compared with the unpopular student (SHI; XIE, 2012). A third study focused on the choice of friendships and how they relate to popularity. Outgoing behavior and aggressiveness among students suggests that the search for similar popularity levels is one of the major factors of the choice. In this sense, aggressive and popular colleagues tend to become friends with those who are also popular, but not necessarily aggressive. Those with outgoing behavior tend to search for friends who are also popular and not necessarily aggressive (LOGIS et al., 2013).

The close relation between social acceptance through popularity and the power exercised by those with this characteristic as a result of this research emphasizes that students whose popularity does not come from aggressiveness do not look to be friends with aggressive and popular colleagues. Research on the reasons that lead to this non-association between aggressiveness and popularity is relevant since it could find some sort of basis to combat violence.

Gender in Physical Education Classes is another aspect highlighted by researchers. Due to little or no participation in sports (until recently), girls become easy targets of cruelty. Boys, on the other hand are considered inapt if they do not show

the expected performance. Gender stereotypes constructed by society are used as means to disqualify and reject (OLIVEIRA; VOTRE, 2006; SHAH; ALTMANN, 1999).

A study conducted by Levandovski and Cardoso (2013) on sixth-grade girls in Brazilian schools found that the students tend to consider the authors of bullying as more beautiful. For them, the authors of aggression are more popular and distinguish themselves from the others by their body performances. The victims of this type of violence were found to have better performance in Portuguese classes. If physical abilities and physical attractiveness are associated with a type of hierarchy characterized by popularity, the performance of students inside the classroom could indicate one of the characteristics of bullying targets.

There are studies on power relations that rule the school life and training processes. Casco (2007) addresses the double hierarchy structure in school through the observation of different moments of everyday school life: the classroom and the break time. One of the author's conclusions from his research is that:

> An uncomfortable relationship between the official and unofficial hierarchies inside the classroom is expressed by a troubled relation between students who stand out by being more involved in classroom affairs and the more aggressive students. In the specific case, the aggressive students were mostly retained and physically stronger students. (CASCO, 2007, p. 242).

Various types of school violence, the association between colleagues and the formation of groups in school were research objects of Crochík et al. (2013) and Crochík (2015). One research observed that the formation of hierarchies among colleagues is related to the classroom performance. By reflecting on the relation between bullying and prejudice, Crochík (2015) identified that students tend to view the person committing bullying as someone strong, popular, good at sports and with bad grades, while the victims are perceived as fragile, overweight, unpopular and bad at sports performance. The characteristics observed on the research refer to the ones described by Adorno (1995a), as Crochík (2015, p. 39) says "social hierarchies can strengthen and be strengthened by bullying. This forces us to not understand the concept of prejudice as something necessarily individual or as a result of family structures."

Taking this into consideration, our objectives are: a) to give character to the double hierarchy structure present in school (the official hierarchy identified by school performance and the unofficial hierarchy identified by sports performance, dating skills and popularity); and b) to verify the maintenance of the students in these hierarchies through three educational levels: middle school, high school and higher education, i.e., if a student who excels in these hierarchies maintains these positions along its school years.

Method

Participants

The study considered 135 students of public universities of the state of São Paulo as sample. Of the sample, 21.5% (29) were Natural Sciences students, 38.5% (52) were Social

Sciences/Humanities students, and 40% (54) were Formal/Applied Sciences students; 42.5% (57) were women. The average age was 22.5 years (SD=3.1); the average socioeconomic status was 36.46 (SD=13.65), which corresponds to the B2 level in the Brazilian Economic Classification Criterion (ABEP). Regarding religion, 54.8% (74) declared having no religion and 45.2% (61) declared following any religion.

Non-probability convenience sampling was opted for the study; according to Selltiz, Wrightsman and Cook (1975), this type of method can be used when the objective is to obtain a variety of elements that can exist in a population and how they relate to the participants and not wide population parameters. Thus, this method is limited when it comes to general population results, unlike studies using representative sample.

Material

A questionnaire on personal data was applied; queries included information on the major chosen by each participant, sex, birthday, religion and socioeconomic level. Socioeconomic level was assessed by the Brazilian Economic Classification Criterion[4].

A scale of school hierarchies consisting of a set of questions aimed at characterizing the participating students according to their performances was used. The scale consisted of the following indexes: school performance, team sports performance and social performance (dating and friendships) using the evaluation system of: very bad (one point); bad (two points); average (three points); good (four points) and very good (five points). Popularity had two possible answers: no (zero points) and yes (one point).

Each subject produced 12 scores; one for each of the indexes (school, sports and social performances and popularity) in each educational level assessed (middle school, high school and superior education). Data of the factor structure of this scale will be presented in the results section since, they relate directly with the objectives of the research.

Procedure

Data were collected in three universities in the state of São Paulo, using students from Physical Education, Business Administration, Mathematics, Physics, Engineering, Chemistry, Biology and Languages and Literature programs. Pairs of researchers applied the instruments to groups of students. Each participant signed an informed consent form (none of them were under 18 years of age). This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Psychology of the University of São Paulo on September 8, 2015 (no. 1.218.644).

To fulfill the two objectives, factor analyses were calculated using the main component method and Varimax rotation, without delimiting the number of factors to be extracted. The variable referring to popularity was not considered in factor analysis, since it differed from the others by having dichotomous answers and being non-continuous.

The factor analysis technique is usually used in psychological tests to validate their constructs and to group multiple variables in a reduced number of factors (FRUCHTER; GUILFORD, 1973). Since this study has three levels of education, it was opted to use the technique because it allows the understanding of how the multiple performances are

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4 - Available at http://www.abep.org/new/.

grouped. If the double hierarchy structure described on the introduction to this text exists, the subjects' score will tend to be grouped in two dimensions over the examined period, from middle school to higher education. If these hierarchies do not exist, as supposed, there will be a higher or lower number of indexes.

Partial correlations were calculated among the multiple types of performances to determine the relation they have, which is an additional method to verify the existence of these hierarchies and if the relation among performances is maintained throughout school education. To control the sex variable, partial correlations were made, since this is the only variable that differed in several of the obtained scores, confirming the observation from Oliveira and Votre (2006) and from Sousa and Altmann (1999).

When the assessed performances were related to religion and major, no significant statistically difference was found, groups were compared using analysis of variance; no significant correlations were obtained between self-assessed scores and the age and socioeconomic level variables.

Since popularity has a nominal level of measurement, correlations of several variables used contingency coefficients. The significance level adopted was of 0.05 and the calculations were made using the SPSS software, version 16.

Analysis and discussion of the results

As previously mentioned, factor analysis was the main method used, considering self-assessment of the subjects regarding performance in school, performance in team sports and social skills on the three educational levels considered. Self-assessed scores for popularity were not considered, since its measurement was not established in a continuous way, but trough two possible answers.

The first factor analysis calculated removed scores regarding school performance and social skills in higher education due to low commonalities and factorial charges presented. This may indicate that at this level of education what influences dating could be distinct of the criteria that determined it previously. At this level, this type of performance could be more closely related to school performance. As further demonstrated in Table 2, only in higher education a significant correlation between school performance and dating can be verified.

School performance in higher education could not be grouped with the other variables. We may assume that the school hierarchy at this level of education changed the criteria that structures it, i.e., the hierarchy might have changed because new groupings were formed in higher education, since there is a common interest around the major. This datum seems to partially counteract the quoted statement from Adorno (1995a) that proposes that there is continuity of the attitudes facing authority on the first years of education and the training for autonomy, or the school performance on higher education may involve pragmatic attitudes that oppose those necessary to incorporate general culture. Data that reinforce this assumption will be presented next.

Another factor analysis performed with the withdrawal of social skills and school performance in higher education obtained the following initial data: KMO = 0.659; $\lambda2(21)$

= 301.616; p = 0.000. The factors, grouped variables and their respective factorials are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Factors and factorial loads obtained by factor analysis without delimited factors.

Education Level	Factor 1 – Performance on team sports	Factor 2 – Performance on social skills	Factor 3 – Performance on school affairs
Higher Education	0.788	–	–
High School	0.897	0.804	0.853
Middle School	0.881	0.888	0.889

Source: research data.

From this analysis three factors were drawn out, and together they are responsible for 77.09% of the explained variance. According to the data on Table 1, the first factor is represented by the performance in team sports on the three levels of education; the second factor relates to the social performance in high school and in middle school; and the third factor is composed of self-assessed performance on school affairs during high school and middle school.

By using the data from Table 1, we assumed that the assessed dimensions are independent of each other and could constitute multiple hierarchies, since there is no unity between sports and social performances, thus no unofficial hierarchy is formed, as it was assumed; but the official hierarchy seems to be confirmed. Contrary to what was stated by Adorno (1995a), there are more than two hierarchies and performance in team sports is not a criterion on the search for partners.

In addition, middle school and high school present continuity on the evaluations of every index, and for higher education there is continuity on the performance in team sports. Regarding the second objective of this study, the previous information shows that there is continuity among the education levels on the three types of performance assessed.

To obtain more data for the testing of the hypotheses proposed by the objectives of the study, correlations among various types of performance were calculated. Table 2 contains the correlations by school level.

According to data from Table 2, performance in team sports is associated with the other three indexes in higher education: better performance in team sports also means better school and dating performances and higher popularity (the contrary is also true). There is no other significant relation among the other types of performance. This seems to indicate that a good performance in team sports could be a good criterion to think about the other performances, while the contrary is not true. As it can be seen in the data from Table 1, team sports performance can be considered as a single factor when considering the three education levels, since those who stood out in sports while on middle or high school remained popular in higher education. In addition, it can be noted that team sports performance remains what favors the popularity of a student in relation to its colleagues.

Educ. Pesqui., São Paulo, v. 44, e167836, 2018.

9

Table 2 – Partial correlation coefficients among various self-evaluations by education level (Middle School, High School, Higher Education).

	Higher Education		
	Team sports	Dating and friendships	Popularity
School performance (grades)	0.172*	0.155	0.202
Team sports		0.194*	0.292*
Dating and friendships			0.161
	High School		
	Team sports	Dating and friendships	Popularity
School performance	-0.019	0.094	0.133
Team sports		0.403**	0.465**
Dating and friendships			0.366**
	Middle school		
	Team sports	Dating and friendships	Popularity
School performance	0.059	0.047	0.250***
Team sports		0.218*	0.248
Dating and friendships			0.323**

*p<0.05; **p<0.01
*** Although the correlation value was higher than that obtained between "Dating and Friendship" and "Team Sports", it was not significant because it was calculated by the Contingency Coefficient and not by the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient.
Source: research data.

Regarding high school, the two hierarchies described by Adorno (1995a) are confirmed by the data from Table 2. School performance self-assessment has no correlation regarding the self-assessment of the other performances and popularity, which places school performance as an official hierarchy. On the other hand, team sports performance, social performance and popularity are related to each other when self-assessed. This indicates the existence of an unofficial hierarchy. We can suppose that in this period of life – the adolescence – emotional aspects are related to body prowess and for this reason the search for dating partners has team sports performance as a criterion, which can increase the popularity of those who stand out in this area. In addition, we may assume that since high school is the moment in which the separation between those who will continue their studies and those who will go on to work on jobs that do not require a higher education diploma is made, being this distinction clearer: facing the impossibility of standing out for the school performance, other types of performances (as valued or even more valued than school performance) are maintained.

Regarding middle school, the self-assessment of school performance is not related to any other self-evaluated performance, configuring what Adorno appointed as the official hierarchy. The existence of the unofficial hierarchy was not as clear as in high school. The self-assessment of social performance was related to popularity and team sports performance, but there was no significant correlation between popularity and sports performance. As described in the introduction, there is research showing that popularity might not be related to the physical prowess of a student, but to other traits that allow a

leadership not based on threats, but on friendship and the admiration of other qualities such as sympathy, companionship, the ability to give advice etc. (LOGIS et al., 2013)

The distinction of the relations among the variables between the three educational levels examined leads us to assume that on secondary education both hierarchies identified by Adorno exist. This seems to be truer for high school than for middle school. Other relations among the variables are identified in higher education, allowing the understanding that if hierarchies continue to exist they are not configured in the same way as in previous school levels.

Factor analysis together with the data indicates the existence (although not completely) of two hierarchies: the official one represented by school performance and the unofficial one represented by self-assessment, especially of the social performance and to a lesser extent, of the sports team performance and popularity (except in higher education). These results partially confirm the results obtained by Levandoski and Cardoso (2013), despite indicating the existence of independence between the two hierarchies, there is no indication of contrast between them. Moreover, the results do not support the association between team sports abilities and dating, which were related to each other only in high school.

Partial correlations were calculated to verify if there is correlation between self-assessment on the three levels of education for popularity and the various types of performance assessed. The partial correlation variables were sex, school performance, team sports performance and emotional performance, and contingency coefficients were used to assess the relation between popularity on the three levels of education. The results are present in Table 3.

Table 3 – Partial correlations and contingency coefficients for each of the self-assessed performance types by education level (Middle School, High School, Higher Education).

	School performance	
	High School	Middle school
Higher Education	0.287**	0.140
High School		0.534**
	Team sports	
	High School	Middle school
Higher Education	0.575**	0.539**
High School		0.806**
	Dating and friendships	
	High School	Middle school
Higher Education	0.289**	0.050
High School		0.531**
	Popularity	
	High School	Middle school
Higher Education	0.206*	0.136
High School		0.368**

P=0.01
*p<0.05; **p<0.01
Source: research data.

According to the data from Table 3, continuity in all three levels of education is only present in sports performance; in other types of performance there is no correlation among the variables, only when comparing middle school and higher education.

There is more proximity between middle school and high school than middle school and higher education. This means that there is continuity in performance in the three levels, but a clear distinction between middle school and higher education and to a lesser extent between high school and higher education. Such datum can be associated with the one obtained by Shi and Xie (2012) regarding the continuity of popularity throughout schooling.

We can resume the hypothesis previously raised, which indicates that the non-continuity of the relations obtained in the former education levels in higher education is due to new types of performance being required. In fact, the continuity of the performance in team sports in the three educational levels evaluated and the correlation between school performance and team sports performance on higher education, as shown in Table 1, might show the proximity of the skills required for these two activities in higher education: more pragmatism, specializing and well-defined objectives. Considering the highlighted statement by Adorno (1995d) regarding the continuity of education for either critical-thought or for mere rebellion, this result would indicate that higher education requires qualities associated with adapting rather than critical-thinking. On one hand, the initial quotation by Adorno states that well-behaved students in the early years of school tend to be autonomous and the rebel students criticize all forms of authority because they feel excluded from the culture. On the other hand, those who can join higher education are not necessarily more autonomous but more adapted to what is socially valued, i.e., to these students it is necessary to excel in every form of performance, school, emotional and sports.

Since there was no significant relation between school performance in middle school and higher education, and since the latter did not compose the official hierarchy on the factor analysis, we could hypothesize that what is learned and developed in secondary school does not necessarily prepares the students for higher education. This is a fact that should lead to thoughts on whether the evaluation of what has been learned in the past is what is necessary for a good training in higher education. By measuring individual merit, admission exams would be disregarding the predictive validity of the performance of the candidates on higher education. This is an additional reason to defend a policy of quotas, because students who start higher education through them might have other skills that will lead them to a better performance during higher education than during the previous levels (WAINER; MELGUIZO, 2017).

Despite not being fully identified, the double hierarchical structure in school and its possible effects on individual development and on society, as analyzed by Adorno (1995b), should lead us to reflect on its consequences. If they are hierarchies that might contribute to student's development and then be overcome, they are important. If they merely reproduce the social hierarchy based on merit and almost always ballasted in appropriate social conditions, they reproduce social violence and must be criticized for this reason. It is noteworthy that they are not a product (and perhaps not even mainly) of individual or family characteristics of students. The school structure allows them to be promoted, they are originated from a social structure prone to splitting mankind according to its needs.

Finally, it should be noted that having self-assessment as the main indicator and not evaluations from colleagues and/or educators limits the study. Certainly, the variables studied can be more thoroughly measured. Another limitation is to solely use students from public universities as sample and not include students from private universities or compare the data obtained between those who attended secondary education in private or public schools.

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José Leon CROCHÍK; Marian Ávila de Lima DIAS; Cintia Copit FRELLER; Alex Sandro CORREA; Rodrigo Nuno Peiró CORREIA

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