

PEDAGOGY OF THE CLOSET: HETEROSEXISM AND GENDER SURVEILLANCE ON BRAZILIAN EVERYDAY SCHOOL LIFE

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Abstract

The article explores the relationship between curriculum and heteronormativity in the Brazilian everyday school life. By understanding the curriculum as a political artifact, cultural and discursive production, the author considers the notion of “curriculum in action” in order to refer to a plurality of learning situations (formal and informal, planned or not, inside and outside the classroom), in which knowledge, subjects, identities, differences, inequalities and hierarchies are built, as well as processes of marginalization and exclusion are deepened. Through the problematization of testimonials and reports from teachers who participated in continuing learning courses provided by the Brazilian Ministry of Education against sexism and homophobia, the author reflects on the school experiences related to processes of (re)production of gender norms and heterosexual matrix. The author considers the “pedagogy of the closet” as a set of practices, power relationships, classifications, construction of knowledge, subjects and differences that the curriculum builds daily in schools under the aegis of gender norms and the heterosexual matrix, and thus promotes the compulsory heterosexuality. Besides, he considers heteronormativity, heterosexism and homophobia as elements that act in structuring the school environment and its curriculum and practices, producing effects on the entire of scholar community. Therefore, the author advocates the destabilization of school devices of normalization and heteronormative discipline, in favor of a quality education for everyone.

Keywords: Curriculum - Everyday school life - Heteronormativity - Heterosexism - Homophobia

PEDAGOGY OF THE CLOSET:
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SCHOOL LIFE

We have an issue at school: a heavily effeminate and grand gesture boy. He is a great dancer! He is always beaten by his colleagues and all teachers laugh on him. I have told him "you are gay, indeed, and I respect you, but stop camping it up! You are drawing all the others' anger to you". His mother has been called up to school. He is 6 years old now. What have I done about the others? What to do?

Report of a Pedagogical Coordinator

We used to have a very effeminate student at school. Everybody was making fun of him and saying he was a sissy. He was more and more showing up with women's apparel. He said he was a travestite, and wanted to be addressed by feminine name and attend to ladies' restroom. Nobody would accept a man on the ladies' restroom. Everybody advised him to quit this lifestyle. He quitted school.

Report of a School Teacher

During preschool parties, we used to distribute colorful toy balloons. This year one of the boys aged 5 had the last one. He did not want it because it was pink. He got upset and did not play. For those asking about it he was explaining: "It was not me who chose this toy balloon. I am a man". Later, I realized he was afraid his father would see him with that balloon. I took this case to the coordinator. She told us not to bring pink toy balloons to groups with boy students.

Report of a School Teacher

On social world of school, quotidian and curriculum reciprocally and inextricably interpellate and implicate each other. It occurs in the wake of a wide production of discourses, statements, gestures, occurrences, in the course of situations where knowledge, subjects, identities, differences, hierarchies are (re)constructed (Camargo & Mariguela, 2007). Observing and analyzing school everyday life reveal pedagogical and curricular situations and procedures closely entailed to social processes related to the production of differences, distinctions and social cleavage that, among other things, interfere in the formation and *social* production of school performance.¹

Therefore, in this paper I attempt to think over dimensions of heteronormativity that is, present in school everyday life and saturates the curriculum, consititues networks of power,

¹ School "success" and "failure" are usually assigned to individuals and not to institutions that produce them.

control and surveillance, promotes the boundary management of (hetero)normality, creates classifications, hierarchies, privileges, stigmatization, marginalization, jeopardizing the right to a quality education and leading to the practice of a “mutilated citizenship” (Santos, 1987).²

School everyday life interacts and interferes in each aspect of the entirety of knowledge and practices, which compose both formal and hidden curriculum.³ The curriculum (whatever it may be) constitutes itself on a political artifact and a cultural and discursive production. i.e. curriculum is related to social historic production of power producing rules and truth patterns; as well as processes of selection, organization, hierarchy and evaluation of what can or not be defined as knowledge or syllabus. It is a field of everlasting disputes and negotiations regarding dispositions, principles of visions and divisions of the world and the things, especially those concerning the world of education and its actors and agents, who are engaged in disputes over maintenance or changing of senses and meanings. Curriculum, then, is a space of production, contest, pleading and controversy which holds relations of power, forms of control, possibilities of conformism and resistance.⁴

Historically, Brazilian education was structured under tributary premises of a set of values, rules and beliefs responsible for turning into “the other” (believed to be strange, inferior, sinner, ill, perverted, criminal, or contagious)., Everyone is meant to adapt to the arsenals centered on reference to the adult, the white, the male, the heterosexual, the burgher, the physically and mentally “sane”. School has become a space where prejudice ordinarily circulates; and puts into motion many forms of discrimination (classicism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, disablism) and other forms of normality boundaries management. There, prejudice and discriminations are daily and systematically consented, cultivated, taught and act as *structuring mechanism* of the school space, its everyday life and its curriculum, generating effects over anyone.⁵

School is a space obsessed with production, reproduction and updating of heteronormativity patterns – a set of dispositions (discourses, values, and practices) on which heterosexuality is imposed and deeply experienced as the only natural and legitimate possibility

2 In this paper I have make use of public school teachers’ reports from all over the country who have participated on continuing formation courses under the federal governmental program called *Brasil Sem Homofobia* (Brazil Without Homophobia) since 2005.

3 The hidden curriculum contributes for social relevant knowledge (attitudes, behaviors, values, orientations); that teaches “conformism, obedience, individualism [...] how to be man or woman, [...] heterosexual, homosexual, as well as the identification with a certain race or ethnic group” (Silva, 2002: 78-79). These sources and means animate, characterize and delineate social relations among school, space organization processes, teaching of time, rituals, rules, regulations and norms, classifications, categorizations, etc.

4 The notion of “curriculum in action” refers to the plurality of formal or informal learning situations experienced by school community as a whole; that pervades the dichotomy of content/format, explicit/hidden (planned or not, inside or outside classroom), under the responsibility of school. It deals on what “really takes place on typical and contradictory situations lived in schools [...], and not what was desirable [...] or what was institutionally prescribed” (Geraldi, 1994: 117).

5 “The permanent markers which we attribute to schools, do not refer to school contents [...], but [...] to the everyday situations, common experiences which we live inside school walls [...]. The reminders of these institutions have to deal to the way we build our social identities, especially gender and sexual ones” (Louro, 1999: 18-19).

of expression (Warner, 1993). This arsenal controls not only sexuality, but also gender. Heteronormative dispositions become natural and imposes and legitimizes a one dimensional sequence sex-gender-sexuality: the one centered on heterosexuality and rigorously regulated by gender norms which, underpinned over the ideology of “sexual dimorphism”,⁶ act structuring social relations and producing subjectivity (Butler, 2003).

Heteronormativity is at the curricular conceptions core; and school is an institution strongly committed to reaffirm and guarantee compulsory heterosexualization processes and incorporation of gender norms, putting under surveillance the bodies of everyone.⁷ Socially produced and reiterated, the hegemonic heterosexuality is historically and culturally transformed in norm, becoming the main support of heteronormativity (Louro, 2009). Not by chance, heterosexism and homophobia take place and establish a control and surveillance regime, not only of sexual behavior, of gender expressions and identities, but also of racial identities; thus, it is feasible to affirm that heterosexism and homophobia are sexism manifestations often related to various normative regimes. These normalize and structure bodies, subjects, identities, hierarchies and institutions, such as classicism, racism and xenophobia (Junqueira, 2009b).

It is worth noting that the term homophobia has been commonly applied to refer to negative emotions (disgust, contempt, hate, suspicion, discomfort or fear) towards “homosexuals”⁸; however, this way of understanding the phenomenon is tremendously limiting, since it tends to lead to a kind of coping based on measures aimed at minimizing the effects of feelings and attitudes of individuals or homophobic groups, whose actions and feelings are supposedly directed only against a minority. By simply establishing a relationship of synonymy between homophobia and a set of *individuals' attitudes* towards lesbians, gays, bisexuals, travestites and transsexuals would imply disregarding formulations of heterosexual matrix when imposing heterosexuality as compulsory, controlling also gender; therefore, it seems to me to be more adequate to understand homophobia as a social phenomenon related to prejudice, discrimination and violence aimed against any individual, gender expressions and life styles that may indicate transgression or untuning towards gender norms, to heterosexual matrix, to heteronormativity. Moreover, devices of homophobia capillary work on heteronormalizing surveillance, control, classifying, correction, adjustment and marginalization processes, on which we all are permanently taken to be confronted with (Junqueira, 2007, 2009a).⁹

6 Such ideology supports the belief on natural existence of two sexes; that would be automatically translated into two complementary genders and two desire modalities which must be adjusted to this binary and linear logic.

7 Gender norms find in the reproductive sexuality field powerful arguments used to reinforce the naturalizing theses about sexual and gender identities and violation of people's rights who may seem to differ from them.

8 The term homophobia, despite of its own limits and misunderstandings, has conquered important space on political field and still presents some potential that recommends us not to abandon it. When avoiding semantically load on the idea of “phobia” and underlining political aspects related to social discriminations, some authors prefer to use others terms such as *heterosexism* (Morin, 1977; Herek, 2004, among others), *homonegativity* (Hudson & Rickett, 1980), *homoprejudice* (Logan, 1996) etc. These are terms that also present limitations and are under resignifying as well. For a history on the term heterosexism and its origins in the lesbian feminist thought, see: Herek (2004).

9 The term homophobia, under the sense here employed, approaches to the current notion of

To say that homophobia and heterosexism threateningly hover over all of us does not imply affirming that they affect individuals and groups on the same identical and indistinct manner. Although norm concerns all of us; and, that its control and surveillance devices may prove to be implacable against anyone, homophobia keeps its preferred targets. The mechanisms of the processes of hierarchization, marginalization, social abjectness and humiliation unequally affect individuals and social groups. The anguished male for not accomplishing the unachievable dictate of *hegemonic masculinity* (Connell, 1995) will not tend to have his *status* questioned when attacking someone considered *less man*. On the contrary, with such manly manifestations, besides posturing himself as a respectable representative of “real man” in the community, he may even be praised. Oppressed by the heavy load¹⁰, which his ruling status presumes, he, in order to adjure threats to his privileges, will have at his own disposal a heterosexist socially promoted arsenal.

School contributions, with its routines, rules, practices and values is crucial to this process of normalization and heteroregulatory adjustment, along with marginalization of subjects, knowledge and dissonant or dissident practices towards heterosexual matrix. In this place, heterosexism and homophobia can cunningly or ostensibly act all over available school spaces.¹¹ People identified as dissonant regarding gender norms and heterosexual matrix will easily be set as preferential targets of *pedagogy of sexuality* (Louro, 1999). It is usually translated, among other things, as *pedagogy of insult* by means of jokes, ridicule, hoaxes, games, nicknames, insinuations, disqualifying and dehumanizing expressions. Prejudice treatment, discriminatory measures, offenses, embarrassment, threats, humiliations and verbal or physical aggressions have been continuous on school everyday life of countless people, early exposed to multiple power strategies and to surveillance and control regimes.

heterosexism in the United States. However, they are not synonymous since there, the notion of heterosexism still emphasizes discrimination of sexual orientation (often, from the essentialist premises), providing little attention to gender norms and heteronormativity, which seems to be central to me. When adopting a broader sense and avoiding individualizing and depoliticizing approaches, it seems adequate to me to employ heterosexism along with homophobia also to emphasize that the latter derives from the former.

10 Masculine privilege is also a trap and lays on every man the duty to affirm his virility, understood as sexual and social competence, as well as an ability to battle and violence practice. So, it is, above all, a burden (Bourdieu, 1999: 64).

11 Indeed, in different levels, we find heterosexism and homophobia in schools, on course books, on concepts of curriculum, on heterocentric contents and on normalizing pedagogical relations. These come out on the attendance call (on the furor that rounds the number 24, but, mainly on the denial of calling the travestite student by his/her “social name”), on games and jokes often considered harmless and used also as didactic resources. They are also on little notes, desks, sport courts, restrooms, on the difficulty to have access to restrooms. These come out on the teachers’ room, on the school board, on parent-teacher conferences. They cause fights during breaks and on the end of classes. They are on the threatening routines, intimidation, scoff, inconveniences, humiliations, storms, degradation, marginalization, exclusion and the like (Junqueira, 2009a). The fury about the number 24 requires an explanation to the foreign reader. It is a reference to the “animal lottery” (*jogo do bicho*), a centennial gamble on which implicate deep rooted beliefs, vision of world, classifying and hierarchical systems. Bets are made on a roll of 25 “animals”, from a complex system of divinations that connects numbers, animals, objects, feelings, dreams and happenings. Each animal corresponds to a referred number and to other sequences of digits. The number 24 is usually referred to the deer, traditionally associated to the masculine homosexual. Framed among the passive animals (target of active straight hunters), the deer is on an ambiguous situation between the masculine and feminine (an “unachievable hunt”). See: Da Matta & Soares (1999).

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Heterosexist and homophobic “jokes” (often considered didactic resource) make up powerful heteroregulatory apparatus of objectification, silencing (syllabus, practices, and subjects), symbolic domination, normalization, adjustment, marginalization and exclusion. This *pedagogy of insult* is followed by tensions of invisibility and revelation, inherent to experiences of the *closet*. This pedagogy is translated into the *pedagogy of the closet*² that affects and lasts over all of us.

Surveillance of gender norms and the pedagogy of the closet

For the establishment of sexual-gender-sexuality heteronormative sequence, a variety of social and institutional spaces concur; nevertheless, it seems to be at school and in the family where we can observe its most crucial moments. How many times have we witnessed situations at school where a “very delicate boy”, who seemed to prefer to play with girls, and did not play soccer became target of jokes, games, debauch and name callings? How many countless situations happen on which boys refuse to join games considered girlish, or prevent girls and boys considered gays from joining recreational “masculine” activities?

Heteronormative constructional processes of compulsorily heterosexual male subjects are followed by rejection of femininity and homosexuality, often through openly homophobic attitudes, discourses and behaviors. Such processes – pedagogical and curricular – produce and feed homophobia and misogyny, especially between boys and youngsters. For them, the “other” mainly becomes the girls and the gays and, to deserve masculine and heterosexual identities, they must continuously offer behavior samples of having exorcised femininity and homosexuality from their inside. They must distance from the girls’ world and be cautious on intimacy expression with other men; restrain fellowship and affection manifestations and use only authorized gestures, behaviors and ideas for the “male” (Louro, 2004a). At hand, they shall have harmful arsenal of jokes and mockery (sexist, misogynist, homophobic, etc.), and, besides that, a set of procedures on simulation, repression, silencing and negations of “improper” desires.

At school, individuals who flee the heteronormative sequence and do not succeed hiding it, risk themselves to be set aside of central attentions in a supposed education for all (Butler, 1999). This marginalization, among other things, helps to circumscribe the domain of the “normal” subject. It is, the more one tries to substantiate and legitimate marginalization of the “different” or “anomalous” individual, the more one bestows further clarity to the boundaries of the “normal” group (Douglas, 1976). The existence of a “we-normal” does not depend only on the existence of an “otherness not-normal”: it is imperative to naturalize the condition of marginalized to what the “other” is subjected to, in order to affirm, confirm and deepen the moat between the “normal” and the “different”.

12 The term was coined by Graciela Morgade and Graciela Alonso (2008); that, yet, do not characterize it.

By translating the *pedagogy of insult* into the *pedagogy of the closet*, students learn, from the very beginning, to move the levers of heterosexism and homophobia. Since then, the compulsory heterosexualization operations imply classifying hierarchical processes on which subjects, still too young, may become easy targets for sentences that act as objectivation and disqualifying devices: “You are queer!”. These children and adolescents then, become targets of collective scorn without having the chance to identify themselves as other things.¹³ Without resources to conceal the difference or to impose themselves, “school faggots” will have their names printed on restrooms, desks, walls, become target of mockery, comments and varied sort of violence on which the *pedagogy of the closet* foresees and assorts while, surreptitiously, involves and controls each and every one.

Such “jokes” either mask or bring out hurts and insults. These are games of power that brand consciousness, inscribe on body and memory of the victim and pedagogically mold their relation to the world. More than a censorship, they translate a verdict and act as scrutinizing and divestiture devices (Éribon, 2008). Besides, the insult indicates threat that hover over everyone’s head, since, for instance, it can be extended to anyone that comes to fail on masculinity demonstrations which he is endlessly and successively subjected to. The *pedagogy of the closet* affects all of us. The “closet” – a process of hiding position of dissonance or dissidence regarding the heterosexual matrix – serves more than simply regulate gay people’s social life, subjecting them to secrecy, silence and/or exposing them to public contempt. Indeed, the “closet” implies on *boundaries management of (hetero)normality* (on which we all are evolved and to which we all are affected by). It also acts as *a control regime of each and every device of sexuality*. Therefore, institutions and heteronormative values are reinforced and focus is given to those who show properly conformed to the heterosexist order (Sedgwick, 2007).

In short, gender norms surveillance carries out a central role on the *pedagogy of the closet*, composed by curricular devices and practices of control, silencing, invisibilization, hiding and no naming, which act as heteroregulating forces of symbolic domination, (de)legitimization of bodies, knowledge, practices and identities, subordination, marginalization and exclusion. School, the place of knowledge, keeps itself as censorship place, unawareness, ignorance, violence, fear, shame when related to sexuality and gender.¹⁴

Surveillance regime, heteroregulating gendering and peripheral inclusion

Internalization of heterosexuality dictate, as a norm, frequently takes us to misunderstand *gender expressions* (gesture, likings, and attitudes), *gender identity and sexual identities*. There is not a single forcible, inescapable and linear correspondence among these conceptions. Behaviors do not necessarily correspond to identities assumptions. Suffice to note that

13 “Identify yourself as gay/queer” does not imply “getting out of the closet”. Logics of the closet are far more complex than the binary in/out may take one to suppose it.

14 For an analysis of the myths and fears (re)produced on the curriculum about (homo/hetero) sexualities, see: Britzman (1996).

we are able to seem masculine or feminine, masculine and feminine, either masculine or feminine, sometimes more masculine over feminine or no one, neither the other, meaning that none of these may be directly connected to our sexuality. To be “man”, does someone need to have a penis, to be aggressive, to know how to control pain, to hide emotions, not to play with girls, to hate poetry, to beat on “fags”, to be heterosexual or to be always ready to sexually harass women?

In sentences like “Be a man, kid!” commonly reported, besides foreseeing an only natural way of mellowing for “boys” (that supposedly must become “men”), underlies the idea of one and only feasible masculinity model: something to be conquered by masculine individuals on arduous battle for a title to be defended in every moment of life; under the relentless surveillance of everyone; a search for an unattainable model, a source of lasting dissatisfaction, anguish and violence. Thereby, the idea that effeminate boys would be homosexuals is reaffirmed; a belief whose strength resides in faith, deposited on the insistently reiterated heteronormative *doxa*. Its systematically repetition bestows an intelligibility to the “other”, that, just because being “less masculine”, can only be homosexual and, therefore, inferior.¹⁵

There is not only the hegemonic masculinity model, but a varied range of possibilities of masculinities that represent different positions of power on the relations between men and women, being it and among men themselves (Connell, 1995), strongly influenced by elements such as social class, ethnicity, etc., presenting different results. Schools step in in this process of construction as they deal with different masculinities, especially when classifying their students as good and bad, reinforcing class hierarchy, race/ethnicity and gender (Carvalho, 2009).

It would be necessary to realize that, not only students watch each “effeminate” boy, but also the whole institution does; moreover: everyone does permanently and capillary controlling the others and itself; besides, “Be a man!”, even being potentially addressed to all boys, is used to set a ritual gesture on which its target is disqualifying, at the same time on which its enunciator tries to present himself as a perfectly adequate individual to the gender norms; therefore, a male teacher that shouts to a student demanding him to become “man”, may feel as an institutionally authorized emitter, proudly well informed by the gender norms.

It would be worth highlighting a plural, dynamic, porous, multifaceted existence of masculinities and femininities; however, when wandering schools, we easily realize intense *gendering* of their spaces and practices. There, the gender boundaries are obsessively and binary delimited, so that activities, objects, knowledge, attitudes, spaces, games and colors that could be indistinctly assigned to boys and girls, become arbitrarily and binary masculine *or* feminine. They are gendered and transformed into distinctive, classifying, hierarchical elements. This distribution tends to be binary, and the criteria can be improvised and immediately assumed as natural. Creativity is easily put to the service of heteronormativity.

15 There is not a correspondent into the sexist context to “Be a man, kid!” for girls. In that context, “be a woman” tends to be realized as an outcome devoted to a naturally inlaid femininity on bodies of girls, or also coated by negative meanings on situations on which “woman” opposes the idea of “virgin”.

Heteronormative statements or expressions, such as “boys play with boys and girls with girls”, “women stuff”, among many others, requires reflection and problematization. Why a simple doll or a pink object on a boy’s hands may generate discomfort or even fury? May not a child choose to play with other children defined as pertaining to a different gender than his/hers? Why is the *crossing* or the *blurring* of gender boundaries so destabilizing? Would it be possible to exist masculinities (heterosexual or not) that could allow free traffic on games, objects, gestures, knowledge, abilities, and, preferences nowadays understood as feminine? Cannot the same happen when addressing to girls or to the, so called, “things of man”? Are there possible masculinities or femininities homo or bisexuals? Shall femininities and masculinities be assigned to anyone only under binary manner? Would not investments on binary opposition between masculinities/femininities or between hetero/homosexuality be a reassurance of heteronormative dictate (Butler, 2003; Juliano & Osborne, 2008)?

Schools would provide relevant service to citizenship and to the increase of quality of education¹⁶ if they engage themselves thinking over and problematizing practices, attitudes, values and norms that invest in the dichotomy polarization, the gender binarism, the segregation, the naturalization of heterosexuality, the naturalization of differences, the fixation and reification of identities, the (re)production of oppressive hierarchies. Yet, regardless of all that, thanks to changing operations of hegemonic and compulsory heterosexuality, *impugnation of gender binary can be accompanied by new methods of heteroregulating normalization.*

Such control regime makes up stressful, intimidating, harassed, aggressive, everlasting non-hosting and, disqualifying scenarios, on which homosexuals and transgender students are frequently taken to incorporate the need of presenting flawless, over the average school performance. Students may be urged to present “something else” to, maybe, be treated as “equals”. Without mandatorily perceive internalization of demands of *the pedagogy of the closet*, they can be urged to put on attitudes devoted to make them: “the best girls’ friend”, “the one who shares tests cheating to everyone”, “a vaunted jokes teller”, “the fastest swimmer”, “the most agile goalkeeper”; others may devote to satisfy and to be always up on the expectations of their peers. This may even take them to be willing to imitate behaviors or attitudes assigned to heterosexuals; it is, in short, efforts to collect a “pass” to a *consented inclusion* in a hostile environment; a fragile welcome usually translated into something like: “He is gay, but he is a nice guy”; that may, at any time, be transformed into “he is fine, but he is gay”, that will make the intruder be sent to limbo (Junqueira, 2009a).

Inside or outside school, the ongoing surveillance and repetitions of heteronormative *doxa* deepen the differentiation process and the status elevation of pertaining individuals on reference group – the heterosexuals – which privileges hold multiple implications. The norm takes them for granted. Its endless repetition supports bigger consolidation of beliefs connected to stereotypes. These can take their own “prophecy” to come true or take power effects on the peripheral inclusion or on the marginalization of the “other” whether in social or curricular aspects.

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16 Quality of education has become a kind of watchword on which lays distinct understandings.

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Normalization, dehumanization and human rights

On school everyday life gender norms may come out on an unvarnished version of *pedagogy of the insult and the closet*. Students, faculty, workers identified as “non heterosexual” are frequently taken to a “less human” condition. They deserve daily homophobic fury from their colleagues and superiors who usually act under certainty of impunity and on behalf of corrective and normalizing efforts. The others may have their rights suspended and have the group anger directly headed to them. People, in this case, do not act under their proper names; i. e., the school as an *institution* - not just people, students, teachers or superiors – shows up explicitly as a *disciplinary institution* (Foucault, 1997). School devices, techniques, and its controlling and subjection networks may reach each and every space, situation and agent micro physically. In this sense, discipline is more than to control: it is an exercise of power on which objects are the bodies and the objective, their *normalization*, whereby a specific identity is arbitrarily selected and naturalized, and then, it becomes a parameter for evaluations and hierarchy of the others. As a result, all the positives are assigned to the identity of reference, while the “other” can only be evaluated in a negative way and set under inferior lower status (Silva, 2000). Those who are not able to be normalized become unwanted and baseness, are set to inferior or void level of humanity.

This situation does not necessarily mean that all violence or arbitrariness is acknowledged by the official department in charge of social control at school. In disciplinary institutions this is not necessary, since, in this place, agents watch each other and over the others reciprocally.¹⁷ Anyway, among Brazilian school principals, it is not uncommon to notice disorientation, indifference or obliviousness toward scenes of overt heterosexist oppression. Not infrequently, they turn a blind eye to homophobic prejudice and violence or do not come down hard enough at any rate. Even when they admit the occurrence of such acts, they hardly ever recognize them as heterosexist (Junqueira, 2009a).

On a school principal’s report an “issue” is raised: a six years old student is believed to be feminine and, therefore, she concludes that he is a homosexual. She advised him to “stop camping it up to no call the others’ anger”, passing over the reifying, marginalization and dehumanization processes led by the institution, as well as all physical violence to which this student is often undergone. Well, only by the heteroregulating disciplinary fury could take somebody to identify/anticipate and assign (as if it was a verdict) homosexuality to a child and not become disturbed by the undergoing violence promoted by the group and institution. In the wake of dehumanization process of the “other”, indifference towards this suffering and complicity with the torturers express an authentic “state of denial and alienation”; i.e., a detachment attitude on which hostility or involving persecution is replaced by the disqualification of the subject, as a moral being, not recognized as an *autonomous* or partner agent (Costa, 1997: 70).¹⁸ Only a deep indifference state could make the peculiar

17 Not by chance, Foucault (1997) questions us if we should still be surprised that prisons look like factories, schools, quarters, hospitals and that these also look like prisons.

18 Dehumanizing processes also degrade and demean those who attack and makes the “other” an object, similarly to what happens in torture cases, on which the torturer seizes for pleasure in the others’ annihilation by the hope of overcoming his own (im)potency.

advice (clear curricular expression of *pedagogy of the closet*) be considered acceptable.¹⁹

The insufficiency or failure of the human rights discourse is clear towards the normalizing fury of *pedagogy of the insult and closet*. Freedom of gender expression and desire is a human right (International Commission of Jurists, 2007); however, considering the (hetero) normalizing wrath, we must remember that disciplinary processes aimed to promote the normalization of individuals are responsible for impeding them to become autonomous subjects (Fonseca, 1995). Together, normalization, heteronomy, denial and alienation generate pedagogies and a curriculum in action to serve framing, dehumanizing and marginalization. Heteronomativity itself is set as violation of human rights, once it restricts the subject's autonomy. Wherefore, Jaya Sharma (2008) considers it useless to talk about human rights on such generic and abstractive manner: according to her, besides doubting the vague and goodwill formulations, it is essential to face specific beliefs and values that feed hostility.²⁰

Denial, silencing and contempt for the feminine

Prejudice and discrimination against lesbians and lesbianity seem to play among the least perceived forms of heterosexism and homophobia also on schools.²¹ Indeed, most teachers' reports refer to heterosexism and homophobia mostly against masculine students. It makes us think about the obsessive surveillance to gender norms on subject growth and disciplining for those holding the identity of reference, the masculine heterosexual. On the other side, it takes us to socio historical processes of prohibition and silencing of the feminine and woman, of her body, of her sexuality. Gender norms and their surveillance and control regimes usually do not demand women to exorcize the masculinity and the homosexuality to be recognized as such. "The feminine faults" are others: infanticide (abortion), prostitution and adultery (Juliano & Osborne, 2008). Under the logic of negation and subordination of the feminine, of women's body, lesbianity would not exist as alternative.²²

19 "If we can convince ourselves that a group is unworthy, subhuman, stupid, or immoral, it helps us to keep from feeling immoral if we enslave members of that group, deprive them of a decent education, or aggress against them. We can then continue to go to church and to feel like good Christians because it isn't a decent fellow human we've hurt. Indeed, if we're skillful enough, we can even convince ourselves that the barbaric slaying of old men, women, and children is a Christian virtue [...]. Again, this form of self-justification serves to intensify subsequent brutality. It preserves the self-image, but also leads to increased hostility against the target person or group" (Aronson, 2008: 332).

20 The justification of homosexuality upon essentialist premises expresses anxiety for authorization, permission, compliance or clemency. It does not imply on ethical and political advances since it advocates for the acknowledgment of the *inevitable* and not of a legitimacy of a *right*. On the track of this conformism lays the rejection to the term "sexual option/choice", in contrast to the essentialist notion of "sexual orientation". See: Sousa Filho (2009).

21 The fact that our society accepts certain affection demonstrations between women is used perceived with more tolerant eyes relating to lesbianity. What may be becoming more acceptable only by the media is the couple that gathers "feminine" white women on stable relationship without social class or generation discrepancies (Borges, 2005).

22 At school, kissing between girls has worried many school principals. The pedagogy of the closet offers them curriculum support: on one side, a discourse tries to empty of its own trespassing and destabilizing contents, making it insignificant, defining it as a "passing fad" or a "temporary" thing; on the

Prejudice and discrimination that affect male or female homosexuals, restricting their basic citizenship rights, can get even worse towards transgender people. In fact, transgender people, when building up their bodies, their way of being, expressing and acting cannot go through as unknowns, since they tend to show little keen on conforming to the *pedagogy of the closet*. Located below the baseline of “sexual stratification” (Rubin, 1992), they systematically acknowledge denial and violation of their own rights under general indifference.²³ At schools they tend to face obstacles to enroll themselves, to join pedagogical activities, to have their own identities respected, to use the school infra-structure (such as restrooms) and to preserve their physical integrity. Although the field of public health in Brazil already seems to be relatively more open to recognizing the rights of transgender people, in the Brazilian schools it can still be very difficult to guarantee the right of transgender people to be treated the way they feel safe and comfortable, and above all, human. Often transgender’s *social name* is still misunderstood as a kind of nickname, rather than perceived as a factor that expresses human dignity redemption, the political acknowledgment of their social identity legitimacy and, then, their right to self-determination of gender.

Curriculum in action arises and makes explicit everyday teachers’ attitudes towards the difference. Indeed, when a teacher refuses calling a travestite student by his/her social name, he/she teaches and encourages his/her pupils to adopt hostile attitudes towards this student and difference in general. In fact, it is one of the most effective ways of translating the *pedagogy of insult* and curriculum in action to dehumanizing, stigmatizing, excluding processes; that subsequently reinforces the dictates on which the *pedagogy of the closet* exercises over every student.

Reflecting upon this demeaning, marginalizing, excluding scenery is a key objective of this paper and it is worth mentioning that normalizing processes with epicenter on the heterosexual matrix could also relate to subtle and tenuous processes on invisibilization of violations. As an example, it is mentioned *spatialization*, is a crucial procedure of power devices, followed by naturalization processes that make imperceptible interdictions and segregations, and thus legitimate them. Spatialization is one of the main aspects of this pedagogy that unfolds in the wake of division, distinction, classification processes; whereupon, curriculum continuously operates in normative terms. When informed by gender norms, spatialization, among other things, often has the consequence of denying travestites and transsexuals the access to restrooms in accordance with their gender identities. This clear violation of their rights of self-determination of gender entails also the legitimacy of a disciplinary arsenal aimed at ensuring compliance with the gender norms, reiterating distinctions and naturalizing segregations – producing effects over everybody.

other, it counts on disciplinary measures to inhibit and restrict the kissing.

23 Travestites are the group of people who faces more challenges to remain at school, as well as entering on job market (Peres, 2009). Prejudice and discriminations to which they customarily are subjected to go straight on the construction of their social, educational and economic profiles; and are used as legitimacy elements to new discriminations and violence against them.

By way of conclusion: Pedagogy of the closet x quality of education

It would be a misunderstanding to consider that heterosexism and homophobia are randomly or expressed in isolation of other oppressive power devices within schools, or merely constitutes the heritage that these institutions would simply admit them. The heteronormativity is inside the order of curriculum and schools everyday life. In fact, schools *allow, cultivate and promote* homophobia and heterosexism, reverberating what is produced in other scopes; and by doing so participates in the updating and rooting of heteronormativity. Besides, heterosexism and homophobia are often informed and reinforced by the racism and the classism (Hooks, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991; Platero, 2012); and then, all together, they *act on the organization* of school spaces, and on pedagogical and curricular practices. In the wake of gender surveillance and all those normality boundaries management regimes, school fabricates subject, identities, and reinforces truth regimes, (in)visibilisations, classifications, objectification²⁴ and distinctions, which affects all of us.

Furthermore, the strength of the *pedagogy of the closet* also seems to abide on the ability of ensuring the “no naming” of its violence, the silencing of its targets and the deletion of its traces. Not by chance, on collected reports the use of homophobia and heterosexism terms was rare. When mentioning subject and violations to which they are undergone could implicate not only on processes of acknowledgement of their social existence but also on their conditions as subjects with rights.²⁵ This would be an important step towards the confrontation of hierarchies, privileges, and invisibilization processes produced and nourished by the *closet*.²⁶

In the wake of this *pedagogy*, among the self-righteous, the understanding that respecting the “other” would be a humanitarian gesture, an expression of gentleness, a courtesy or a magnanimity, a sort of benevolent tolerance that keeps the hierarchies, relations of power and management technics of normality boundaries untouched is recurrent. Informed by a conformation matrix, people with different levels of prejudice usually see themselves as provided with positive attributes, as they believe to hold some sensibility regarding the

24 Teachers often anticipated homosexuality on children after identifying some untuning regarding gender norms among them.

25 In their reports, teachers often showed them as external observers, indicating difficulty to realize themselves as part of the problem; as if relations built in there, the adopted pedagogical practices, institutional rules and routines, would not be socially relevant on the naturalization of hegemonic heterosexuality, compulsory heterosexuality and legitimacy of the different, or “abnormal” marginalization.

26 It is observable in many teachers’ reports the absence of indignation and a strong search for self-appeasement. A mix of ingredients (conformism, resignation, pain, indignation, dissatisfaction, discomfort, compassion, impotence, indifference) accompanies the lack of motivation to go after more effective, collectively built alternatives. In the wake of the *pedagogy of the closet*, the measures usually taken are palliative or erroneous; and do not point to any social or political articulation. Many routes and proposals seem to be informed by a way of seeing that do not take to any change. Speeches often make up *displacement* on processes of responsibility assignments: the responsibilities are transferred from the group and the institution, i.e., the authors of violation, to the discriminated target. In fact, it is a heteroregulating action from the *economy of guilt* of the *pedagogy of the closet*.

victims. This is a portion of compassion as the other receives an acquiescent authorization to exist, usually on the margin and silenced. At school, before talking about “respect the differences”, it is worth questioning socio curricular and political processes on which they are produced, named and (de)valued. It is not enough to denounce prejudice and proclaim more freedom; it is necessary to destabilize relations of power, cleave hierarchies, disturb classifications and question the production of reified identities, as well as iniquities.

It is not an easy or unimportant task to invest on deconstruction of social, political and epistemological processes pertaining to the *pedagogy of the closet* by which some individuals and groups become normalized as the others become marginalized. Looking ahead the possibilities, discontinuities, transgressions and subversions which the trinomial sex-gender-sexuality experiences and produces, it is worth resisting the convenience offered by naturalizing conceptions that divide sex from culture and offer support to the essentialist, binary and reductive representations about body, gender, sexuality, identities and the like (Louro, 2004b).

Constructional processes of identities and social hierarchies at school are also related to inequality on the *social* distribution of educational “success” and “failure”. It is predictable that prejudiced ambiances disadvantage the efficiency of those affected by direct prejudice and discrimination; however, a national scope survey called “Research about prejudice and discrimination on school environment” (Brazil, Inep, 2009) goes beyond: it reveals a negative correlation between discriminatory school ambience and school performance in the global set of students. When producing and nourishing privileges and discriminations, school ambiances tend to undermine the average school performance of all students.

School is a space where the naturalized are considered as an unrecoverable can be confronted by pedagogies inclined to promote more creative rereadings, reworkings, dialogues and manners of seeing, being, classifying and behaving. At school, “tactical creations of life practices” (De Certeau, 1998) may give rise to inventing forms of living together, teaching, learning in favor of re-invention of life.

If a youth leaves regular school convinced that girls, black people or Muslim are inferior categories, it will not be important he/she knows grammar, algebra or any foreign language. School will have drastically failed already

(Perrenoud, 2000: 149).

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