

**WEARING FOUCAULT'S CLOGS: BIOPOLITICS  
IN BRAZILIAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**

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**ABSTRACT**

The article initiates by presenting the context and effects of the uses of biopolitics, a notion that Foucault frames during a period of theoretical transition, when he operates important displacements in his analytics of power. In the second section, we take 45 articles that appeared in Brazilian main journals in the field of education, during the past fifteen years, and that referred either to the notion of biopolitics or biopower. We noticed that the problems confronted by Foucault during this *biopolitical interlude* have undoubtedly found an echo in the angst, hopes and obstacles faced by Brazilian researchers during the post-dictatorial times. We believe this happened, among other reasons, because of the paradox they were witnessing: the first steps Brazil was walking towards democratization of relations and institutions, at the very same time neoliberal practices and reforms were introduced into the horizon.

**KEY WORDS**

Michel Foucault; Biopolitics; Brazilian education; Educational research.



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# Wearing Foucault's Clogs: Biopolitics in Brazilian Educational Research<sup>1</sup>

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*I produce clogs and find in it an almost erotic pleasure,  
for I am happy when someone sticks the feet in them.*

MICHEL FOUCAULT

The epigraph that served as inspiration to the strange title we chose to name this article has been taken from an interview Michel Foucault has given in 1973, during one of his stays in Brazil (Augusto, 1973). It is one more exemplar of those remarkable sentences the French philosopher employed to highlight the fact that his thinking was an ongoing work, always provisional and somewhat temporary: toolbox, scalpel, Molotov cocktails, fireworks, clogs (in French, *sabots*). All images that express the *use-value* he gave to the philosophy he meant to produce aiming present times, and whose pretensions was no other than change its strategic configuration by reactivating the possibility of a critical distance from ourselves (Foucault, 1983).

The election of what we are calling a clog-hypothesis seemed to us as an appropriate manner of approaching the reception of Foucauldian propositions on biopolitics in Brazilian educational field of researches. Therefore, it is not

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only because Foucault referred to this clog idea in Brazilian territory (the same way he first spoke of biopolitics during a conference at Rio de Janeiro, in 1974), but mainly for its contribution to clarify the approach we are assuming.

The article will develop in three different sections. In the first one, we intend to examine the uses Michel Foucault gave to the notion of biopolitics, by perusing three different sources: from the *Dits et Écrits*, two conferences and the summaries Foucault has written for the 1978 and 1979 lectures at Collège de France; from his books, the final chapter of the first volume of *History of Sexuality—An Introduction* (in French, *La volonté de savoir*); and, last, from his lectures at Collège de France, the final lecture of 1976, *Society must be defended*, and the courses of 1978 and 1979, *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Regarding these pieces, we intend to emphasize the instrumental nature of the notion of biopolitics on Foucauldian thought, as well as its connection to a period of theoretical transition, during which the author operates some very important displacement towards bypassing his interlocutors' ideas but also, ultimately, transcending himself.

In the second section, we undertake a cartography of how the theme of biopolitics appears in Brazilian researches of Foucauldian orientation. In order to pursue that we take into account 45 articles that have been published in the main journals of Brazilian field of Education during the last fifteen years. The selection considered the uses of the notions of biopolitics and biopower and it didn't matter whether it was a more explicit use or, instead, if it was a marginal one.

At the final section, we present some ideas about Foucauldian biopolitics as a clog-operation of thinking when in face of our educational present.

## BIOPOLITICS IN MICHEL FOUCAULT'S THOUGHT

Because it has been very deeply analyzed by other authors (Lazzarato, 1999; Castro, 2011; Rabinow & Rose, 2006), we do not intend to sharply circumscribe here a notion that carries along a floating meaning and is, strictly, an operational one. In this first section, our objective is to revisit the theme of biopolitics in Foucault's work, pursuing at once the concerns that led him to use it and the context in which it appears.

As we previously mentioned, the first (recorded) reference Foucault makes to biopolitics was at a conference in Rio de Janeiro, 1974, that was

called *The birth of social medicine*. During his talk, he examines the thesis that capitalism was to be blamed for the privatization of medicine. Although in a slightly different analytical key, the author presents an idea he would express more clearly in *Discipline and Punish* (that appeared the next year):

... capitalism, which developed from the end of eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, started by socializing a first object, the body, as a factor of productive force, as labor power... It was biopolitics, the biological, the somatic, that mattered more than anything else. The body is a biopolitical reality. Medicine is a biopolitical strategy (Foucault, 2000, p. 137).

The notion's first appearance is, therefore connected to a pool of themes close to those referred to during the 1978 and 1979 lectures at Collège de France. Also, Foucault tries to emphasize the emergence of practices that are capable of investment on biological body, which allows the productive forces to develop and to unlock the possibilities opened by the new forms of production.

This methodological insistence on the productive nature of power reappears during another conference, that has also taken place in Brazil (but this time at Salvador–Bahia), in 1976. Again, Foucault retrieves the notion of biopolitics. He starts criticizing the limits of the reflection that western societies developed about power, mostly thinking of it as repression (he refers directly to psychoanalysis, to sociological politics and to ethnology of traditional societies). He resumes from his aim of escaping the institutional and the juridical models of analyzing power. In this sense, the image of a mesh is referred to, in order to suggest that disciplines and biopolitics have both taken part on this process of tightening the web that recovers individuals. From now on, individuals are no longer thought of only in juridical terms (a loose mesh, which allows a series of activities, exchanges and displacements to leak from it); they are now confronted with other axes of subjectivation. In this conference, biopolitics assembles a meaning closer to the one that appears in the final chapter of *La volonté de savoir*:

Life now becomes, beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, an object of power. Life and the body. Previously, there had only been subjects, juridical subjects from whom we could collect goods, and life too, moreover. Now, there are bodies and populations. Power becomes materialist. It ceases to be essentially



juridical. It has to deal with real things [*des choses réelles*], which are bodies and life. Life enters the field of power: a major transformation [*mutation capitale*], doubtless one of the most important, in the history of human societies (Foucault, 2007).

Political investment of the body, emergence of life as an object to power. It is worth highlighting two other aspects about this 1976 conference. The first one is that Foucault gives special attention to the problem of illegalities and to the role of imprisonment to the production of violence. That is to say that the law produces effects even when it is introduced in contexts where there are no realistic perspectives of recovering the entire social body. Of course this is the last part of *Discipline and Punish* but perhaps it was also a subtle but firm manner to speak to Brazilian intellectuals and to their efforts of imagining how to escape the civil-military dictatorship. Foucault seems to suggest that the return to the State of Law would be insufficient to assure other freedom than civil or political ones. Therefore, Foucault calls the attention to the fact that the technologies of power he analyzes compose a *corpus* of counter-rights:

From the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward, in societies which appear as societies of rights, with parliaments, legislatures, codes, courts, an entirely different mechanism of power was beginning to seep in, which did not follow juridical forms and which did not have the law as its fundamental principle, but instead had the principle of the norm, and which no longer had courts, law, and juridical apparatus as its instruments but instead, medicine, social controls, psychiatry, psychology. We are therefore in a disciplinary world; we are in a world of regulation. We believe that we are still in a world of law, but, in fact, this other type of power is taking shape through channels [*relais*] that are no longer juridical channels (Foucault, 2007).

The second aspect that is worth emphasizing is that Foucault refers straightforwardly to the role played by sexuality as a surface to these two technologies of power, which allows their strategic coupling:

... and we can clearly see how sex [*le sexe*] could become, from this moment forward, which is to say precisely from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, an absolutely capital component; for, basically, sex is situated very precisely at the point of articu-

lation between the individual disciplines of the body and the regulations of population. Sex is that through which one can assure the surveillance of individuals... (Foucault, 2007).

Within the *Dits et Écrits*, it is only in these two conferences and in the courses' summaries that the notion of biopolitics appears. In all of them, the notion assumes a precise quality, by which Foucault identifies the emergence of specific technologies of power, capable of unlocking the operative effects produced by the notion of population. These practices are mostly participant of the general frame of disciplines: social medicine, psychiatry and juridical institutions. That is why *sex* is a central hinge that makes the articulation between disciplines and biopolitics possible.

We can see, therefore, the construction site where the notion of biopolitics is being shaped as a tool. Once again, it is about proposing a political genealogy of West, uncovering power and subjection relations that are immersed in democratic and welfare institutions. By doing so, he contributes to dismantle the Western self-representation as a civilization in constant progress, oriented by values such as equality, freedom and fraternity. We will come back to this in our final considerations.

Let us see now how the notion appears in the only book in which Foucault makes use of it: the first volume of *History of Sexuality*. The sentence is now very well known:

One might say that the ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death... The setting up, in the course of the classical age, of this great bipolar technology-anatomic and biological, individualizing and specifying, directed toward the performances of the body, with attention to the processes of life characterized a power whose highest function was perhaps no longer to kill, but to invest life through and through (Foucault, 1978, p. 138-139).

It is therefore in these pages that biopolitics appears as a notion that allows him to identify a new configuration of technologies of power over life, introducing biological into the center of political power. At least from the perspective of practices and effects, this represents a rupture to sovereignty and provokes changes to the disciplinary dispositive. The notion allows him to think differently about the changes that classical *episteme* has suffered, as



long as the entrance of life as a political problem unfolds into a new relation between history and life (Foucault, 1978, p. 143). Finally, here the notions also functions to make visible the effects of the overlap of the regulation by norms and juridical system of law:

I do not mean to say that the law fades into the background or that the institutions of justice tend to disappear, but rather that the law operates more and more as a norm, and that the judicial institution is increasingly incorporated into a continuum of apparatuses (medical, administrative, and so on) whose functions are for the most part regulatory. A normalizing society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life... We should not be deceived by all the Constitutions framed throughout the world since the French Revolution, the Codes written and revised, a whole continual and clamorous legislative activity: these were the forms that made an essentially normalizing power acceptable. (Foucault, 1978, p. 144).

It is important to notice that, at the end of these pages where he refers to biopower, Foucault identifies a new form of political resistance:

The “right” to life, to one’s body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of needs, and beyond all the oppressions or “alienations”, the “right” to rediscover what one is and all that one can be, this “right”—which the classical juridical system was utterly incapable of comprehending—was the political response to all these new procedures of power which did not derive, either, from the traditional right of sovereignty (Foucault, 1978, p. 145).

We will resume the theme of resistances within the frame of technologies of power in the following paragraphs. Before, we will pass to the final commentaries about the uses of biopolitics during Foucault’s lectures at Collège de France.

Foucault either makes use of the notion or intents to produce its genealogy in three different occasions: during the 1976 course, *Society must be defended*; in 1978, *Security, Territory, Population* and, in 1979, *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

*Society must be defended* is contemporaneous to the appearance of *La volonté de savoir*. Over the lectures, Foucault examines war as a frame to analyze politics in Western societies. As the title of the course suggests, the objective was to understand how the problem of defending society could appear, assigning



State the possibility, the responsibility and the ability to ensure its citizens' security. What is interesting is that Foucault operates a displacement from the juridical cases (as in the lectures of 1975, *Abnormal*) and from the medical practices, connected to sexuality (as in *La volonté de savoir*) towards philosophical and historical practices that legitimate power, during sixteenth century.

Foucault begins his lectures by discussing the emergence of the “war of races” as a discourse that can be thought of as an event both to politics and history. In this sense, the “war of races” appears as a counter-history, reclaimed by the subjugated people as a memory of the truth, which functions to reactivate political arena, as long as they allow the struggles and conflicts silenced by the conquest to be heard in present times.

“War of races” appears, therefore, as a practice of resistance to historical and philosophical discourses that tried to legitimate sovereign power. It is a practice that introduces a binary logic into political conflicts and that changes entirely the very experience of history in West by showing its opened nature (Foucault, 2003). “The war of races” is also “the first exclusively historico-political discourse to emerge in the West... in which truth functions exclusively as a weapon that is used to win an exclusively partisan victory (Foucault, 2003, p.57). Foucault also contends that it will be from this frame of analysis that many revolutionary works extract their “will to rekindle the real war that once went on and which is still going on, even though the function of the silent order of power is to mask and smother it, and even though it is in its interest to do so” (Foucault, 2003, p.79).

We start referring to these initial lectures because they allow us to clarify a dimension of biopolitics that Foucault had begun to approach both at the end of his 1975 lectures and *History of Sexuality I*: the problem of racism.

In his 1975 lectures, Foucault (2003) spoke in terms of a racism against *abnormal*, in order to make visible the effects of a new psychiatric power, which functioned by normalizing. At the end of *La volonté de savoir*, Foucault addresses racism straightforwardly as the effect of biopolitical technologies, which allows to reintroduce the power of death into political field, besides the aim of *making live*: the death of some will now be the condition of a general increase of the health of population, always thought of in long term. During the *Society must be defended* lectures, Foucault refers to a racism of State, making it clear that it operates cuts within a population, what makes it possible for power to divide it and to hierarchize it, producing a differential distribution of the chances to live and die:





I think that, broadly speaking, racism justifies the death-function in the economy of biopower by appealing to the principle that the death of others makes one biologically stronger insofar as one is a member of a race or a population, insofar as one is an element in a unitary living plurality... The specificity of modern racism, or what gives it its specificity, is not bound to mentalities, ideologies or the lies of power. It is bound up with the technique of power, with the technology of power (Foucault, 2003, p. 258).

It is worth noticing that, although Foucault refers to Nazism, he also repeatedly mentions the soviet totalitarianism. By doing so, he reiterates his critique to Left thinking, which shows the incapacity to reflect on power and—as he will say during the 1979 lectures—to propose a different governmentality (Foucault, 2008). By focusing their analysis on power in its institutional aspects, Left thinking finds itself hostage of practices and technologies that reproduce some of the problems they would like to bypass. And so the 1976 lectures concludes with this acid critique to Left’s impotence to surpass biological politics, which includes modern racism—this conservative appropriation, at the end of the nineteenth century, of the critical firepower contained within the “war of races” discourse.

During the next year lectures, *Security, Territory, Population*, biopower appears as an object to be analyzed through the exam of security mechanisms (diseases, epidemics and food shortage). But soon after the first lectures, Foucault displaces the problem from a genealogy of biopower towards a genealogy of western governmentality—a project that he embraces entirely at the fifth lecture. Besides identifying the idea of *population* as a surface that rearticulates tactical and political technologies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Foucault recedes towards the analysis of pastoral power and the emergence of *raison d’État*, both of them taken as the condition of possibility to the entrance of life and government as political problems. It is at this moment that Foucault recovers those archives he had examined in the 1974 conference: social medicine, public hygiene, urbanization and the two frames of control (harm and plague), *police*—in the specific German meaning. But it is also where the author presents liberalism as a sort of permanent critique of State.

Likewise, in the course of the 1979 lectures, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, the notion will describe, broadly, “the attempt... to rationalize the problems posed to governmental practice by phenomena characteristic of a set of living beings forming a population: health, hygiene, birth-rate, life expectancy,

race...” (Foucault, 2008, p. 317). During these lectures, Foucault addresses neoliberalism, examining both the German and the North American models. During the 1978 lectures, he had shown how liberalism could be thought as a technology of government that introduces a limit to State practices other than Law; at this time neoliberalism appears as an art of government capable of restructuring practices and discourses of State. But it does not mean overcoming biopower; instead, taking biopower and reshaping it in new terms, what implies a deep transformation of political institutions created within the juridical model.

Foucault concludes the lectures with a reference to political history as a stage of conflict and battle between different arts of government. But he also acknowledges the strategic centrality played by liberalism:

What should now be studied, therefore, is the way in which the specific problems of life and population have been posed within a technology of government which, although far from always having been liberal, since the end of the eighteenth century has been constantly haunted by the question of liberalism (Foucault, 2008, p. 323-24).

In the range of six years, we have this trajectory that only now, at distance of time and when we are in possession of its various pieces, we can acknowledge as an incessant work of returning to archives in order to face, continuously, the challenge of thinking differently about the relations of power. If the idea of a micro-physics had taken him to identify the disciplinary anatomo-politics that invested in the body-machine, the dispositive of sexuality seems to lead him to the consciousness of another strength playing to give form to present times, what he translates in terms of a biopolitics of species. Over these years, biopolitics passes from an instrument of precision to a sort of master key that makes visible a range of political technologies and practices: war of races, political economy, pastoral power, *raison d'État*, neoliberalism. All these themes can now interlock into a genealogy of western governmentality. Along with the notion of government, Foucault also demonstrates a clear concern with the problem of resistance: counter-conducts, critique, dissidence, uprising, a wish not to be governed, the “right of the governed” (Gros, 2013). The problem of liberation and of ethics is here announced, once again, as a reiterated refusal of universal concepts and as a claim for inventing new forms of government.



## THE FOUCAULDIAN BIOPOLITICS AND ITS USES IN BRAZILIAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

From the general framework outlined above, and pursuing a general overview of the appropriations of the notion of biopolitics in the Brazilian educational field, 45 articles, from 25 different education journals in the period of 2001 to 2014, have been selected in order to compose the current research. The timeframe of the early 2000's is not arbitrary. It has to do with the publication in Brazil, in 1999, of *Society must be defended* (Foucault, 2000), in which the notion is initially mentioned. However, it is important to keep in mind that the final chapter of the *History of sexuality I*, which consists of one of the benchmarks for the discussions, had been in circulation since the late 1970's. Nevertheless, such discussions will gain strength and systematization only three decades later with the publication in Portuguese, in 2008, of the other two courses delivered by Foucault—*Security, territory, population* (2009) and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008)—in which the theme of biopolitics becomes central.

Thus, in view of the selected material, four separate, but often crossed, argumentative axes were isolated. The first axis is related to studies devoted to the triad body/sexuality/health. Another branch of the studies is referred to the discussion about inclusive education. The third one involves the research field dedicated to certain aspects of governmentality/neoliberalism. The fourth axis approaches the historiographical studies that used the notion of biopolitics in their analysis.

Our discussion will begin with the last ones, which happen to be the least frequent in the set of texts.

Among the chosen articles in the last axis, perhaps the most emblematic is the one written by Silva (2013), which establishes the historical nexus between biopolitics, eugenics and education in Brazil, in the period from 1911 to 1945. It is, according to the author, the historical zenith of racist thesis, in use in Brazil since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, until its decline with the end of the Second World War and the collapse of the so called Era Vargas<sup>2</sup>. The period is characterized by the bonding between educational practises and hygienist/eugenic precepts, through the efforts of their dissemination/popularization

<sup>2</sup> Period in the Brazilian history between 1930 and 1945. It is named after the first presidency of Getúlio Dornelles Vargas, who assumes an interim government after a civilian *coup d'état* in 1930. He leads a constitutional government from 1934 to 1937 and finally imposes a dictatorship from 1937 to 1945.

either in the context of schooling itself, or in the social domain by newspapers, books, conferences, etc. In short, the purpose was to instruct people about scientific ideas concerning an alleged racial and moral improvement of the Brazilian man, by encouraging a sanitary and, at the same time, nationalistic awareness.

Referring to the school realm, the author highlights the enthusiastic expectations assigned, in that context, to Physical Education. Carvalho & Guido (2011) have achieved a similar effort, but focusing on a subsequent historical period—1964 to 1985—, through the analysis of the journal *Revista Brasileira de Educação Física* [Brazilian Journal of Physical Education].

Other analytical trend explored by historiographical texts focuses on the practices based in “Nova Escola” movement<sup>3</sup>. Lima (2007) analyzes the ABC Tests, formulated by Lourenço Filho, which were implemented in primary schools of São Paulo in the decade of 1930, aiming at solving the high level of failure in the initial years of schooling. The author considers these tests

as a resource of biopolitics because they produced knowledge about an aspect of students’ life—their maturity for learning reading and writing. And this knowledge allowed to intervene in the population, organize it into more homogeneous, legible and manageable groups (p. 145-146).

In fact, it is worth enhancing the key role, in biopolitical terms, conferred to the psychological discourse within the educational field. It can be attested in the articles by Guimarães (2013), Elias & Resende (2014) and, specially, in the one by Santos (2011), which deals with a particular phenomenon: the teachings directed to mothers in children’s care manuals. To do so, the author analyses two editions (1963 and 2002) of *The life of the baby*, a best seller, originally published in 1941, written by Brazilian paediatrician Rinaldo De Lamare. The study presents incisive reflections:

Through the permanent vigilance of her baby and the monitoring of what the child is already able to do, the mother becomes a child development inspector, and should turn to the experts, if she notices something abnormal. In addition, the mother extracts truths about that subject who is on her

3 As it was entitled in Brazil, New School movement is analogue to Progressive education movement. It was led in Brazil by Lourenço Filho and Anísio Teixeira, among other pedagogues, in the 1930’s.

surveillance, truths that will be readdressed to the child in the pedagogy and psychology discourses, depending on the position that it occupies in the normal curve (p. 439).

The overall scenario outlined by historiographical studies creates a fertile ground for the studies that focused on contemporary educational issues. Moreover, one of the most significant attributes of educational studies appropriations of the notion of biopolitics is the radius increase of the analyses beyond school frontiers, embracing a series of socially scattered (in)formative actions.

In this direction, a good example is Coutinho's study (2003) on the appearance of pedagogical spaces for children in Brazilian shopping centres. According to the author, it's necessary to understand this kind of event as an effect of a growing *hiperprivatization*, according to author's terms, of educational services nowadays, consisting of a set of initiatives apart of the State regulation and at the mercy of massive forces of the market.

Studies on the media educational character are also an example of researchers' attention to outward movements of educational initiatives. An example of this effort is the article by Henning et al. (2014) about the biopolitical strategies implied on environmental education discourses through advertisements broadcast on television and on the Internet, since

ordering and composing the reality, media manufactures lifestyles. It selects what should be said and indicates the way it must be said. Thus, it sets up a power operation that reaches countless people, considering the circulation power of its discourses (p.226).

Similar attention to non-school educational dynamics can be found in the studies related to triad body/sexuality/health, which happen to show a significant impact in the set of selected articles. It is undoubtedly one of the main branches of the educational studies about biopolitics.

Weber's article (2011) dedicated to analyse the *Programa de Saúde da Família*, public health policy of Brazilian Federal Government in operation since 1994, which established itself, according to the author, as a powerful biopolitical *dispositif* for governing population groups under its domain.

The treatment granted to aging by the media was, in turn, focused in two studies. In the first case, Oliveira & Siqueira (2013) analysed the Brazil-

ian video *Solitário Anônimo* (Anonymous Solitaire), released in 2007, which presents the true case of “one man, found in grave state of malnutrition, without any personal or family reference, admitted in a public hospital against his will: he intended to die by starvation” (p. 149). In the second text, Giusti (2014) prioritized front pages of health inserts in two newspapers, from 2004 to 2010. The study conclusions describe the biopolitical spectrum of management operations on such population groups, in view of the production of

an old age based on health promotion, i.e., a healthy aging. The promotion enunciations currently adopted, which frame every subjects as liable to intervention, reveals the project dictated by geriatrics, which orientates the control of human life in all its extension... The establishment of the elders new figure is based on the need for this population adaptation to follow the accelerated flow of events that define our times (Giusti, 2014, p. 184).

Based on the proposition by Pereira & Ferraro (2011), the pedagogical nexus of actions carried out either by Government, by market or by culture, could be defined as holder of a curricular nature; curriculum being understood as “all forms of organization of space, time, skills, truths and practices within the universe of the school and its surroundings” (p. 139). That is what the authors advocate when they present the school measures for prevention and control of Influenza H1N1 when it appeared in Brazil in 2009, demonstrating the conversion of curriculum practices in a ruthless security *dispositif*. From this emblematic case of alliances between biopolitics and education, the authors conclude: “each and every one must be conformed under the general model of normality and risk management” (p. 145).

Using statements about obese people that circulated in Orkut communities, Camozzato (2011) examines what she names *current updates of racism*, operated by body discourses, currently not only under a disciplinary frame, but also a biopolitical one. Such process develops, according to the author,

when we speak about sexuality, fashion, youth identities, among other themes, the body is there, watching the set of processes that make us subjects of certain experiences. Therefore, the body is constantly (re)evaluated, compared, selected... Qualify, improve, clean, extract, sort, purify, accelerate, modify, in brief, verbs that meet a eugenics will (p. 178).



It is also under the motto of combating obesity that César & Duarte (2009) highlights a phenomenon entitled *fitness pedagogy*, in order to analyse the biopolitical effects of neo-liberal economic corollary in contemporary education. It is, according to them, the emergence of new government forms of children's bodies, based on diverse files, such as

body measurements, conducting exercises, the elaboration of new school meals and, above all, the diffusion of a slim and healthy lifestyle, which is the central theme of the new body pedagogy that now invades contemporary school and takes it as a privileged instrument of diffusion (p. 128).

Regarding to the meanders of the relationship between education biopolitics by bias of embodiment, both Altmann (2007) as Silva, Siqueira & Lacerda (2010) pointed out the discourses around teen sexuality and, specially, the unexpected pregnancy. Likewise, Cruz (2007) examined the discourses about childhood, adolescence and AIDS, while Ribeiro (2008) did the same with those about drug use prevention, when they emerged in the 1970's in Brazil.

Some statements in this last text reaffirm the amalgam role of the psychological discourse regarding the binomial health-education, marked in the logic of risk prevention, i.e. in

complex interconnection between the psi discourse and the governmentalization relations within state and society, marked by the constant search of new tactics of population management and by the rise of the expert psi figure as an increasingly qualified and privileged interlocutor... The psi knowledge and the rationality of governing conducts, economic and secure government, constitute, therefore, the parameters for the emergence of prevention logic (Ribeiro, 2008, p. 363).

A similar set of issues (sexuality, eating disorders, drug use and mental health) became the motto of an intervention in a public primary and secondary school in Fortaleza (capital of Ceara state, in the country northeast), in the form of focal groups. Their outcome was analysed by Barros (2013), and, once again, the notions of risk and prevention emerged as “mechanisms by which the discursive practices in health accomplished intersections between individuals disciplining and biopolitical processes linked to social normalization of the body-species life of juvenile population” (p. 377).

The critique of medicalization processes, associated to the biopolitization of educational practices often attested in school background, appears in two studies, both having reached similar conclusions. In the first case: “the large-scale medicalization of children nowadays can be read also as appeal to quiet the conflicts, denying them as inherent to subjectivity and to human encounter” (Guarido, 2007, p. 160). The second: “the increasing intensity of competition orders at work and of very high demands for performance goals, added to the fraying of solidarity and the fragmentation of social ties, creates space for the expansion of the body medicalization” (Lemos, 2014, p. 492).

Finally, among the texts relating education and biopolitics in the thematic intersection body/sexuality/health, there is one that seems to distinguish from the others, which are often tied to a kind of hermeneutical juxtaposition of the Foucauldian notion of biopolitics over some empirical frame. Sierra & César (2014) face the challenge of a post-identity LGBT (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transvestites, transsexuals and transgender people) existential aesthetics in education. The notion of biopolitics, adversary to the aesthetics of existence, describes the capture of sexual differences through the identity fixation of their protagonists, imposing them a role as legitimate as, paradoxically, secreted in the socio-political and school order. Thus, the subject of rights would automatically convert in subject of norm. It is, according to the authors, the

production of bodies and lives adjusted to classification, correction and normalization processes that impose LGBT subjects a way of life operated from heteronormativity which establishes the identity logic as a resource to inclusion in the legal, social and educational sphere (p. 37).

The intrinsic relationship between inclusion and normalization joins the argumentative structure of most part of the educational researches that operated with the Foucauldian notion of biopolitics. It is, more specifically, a vigorous front explored by the texts analysed, which dedicated to characterize the requirements and, at the same time, the setbacks around educational inclusion in Brazil.

Hailed as a major legal achievement from the re-democratization process in the country, which culminated in the latest Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDB 9394/96), the guarantee of educational services to either marginalized social groups, or persons in situation of vulnerability, has consolidated itself as a socio-political imperative in Brazilian present time.





Despite the correctness of the educational inclusion precept, Foucauldian researchers seem to be unanimous in pointing out the paradoxical effects witnessed in its factual appropriation.

In an opening text of this thematic field, Veiga-Neto (2001) offers what could be considered the Gordian knot of education inclusion: its normalizing function.

The norm, while allows to draw the dangerous, strangers, unknown and the bizarre ones from wild exteriority, by capturing them and making them understandable, familiar, accessible, controllable, it allows, at the same time, to frame them at a safe distance, to the point that they don't incorporate. This means that, by converting an unknown into a known abnormal, the norm makes this last one another case of its own... It's also what makes it such a central operator to the government of the others; there is no escape (p. 29).

As one can easily assume, discussions on the norm/normalization open a range of varied possibilities regarding the analysis about the relationship between biopolitics and education—something that underlined the textual production focused here in this text, concerning the practices of children education, special needs education, prison education and, above all, public policies related to the field.

Other text that could be considered germinal is the one by Souza & Gallo (2002). From an association between Foucault and psychoanalysis, the authors propose to discuss the topic of exclusion and, particularly, racism.

The theme of exclusion also echoes in the study conducted by Martins (2009), which presents nursery practices, that took place in Aracaju (capital of Sergipe, another state in the northeast region), addressed to children of low-income workers, whose responsibilities were systematically disqualified by the educational agents, resulting in stigmatization of children, believed to be raw.

It was possible to testify that the big issue that prevented day care to let mothers participate in other tasks, including the pedagogic level, was the mistrust in the capacity and in the “pedagogical condition” of those mothers, submitted that they were to the role of poverty and ignorance. Who can't know how to read, to write, to take care of hygiene, of good food. They don't know, don't know... (p. 40).

A specific social niche focused in one of the articles refers to young victims of abandonment by their families, who were under social protection. The research of Sales & Rocha (2013) was held with 15 at-risk host assistance institutions in Fortaleza. Some conclusions of the study are acute:

We verified that the exclusion of those young people reveals itself by the invisibility that they carry nowadays. They do not disturb, do not mobilize, do not change the order of the world. They are normalized by the inclusion policies. Their lives do not preoccupy (p. 327).

In an argumentative perspective opposite to the invisibility of the subjects, another researcher understands the logic in the discourses/policies related to inclusion: they “always define the boundaries of a certain selectivity degree that emphasizes the difference by prejudice, as a strategy of social segregation, constantly aiming at a collective or individual exposure” (Osório, 2007, p. 302).

Studies on exclusion/inclusion processes have found, however, more positive explanatory approaches, as in the case of childhood.

That’s what the texts by Carvalho (2006) and by Bujes (2010) allow to witness, both devoted to the practice of early childhood education. With the spread of biopolitical modality of population management, childhood finds himself entangled, according to the second author, in practices which overcome the purely disciplinary scope. Set around the notion of risk and its characteristic susceptibility, childhood care has accomplished, currently, an extended radius of action, derived from the activation of a wide range of security techniques related to children custody.

If what is at question is the management of the children lives, the risks to which they are exposed could be found in such diverse points such as the parents’ level of education, their employment status, their income, the family structure, the access to community medical care, the relative child position in family constellation, family hygiene habits, hours in front of the TV, school attendance, and many others (p. 171-172).

Also Lemos (2009), reviewing documents from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) released between 1990 and 2003, detects distinctive features of the biopolitics corollary, through the bonding between security, protection of



life and discipline of children and adolescents bodies: “What seemed a rescuing mission of poor and helpless childhood reveals itself clearly as a social control policy of disadvantaged populations, held by cautionary bias on an economic basis” (p. 17).

In an article on the cultural attitude related to the so called human and social differences, Benevides (2012) offers a summary of Foucauldian studies point of view about what is at stake in inclusive education:

The will that sustains these practices, policies and discourses operates in order to take care of, include and secure the rights to health, to good quality of life, to the education of others—in one word, is to show the will of power that sustains the protection *dispositifs*. Thus, who understands that the production of the difference to be included is simultaneous to the production of normality that includes, will understand better the will of power that sustains the protection *dispositifs* (p. 900).

Through the prism of biopolitics, it becomes evident the fact that effectiveness of populations government processes operate through conversion of virtuality into universality, particularity into globalism. In other words, it achieves totality by singularity. Here lies the centrepiece of biopolitical modality—markedly flexible and floating—of lifestyle shaping in contemporary times. Lunardi (2006) explains it in a discussion about practices carried out by special needs education:

It is not a question of being associated to an individual’s body at the level of detail, as the discipline does it, but, on the contrary, it is acting upon global mechanisms in order to achieve also global states based on balance, regularity... The “real” individual, characterized as presenting “concrete” risks and needing to be imprisoned, ceased to be the central concern for Government programs. Attention now turns to the association of certain factors that constitute not only individuals, but spaces, communities, social risk populations (p. 178-179).

To the author, it is exactly as a community at risk and, therefore, as a target of imminent social control that individuals with educational special needs are being designed, treated and *subjectivated* by the public policies addressed to them at the present time.

A similar perspective is advocated by Saraiva & Lopes (2011) regarding educational practices in prisons. This segment of the population, despite being in confinement, would not be apart from the inclusion meshes and the neoliberal accent that designates them. Unlikely, it is only different “gradients of participation” (p. 28) of each of the sub-groups that compose the contemporary social diversity.

It should be pointed out, yet, a significant amount of texts dedicated to offer properly conceptual elements about inclusion as a political practice in governmentality. In this direction, the production by Veiga-Neto & Lopes (2007), Lopes (2009) and Lopes & Rech (2013) is exemplary. An excerpt from one of the Lopes’ texts is a sample of the kind of approach at stake:

Inclusion in contemporary times has become one of the ways that States found, in a globalised world, to keep control on information and economy. The promise of a status change within consumer relations—a promise that also comes to those who live in absolute poverty—, articulated the desire for condition of life change, is a source that maintain partnership between State and market, keeping inclusion as an neo-liberalism imperative (Lopes, 2009, p. 167).

The essential theoretical bond between biopolitics and governmentality, as attested in the Lopes’ writings, configures the last axis of educational studies dedicated to biopolitics in education.

One of the argumentative milestones that structures this last axis refers to the processes of *subjectivation*, devoted to the edification and the constant update of the *homo oeconomicus*, as pointed out by Foucault in *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

One of the representative texts in such a way to estimate the current biopolitical rationality is the one by Saraiva & Veiga-Neto (2009). Through a dialogue between Foucault’s ideas and other thinkers, such as Gilles Deleuze, Maurizio Lazzarato and Richard Sennett, the authors synthesize the main changes experienced in and by contemporary educational practices: a distinct mutation of children and young people’s values and behaviours brought up by the advent of new technologies; a reorganization of school temporality based on immediacy, due to the hegemony of psychological pedagogies and their emphasis on students’ interests; finally, a subordination of pedagogical action to the dictates of the labour world and its actual impermanence,



resulting, among teachers, in “increasing flexibility, *deprofessionalization, replacement, disqualification, social marginalisation, salary deflation, political devaluation, associative and union weakening*” (p. 199, Gryphons of the authors), and, among students, in entrepreneurial subjectivities based on the unfailing logic of learning to learn.

In the wake of an endless civilizing mission, a strategic turning point arises in Brazilian pedagogical rationality, according to Saraiva (2013). The author reviewed journal articles from educational field between 2005 and 2012, in which the researchers evocated the insertion of new themes in the curricula, according to three major axes: nutritional education, as well health and sex education; entrepreneurial and financial education; environmental education and traffic education. The endeavour to disseminate technical-scientific based information, by way of clarification of the school population in favour of living without risks, contemplate not only students, but also their families and the communities to which they belong.

It is necessary to recognize that if there was a time when the population control relied mainly on strategies of restriction to information (like censorship), today it seems that the truth, especially scientific truth, is what serves as the main support element (p. 177).

The author’s argument is valuable since it draws a framework of biopolitics updates in education, within the centrepiece of contemporary processes of governmentalization, resulting in what Camozzato & Costa (2013) perfectly synthesize: a growing willingness for pedagogy. According to the authors, this is the effect of a historical movement towards an uninterrupted flexion of pedagogy idea and, consequently, its domains expansion.

In this process of expansion, we create and feed, continuously, a willingness for pedagogy, which, somehow, becomes “visible” and “speakable”, showing us how society and the population as a whole are targets of that expansion. This willingness should be understood as the search for fulfilling a lack, an insatiable desire that is, overall, kindled by changing needs that are never supplied (p. 41-42).

In order to establish the theoretical basis for the analysis of educational issues related to contemporary socio-political problems, many of the texts

included in this latter category make use of an essay structure, by way of dissemination of Foucault's main ideas about the notion of governmentality.

Thus, three articles, respectively by Costa (2009), César (2010) and Maia (2011), are highlighted. The first one, in particular, has become a reference employed by several subsequent studies. Reviewing Foucault's ideas contained in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, the author focuses on the educational outcomes from human capital theory, as formulated by the Chicago school, highlighting the emergence of an entrepreneurship culture in school practices. This is the outbreak of *individuals-micro-enterprises*, according to his terms, holders of the following attributes:

They are proactive, innovative, flexible, with a sense of opportunity, with remarkable ability to provoke changes, etc. Migrating from market—the new economic theories, administration and large business corporations (corporate ethos)—for society as a whole, this new discourse arrives at the education received and celebrated both by progressive and conservative sectors, by private and public segments, by governmental and non-governmental organizations (Costa, 2009, p. 181).

Overwhelmed by the learning to learn mantra, “contemporary self-entrepreneurialism and school education must regroup with the goal of producing the ‘human capital’ equipped with a beautiful body and informational and cognitive extraordinary skills” (César, 2010, p. 232). In other words, it is about developing changing capacities instead of cultivating long-lasting knowledge, promoting modes of *subjectivation* as occasion of uninterrupted educational investments, which would result in hyperactive bodies and minds always in readiness for lifelong learning.

That is, according to Saraiva (2014), one of the indelible marks of cognitive capitalism: the biopolitical alliance between the regulatory universes of education and labour. Associating the educational scope to the domain of immaterial labour, according to the assertion by Maurizio Lazzarato and Antonio Negri, the author detects a new pedagogical rationality in course, embodied in initiatives such as the pedagogy of projects and, above all, distance education.

A similar perspective is advocated by Silva & Fabris (2012), as well by Silva (2014). In both cases, printed materials addressed, respectively, to the university public and, in the second case, to high school teachers, are analysed.



The conclusions point out the main role that the media plays in the thought and conduct management of educational subjects, underscoring a *pedagogy of protections* which, according to Silva (2014, p. 955), “as it is located within the political game of security technologies, takes the communities as spaces of pedagogical intervention, proposing to regulate teachers’ subjectivity”.

The last selected text is a thought-provoking article in which the biopolitical Foucauldian is coupled to the concept of *faciality* formulated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Carvalho (2013) proposes, then, three ethical-political principles in opposition to the many constraints operated by *biopolitized* school, according to his terms: to overcome the walls of dominant signifiers-significations; to replace the manufacturing will for a handmade attitude; finally, to promote the event rather than strict planning.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The cartography we intended to present here has shown itself at once intensive and modest. It is intensive when we take into account the intricate work of collecting and organizing data. But it is modest in the sense we tried to resist the temptation of judging the uses of Foucault. We took very seriously Foucault’s proposition about the clogs by assigning the notion of biopolitics the usage of something to be enjoyed, put into circulation and, especially, something capable of producing multiple resonances. A clog-notion, so to speak.

Therefore, we have to acknowledge that the critical project endeavored by Foucault during the years we tried to map in the first section—a period usually referred to as his *biopolitical interlude*—has undoubtedly echoed the angst, hopes and obstacles that were circulating in Brazilian society when it was time to face post-dictatorial challenges. Part of Foucault’s writings appeared just when this society was trying to take the first steps toward a democratic reform of its institutions. But it was also the 1980s, a period when practices and values clearly from neoliberal matrix were emerging. This is why we believe that when the educational researchers conjure the notion of biopolitics, they are not just wearing a comfortable clog-notion: they are also assuming a clog-operation, in the sense they bear a critical attitude, ultimately deeply questioning our educational present and its evils.



From this perspective, we resume from a last dimension, already mentioned, but to what we want to call attention for it is profoundly connected to the reasons the notion of biopolitics is so contemporary to Brazilian educational research, since the late appearance of translations of *Dits et Écrits* and the Collège de France lectures.

Examining Foucault's *biopolitical interlude*, as well as the manners his ideas were received by educational research in Brazil, we can reason that this period extends, and somehow also closes, a trajectory of sharp critique to the stakes and hopes western societies have put into the idea of rights as a juridical reality and into the principles of equality, freedom and fraternity as basis of free-democratic societies. A genealogy of relations of power in West aimed to reinsert, within the strategic field of struggles, some of the *low beginnings* of practices and technologies of government that overpass our experience of present times—also (and specially) our educational present.

After Foucault, it is possible to recognize that the era of equality is also the era of disciplines that hierarchize, select and rebuild differences accordingly to a new rationality. It is also the era of biopolitical practices, and its norm of differential distribution, which implies giving up the utopia of individual insertion. If the relation between education and discipline seemed evident since the first Foucauldian works appeared, the paradoxical articulation between democratization of school and neoliberalism will produce a new horizon of problems where, as we have seen in the second section, the imperative of inclusion will repeatedly arise.

Accompanying Foucault, we are also confronted to the idea that the era of freedom carries along technologies of government that produce and, at the same time, consume freedom. That is to say that Foucauldian critique makes visible—crisply—the *meshes* of power that make freedom relative, as long as it is crossed by practices that produce subjects. Therefore the paradox of freedom as condition to regulation processes.

Finally, Foucault confronts us with the limits of the era of fraternity when he unveils that it is based upon a racism of State that continuously produces cuts in order to scavenge population by identities that, largely, have consequences over their higher or lower chances of living—and living here has a biological, labor or educational sense. As we can now acknowledge, beneath, above and within laws and rights, run practices that incessantly produce new forms of living and, therefore, new educational subjects.





Beyond clog-notions, Foucault's legacy seems to be the continuous challenge for us to escape the traps we were historically imprisoned in (Foucault, 1983). And this could mean, ultimately, that we take off our received clogs and risk hurting our bare feet by walking the unpaved paths of contemporaneous—experiencing its shards, its dirtiness, its compulsory incompleteness.

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