



Perspectivizing and Imagining Queer Pedagogies Through Collaborative Interventionist Research in a Brazilian School

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INTRODUCTION¹

This chapter is a response to a bleak scenario in Brazil and in different parts of the world. Government officials and a lot of parents have been fighting against teachers in order to protect children from the influence of what has been dubbed “gender ideology”. Moreover, homophobia and racism have been increasing in institutional and non-institutional contexts. This situation gives rise to many worries. What will become of the relative recent gains in relation to gender, sexuality, and race? How can they endure when the so-called “identity politics” are under attack? How does one face the flourishing prejudice in contemporary times? In order to grapple with these questions, we revisit two educational research projects developed in Brazilian schools, whose aim was to imagine queer times and spaces in educational life. Resorting to the concept of scale, we explore

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some of the performative effects of these projects by analyzing classroom and digital practices revolving around gender and sexuality.

More than ever, there is now a compelling need to consider more strongly queer theorizing in the education domain. That is not to say that the necessity for queering education was not among educational concerns before. In fact, there are myriad research projects related to queer education carried out at schools across the world and also reports on how to act in classrooms in order to queer school curricula. Moita-Lopes and Fabrício (2019) review this kind of research, especially in literacy contexts. The literature they discuss may lead many scholars into thinking that education is becoming increasingly progressive, particularly in connection with race, gender, and sexuality issues. Their basis is the fundamental works of Judith Butler (1990) and Eve Sedgwick (1990). Among many others who have written about gender theory, these thinkers prompted a political agenda including “identity” work at large. Such an agenda has cleared the ground for queer theorizing, which also includes race issues (Barnard, 2004).

Intrinsic to it are social movements in many parts of the globe, particularly mobilized by feminist, LGBTIQ+, and anti-racist activism. Their repercussions have been paramount in demanding a classroom epistemology that considers students as subjects who do gender, race, and sexuality. Although one cannot say that a queer outlook is influential in every classroom, it has animated a lot of the discussions in initial and in-service teacher education programs. It has also had a great impact on research, textbook publishing, and syllabus design in many quarters of the world.

Bringing the centrality of who we “are” as social beings into the educational realm makes the task of teaching more complex. Nevertheless, it enables teachers to connect with a world deeply transformed by social movements. Therefore, more democratic aims in education toward the construction of social justice have become crucial issues. They consider students’ races, genders, and sexualities as integral to cognition and inseparable from their socially situated bodies. This orientation has contributed to education becoming forward-looking in its developments.

In spite of all these progressive changes, contemporary social life has been pointing in a different direction. We now face extremely conservative sociopolitical circumstances that have caused a widespread backlash. This perception considers different aspects. On the one hand, the world is now following neoliberal perspectives, in which the feeding of Market forces is promoted at the expense of democratic principles. On the other hand,

anti-democratic politics on the far right link up with extremist religious practices that fight against contemporary social changes.

Such a reactionary wave has reached the forefront of education, favoring a turn to modernist, purist, and objectivist approaches to knowledge. This kind of epistemology favors monoculturalism and avoids diversity. Moreover, it sees students as existing solely in terms of their cognition or in a social vacuum. It thus exposes them to standardized learning, assuming that all subjects are equal provided that they submit themselves to a white-male-heterosexual matrix. Such a view is inherent to the exercise of power, constituting a race, gender, and sexuality template against which all are compared. Consequently, one single blow erases the complexity of both learning and the social world. This perspective manages to maintain its attractiveness, as it allows one to overlook differences. Backed up by positivism—a scientific trend still very much in vogue—it produces oversimplifications that require statistical generalization, while disregarding the heterogeneity of everyday lives. It thus removes the obstacles that would weaken particular kinds of theories and their universalizing cognitivist appeal.

It is against this backdrop that, in this chapter, we draw on a scale-sensitive approach to discourse (Carr & Lempert, 2016) in order to create intelligibility about recent political and educational experiences. We call into question totalitarian practices in the contemporary scenario by comparing them with an earlier social democratic period, when it was possible to research gender, sexuality, and race in schools. The discussion of the Brazilian sociopolitical and historical environment is our concern here. We then move on to put into perspective our ethnographic research in Brazilian schools, drawing attention to two different moments. Firstly, we cover a descriptive ethnographic stage, and then we discuss an interventionist phase that focuses on queering literacies. In the last part of the chapter, we argue that our research disassembles the reactionary impetus we are now facing.

TOTALITARIAN SCALES IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICS

Scale, as employed by Carr and Lempert (2016), is a concept referring to meaning-making phenomena at large. According to a scalar view, human existence is inseparable from semiosis. In their daily activities, humans scale their worlds around them as they deploy signs in constructing themselves, other people, and their experiences. To explain the intense semiotic

labor involved in scaling, the authors resort to an excerpt of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, in which Ishmael, a fisherman, narrates his encounter with the colossal carcass of a whale. In his reconstruction of the unexpected event, he establishes different relations. He compares the minute size of humans to the gargantuan dimensions of the skeletal remains. He invokes the leviathan, as metaphorical of the enormity of the sea creature. He highlights the uniqueness of the episode, by anchoring his story in a specific time and space, different from the here-and-now of the narration. He also expresses his awe and bravery in dealing with a monstrous corpse. According to Carr and Lempert (2016, p. 2), Ishmael's calculations, comparisons, and narrative authority constitute an eloquent "lesson in perspective". It materializes for an audience the experience of coming across a giant being. It is this projected sign-weft that forges interlocutors' sense of reality.

This kind of activity is representative of what social actors do when signifying social phenomena. They employ signs conjointly in organizing, interpreting, valuing, and producing distinctions. They also "sort, group, and categorize many things, people and qualities in terms of relative degrees of elevation or centrality" (p. 3). Think, for example, of the State, an overarching category that encompasses many other hierarchically laminated elements, such as counties, districts, suburbs, and the like. At first sight, it is merely a neutral label describing a spatial and administrative entity. However, the naming activity does much more than simple referential work. It structures practices, social roles, geopolitics, and power relations. As such, it is a semiotic-performative achievement in that it gauges perception. In the last analysis, the State and the sub-classifications deriving from it are taxonomies that construct an optical illusion or a "forced perspective" (p. 18) interlaced with specific ways of being. They thus constitute a scalar project that operates ideologically.

This angle may shed light on the semiotic life of contemporary politics as it focuses on the sign-amalgam political discourses make circulate. Zygmund Bauman (1997/1998) had already argued that the emergence of the so-called modern state was linked to ideologies of order, cleanliness, and progress. As control strategies, these ideals would help constrain and regulate human instincts in the structuring of social formations. Therefore, scales of organization, constant development, and hygiene have always gravitated around the concept of civilized world, contributing to perceptions of stability and continuous upgrade of imagined nations-peoples-languages (Anderson, 1983; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). The centrality

of this kind of scalar fabrication in the civilizing process (Elias, 1939/1990) is well known. So are its paradoxical consequences. On the one hand, it generated ideals of freedom, equality, and fraternity. On the other, it produced totalitarian regimes as a corollary of the expansion and toughening of state-type forms of governmentality. Investments on ways of keeping things in their right places and avoiding any kind of “dirt” have made us familiar with civilization’s capacity to designate “polluting agents” and design tactics to either “repair” or “eliminate” them.

These orientations have integrated western imaginary for a couple of centuries now through what has been called the Occidentalization of the world or the colonization of what was not west (Venn, 2000). However, more recently, we have been witnessing their sharp revival in populist presidents’ oratory. They all appeal to a mythical national past, recycling scales of purity and homogeneity in the projection of the “identity” of their countries. Moreover, they invoke the fundamental opposition “us vs. them” while fabricating a negative and threatening alterity. The menacing “other” is any group of individuals who transgress “normalcy patterns” concerning sexuality, gender, and race. These social divisions would guarantee an invented internal cohesion that relies on the patriarchal family. Images of the authoritarian bread-winner father who protects his wife and children tend to collapse in the character of many political figures. As scale-makers, they claim authority, moral status, strength, and maleness as positive attributes that help fathom the nation as a white and heterosexual domain of power. In opposition, people who identify themselves as LGBTIQ+,² black, or women and who challenge the gender or racial biases are scaled as “enemies”.

In their reading of the globalized political ambience, many authors emphasize the above aspects in the discourse of world leaders nowadays in Brazil, Russia, Poland, Hungary, and the USA, among others. Timothy Snyder (2018), Jason Stanley (2018), Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2016), and Walter Dignolo (2011/2017), for example, agree that the upsurge of a nationalist rhetoric in these areas has been incrementing anti-democratic practices. Negative emotions such as hatred and abjection have been circulating worldwide, linked to homophobia, racism, misogyny, and immigrant-phobia, among other forms of discrimination. According to their diagnosis, the ideal of democracy is in conflict with systems of domination sustained by three long-entrenched ideologies: capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. In spite of all the social gains guaranteed by democratic advancement, colonialism and patriarchy have made a comeback. The

former is based on an idea of the natural inferiority of certain human groups, and the latter is sustained by a rigid binary gender system. Financial capitalism depends on both of them. They keep social structures and social actors in place. Any deviation may bring about a sense of disorder, demanding correction. Symbolic and/or physical assaults on rebellious women, LGBTIQ+, black people, and immigrants are expressive examples of violent solutions against “the adversaries” of the capitalist enterprise.

Sousa Santos (in Machado 2016) employs the term “low-intensity democracy” to refer to this flourishing form of political life and the imaginary narrative in which diversity and mixing damage the integrity of nation states. In his view, a neoconservative fabric is being designed containing fascist overtones. Social fascism is the term he employs to refer to the colonial, patriarchal, and bigoted scales at play. In his own words, “We live in low or very low intense democracies that coexist with socially fascist societies. Hence my diagnosis is that we live in societies which are politically democratic but socially fascist” (Sousa Santos in Machado 2016, n.p.). Differently from political fascism, “social fascism is defined by a crisis in the social contract, namely, by the idea that notions such as equality, justice, solidarity and universality are no longer values” (Sousa Santos in Machado 2016, n.p.) operating in many countries.

Taking Brazil as a case in point, we can typify the country’s present government as a far-right autocratic shock that contrasts with the previous 13-year-long center-left leadership. Oriented by a totalitarian mindset, the Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro has been following a dogmatic blueprint that includes, among other actions, the rejection of any form of intellectualism. He displays a despotic disposition through his recurrent downgrading of teachers, his attacks on the credibility of research and universities, and his undermining of dissident voices. Moreover, a fascist flavor can also be detected in his extremist gender politics and homophobic remarks. According to Eco (1995/2018), in his analysis of fascist archetypes, these are phallic moves deriving from power impulses transmuted into sexual anxiety. Politically, they translate as chauvinistic condemnation of “strangers” or what constitutes our eternal fascism. Or, as Silva (2019) contends, they integrate a new populist register employed as strategy to recruit voters aligned with conservative values.

Moral panic is a possible consequence of such scalar fantasy. It identifies the performance of varied genders and sexualities as a menace to the reproductive family led by a vigorous stallion, a cherished national symbol

as argued above. In view of this conservative turn in politics, there is a tremendous need for queer pedagogies to counter its totalitarian inflection.

QUEER SCALES IN PEDAGOGY

The appalling rebirth of a destructive view of queer lives in many societies has been supported by the so-called “gender ideology” and “cultural Marxist principles”, which Márquez and Laje (2014) dreadfully defend. In Brazil, as well as elsewhere, influential fundamentalist religious groups, linked to evangelical and other Christian credos, have been claiming this position. They overtly describe themselves as the bastions of gender and sexuality normativity. Based on firm biological assumptions that men and women have essential properties, they spell out the perils of feminism and queer theories because they defy the fundamental tenets of human reality. Men and women are born men and women. Their bodies are programed for reproduction. Their mating and forming families are taken as instinctive activities to guarantee the preservation of the species. According to them, this is a natural order that queer lives disrupt and corrupt.

Such a mindset has affected contemporary politics. In Brazil, for example, a specific law bill suggests that gender issues cannot be discussed at school, although it has not been approved by the Congress. It develops its argumentation based on a narrow and misconceived reading of Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* and social constructionism. In the perception of some politicians, this kind of literature is ideologically misleading as it distorts the crude fact that although human-beings are both culture and nature, nature always comes first. It thus comes as no surprise the present moral crusade against queer theory in order to restore Nature’s harmony.

Queering pedagogy involves queering language and communication and imagining them differently. A performative view of language and identity has a decentering potential and may help us rescale meaning-making. Traditionally, socioconstructionist perspectives in connection with “identity studies” approach discourse as an instrument for fabricating who we are (Fairclough, 1992; Moita-Lopes, 1998; Moita-Lopes, 2002). More recently, a performative view of language (Pennycook, 2007; Moita-Lopes & Fabrício, 2019) has received attention. Performativity is a scale that perspectivizes meaning not as intrinsic to language. It is brought about by speech acts (Austin, 1962; Derrida, 1972/1988) that produce particular meaning effects in social encounters. Meaning emerges in interaction.

Therefore, when we use language, our words do things in the world (Austin, 1962). This is a totally externalist view since it is not concerned with traditional perceptions of language as an internal system. Rather it focuses on how our speech acts construct meanings. This view is performative since, when we engage in meaning construction, we describe what we are doing in the very act of using language: we perform meaning. And we do so by resorting to numerous signs (linguistic signs, images, videos, etc.). They index ideologies, particular discourses, and worldviews besides bringing up particular semantic effects. This perspective highlights the unstable nature of meaning-making. On the one hand, signification depends on the repetition of conventional speech acts—contextually relevant ritual acts, deriving from a general iterability of language by citation (Derrida, 1982, p. 326). On the other, because repetition is never the same, meaning construction is also constantly involved with innovation. That is why Derrida (1982) has drawn attention to how meaning is always deferred or postponed. Pennycook (2007) has suggested a very useful operational distinction between performative and performativity to account for the repetition-and-innovation matrix of language use. While the performative nature of language accounts for repetition, the notion of performativity explains the innovations it may bring about.

Relying on these ideas and on Foucault's discussion on the inextricability of discourse and subjectivity, Butler (1990) puts forward the perspective that we are called into being by language. According to it, we do not exist before discourse: we emerge in interaction. Butler developed the very influential theory of gender and sexuality as a doing. Gender and sexuality do not have to do with what we are but with the particular meaning effects we perform in the world. These effects are highly regulated by sociocultural rules. They involve us in the repetition of particular discursive games about what women's and heterosexuals' bodies, for example, do in the enactment of who they are. Butler (1990) has argued that our bodies are constantly evaluated by what she refers to as the "heterosexual matrix". It ultimately decides who fits it and who deviates from it.

However, the incessant iterability of what our bodies can do ends up producing a sense of substance to what is fictional, or a meaning effect of our practices. The fictional nature of gender and sexuality has shaken essentialist and biological understandings of our bodies and has been very influential in the development of queer theories. Gender and sexuality are both performative but, by virtue of being performative, they also instigate performativity since they are never the same. Had they been solely

repetitive processes, gatekeeping devices for controlling people in static binary positionalities would not have blossomed. There would be no need for the heterosexuality matrix that scales human subjects. By the same token, the full-time job to regulate repetition with which families, schools, and churches are involved would be totally superfluous. As meaning-making practices, gender and sexuality are always navigating the feeble and malleable line between repetition and innovation. Therefore, they cannot be explained biologically. These performative views of both language and gender/sexuality have been very productive in orienting queer scales in pedagogy.

In the remainder of this chapter, we discuss two distinct phases of our ethnographic research, focusing on how different teachers and students engage in talk about gender and sexuality as part of their school activities. The first phase, which operationalized a talk-about-text approach, detected orienting beliefs concerning the performance of social identities in the classroom. The second phase was interventionist. It sought to promote reflexive thinking about gender and sexuality through awareness-raising activities on an educational blog.

SCALING SCHOOL LIFE AS SUFFERING: THE FIRST STAGE OF RESEARCH

In this section we review the first stage of our school ethnographic research that had a descriptive nature. It was carried out with fifth graders (age range from 12 to 14) in a Portuguese-as-a mother-tongue literacy classroom in a school in the city of Rio de Janeiro, at the end of the 1990s. The teacher chose one of a series of texts related to difference to be talked about in class. One of us attended these discussions, constructing field notes related to the interactional and identity practices being performed while also audio-recording the classroom events as well as focus-group interviews. This kind of observation detected recurrent scaling practices employed by students. Frequently, the teacher projected an institutional scale. While framing her classes as the teaching of the Portuguese language, she avoided bringing up homosexuality to the front of the classroom at all costs, even when students' themselves suggested it as an interactional topic. Comments such as "If you are going to be disrespectful ... I am going away" (Moita-Lopes, 2002, p. 103)³ indicated that certain themes were not considered educational in her classes. Nevertheless,

in one of our focus-group interviews, students were projecting scales on a particular boy, who they classified as a “homosexual” or as a member of a species as Foucault (1976/1978) put it.

Such categorization of the boy came to us as a surprise since we had been in classroom for over five months at that point and the particular boy had never drawn our attention as being different from all the others. Note, however, the scaling project students devoted themselves to, while talking in the focus-group encounter. In Fig. 3.1 below, we recontextualize an excerpt of their interaction in which meanings about the classmate’s deviant sexuality are constructed in contrast with a particular student’s performance as a heterosexual persona. Let us observe then how Hans interactionally positioned himself as a straight male, with the help of his peers Peter and Betina.⁴

This excerpt was translated into English in a book chapter published in Moita-Lopes (2006a). Hans and his co-narrators tell a story about a boy in their class without ever referring to his name. This fact indicates they all know who he is and that they are used to gossiping about him. It also indicates that his alterity is so noticeable that there is no need of singling him out. Furthermore, this is a device Hans and the other narrators make use of that transforms the boy into “the stranger”, by forging scales that make his awkwardness or “homosexuality” obvious (“he spoke like a woman”; “this guy must have a problem”; “This is not normal!”; “He

Hans: My goodness! This is not normal!

Hans: Like this boy in our class. He speaks in a totally different manner, do you get it?

Peter: Walks in a different manner.

Betina: He wiggles his ass.

Hans: ... to me this is wrong. The chap is 12 years old. I am 14. But when I was his age, I wouldn't go somewhere and use that funny tone of voice and wiggle my ass.

Betina: And the worst thing about it is that he is a gossip!

Hans: Right! Right!

Betina: He tells everything to everybody. We can never rely on him.

Hans: He can never see anything that [he gossips about]

Peter: He is that kind of mad queen.

Fig. 3.1 Focus-group interview (Moita-Lopes, 2006a, p. 303)

speaks in a totally different manner”, “Walks in a different manner”; “He wiggles his ass”; “he is a gossip”; “He is that kind of mad queen”). The scale exercise goes in a crescendo of vehemence up to the point when Peter characterizes the boy as “a mad queen” as if he were given the chance for the final evaluation. Meanwhile, the co-narrators performatively project themselves as “heterosexual” or as doing the “right” gender and sexuality. Such “identity” scales consistently positioned interlocutors at the “hegemonic” angle through which the “margins” are constructed and naturalized—femininity and homoeroticism in the case at hand.

Our research in this field involved educational ethnographies that explored how gender, sexuality, and race intersected in daily discursive practices (Moita-Lopes, 1998, 2002, 2006a, b). This research drew attention to the amount of suffering involved in school life, on the part of students who did not fit in with a (white) heteronormative matrix (Butler, 1990). Furthermore, it indicated the difficulties teachers faced in dealing with otherness. Although these insights were generated many years ago, they point to hardships and to a social dynamic that is very much alive nowadays, echoing a socially fascist organization toward difference. Its recurrence in the different school contexts we have researched has prompted us to move into interventionist research.

In order to illustrate possible actions in literacy educational contexts, our focus now changes to ethnographic collaborative interventionist research conducted by Fabrício and reported by Fabrício (2012, 2017) and Fabrício and Moita-Lopes (2015, 2019). We show how a researcher in collaboration with a teacher and students can performatively queer essentialist views of social subjects by negotiating queer scales.

SCALING SCHOOL LIFE AS ACTION: THE INTERVENTIONIST STAGE OF RESEARCH

In this section, we recontextualize one of a series of educational encounters generated in our fieldwork at Admiral School—an institution located in a densely populated urban area in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The interactions took place in a digital space produced cooperatively by a History teacher and one of us to be used with four groups of high school students.⁵ The virtual encounters ran parallel to classroom interaction and were always related to the discussions carried out in the History classes. The blog was discursively constructed as a debate forum, as made explicit

on its presentation page. As shown in Fig. 3.2 below, the website invited participants to engage in scalar work as a strategy to approach historical processes.⁶

As stated in previous work (Fabrício & Moita-Lopes, 2019), the blog idea was designed as a space to promote reflexivity concerning recurrent practices of racism and homophobia in the institution's past history. The teacher wanted to confront them with pedagogically oriented activities. The blog was thus conceived a reflexive environment meant to complement the institution's official syllabus. The conversation these two interactional spaces established encouraged scalar projections that ended up queering normative expectations concerning gender and sexuality. As an example, we briefly explore how students' scalar work may disrupt naturalized perceptions of social performances. The stretch of online talk we recontextualize below was triggered by a task posted on the blog⁷ during the first term of the school year (March–April).

According to our field notes, the official syllabus indicated the “Enlightenment” as the theme for that period, according to which students were supposed to reflect on two simultaneous processes: the production of democratic ideals and the promotion of social annihilation. With the cooperation of one of us, she elaborated an assignment titled “Enlightenment, reason, and freedom”. This task was the first discussion proposed to students, functioning as an inaugural address, so to speak.

Fig. 3.2 First page of an educational blog

What is [REDACTED]
 This is a space for conjoint reflection about the connection between our past History and the emergent History being constructed here and now. In order to build such links you can draw on your own daily cultural experiences. Your ideas will help us talk about the future. This is why it is important to observe historical happenings in the making. So, look around and register your impressions on this interactional environment. Here, you have a voice. Here, you can express your opinion and get a reply. Here, you take a stand.

Enlightenment, Reason and Freedom
Published on 5 March 2015

The Age of Enlightenment also known as the Age of Reason are terms that describe literary and philosophical trends in 18th century Europe, just before the French Revolution. Thinkers of that period employed the light metaphor to counter obscurantism and ignorance toward a new era oriented by rationalism, science and respect for humanity. New scientific discoveries, Isaac Newton's theory of universal gravitation and the idea of cultural relativism triggered by the Great Navigations influenced the outbreak of the Enlightenment.

Fig. 3.3 Task on an educational blog

HAVE YOU FINISHED READING? YOU ARE THEN READY TO POST A COMMENT

1. Which piece of news struck you most? Why?
2. Is the news you have selected close to or distant from the ideals of the Enlightenment period?
3. Can you think of any other example that may help us think of the Enlightenment ideals in the contemporary world?

Fig. 3.4 Questions on an educational blog

Our main concern was the existence of terror and violence within an allegedly democratic apparatus, as Fig. 3.3 indicates.

Following this explanation there were 12 news headlines from different media sources, dealing with a variety of social issues, such as racism in Brazilian soccer, abandoned patients in public hospitals, schools in precarious conditions, crimes against animals, terrorism, and the recognition of homo-affective relations by the Supreme Court, among others. Three subsequent questions encouraged students to take a stand, as shown in Fig. 3.4:

Four different groups of students debated the suggested topic. For the purposes of the present chapter, we will focus on one of them whose participants made 64 comments. In Figs. 3.5–3.8, we briefly explore four of such posts that considered the headline “Homosexual couple spanked by about 15 men on a subway train in São Paulo”. We focus on students’ scale labor and the meaning effects it fashions.⁸

In Fig. 3.5, Gina recontextualizes the news about homophobia, projecting a position of indignation against “people’s prejudice” and

Gina, on 12 March 2015 at 22:45:

the news that struck me most was the one on the homosexual couple beaten by 15 men, I was outraged to think of the magnitude of people's prejudice nowadays, people have the right to choose what they want to be, I think other people have to respect their choices (...)

An example I can provide is what happened to a friend of mine, she had no friends, she was mocked at, she was isolated simply because she has AIDS, everyone was afraid to come near her, they also offended her.

Fig. 3.5 Gina's post

Joice, on 12 March 2015 at 23:41 :

(...) I was really shocked by the aggression towards homosexuals ... I can't explain why, but this kind of thing always moves me ... how blind and thoughtless people are toward individuals that are fellow human beings, I don't understand .. I think what drew my attention most is the fact that people don't understand that we live in the 21st century, that things have changed, that normality is different now and that people seem unable to accept difference in society (...) that news is both close to and distant from the Enlightenment.. it's close to it cause what homosexuals look for is exactly that, people using their reason to understand they are normal human beings, equality and more respect .. but I also agree that it is distant from it, because the men who have done such barbarism don't use reason let alone a sense of respect for others. As I have mentioned in today's class, the case of the boy who was beaten simply because his parents were a gay couple. In our school too there was a case, I haven't experienced it, but some classmates have told me about it .. about the boy who came out of the closet and his father made him quit school, because the father blamed the school for influencing his son.

Fig. 3.6 Joice's post

highlighting “respect” as a mode of resistance. She also shares with her interlocutors an example of violence and exclusion experienced by a close friend.

In her comment, Gina highlights the notion of respect, which reappears in Joice's post in Fig. 3.6. The student seems to frame it as a strategy to deal with difference. Interlacing different scales (translocal, local, and personal), the participant projects multiple time-space references: the time-space of the “Enlightenment”, the time-space of her history classes

at school, the time-space of another news report, and the time-space of the news at hand.

Joice's multidimensional construction characterizes as barbarian, violent, and irrational actions that loathe difference. Although the student essentializes rationality almost as a saving grace, her scalar projections are critical of the idea of normality. Such reflexive stance seems to influence other contributions. Ema and Paula (see Fig. 3.7), for instance, expand the idea of respect as they reconstruct Joice's example about "the boy who was spanked simply because his parents were a gay couple".

Having tracked the news Joice had cited on the web, Ema shares the link to the report with the whole group. Besides replicating the concepts of respect and acceptance employed by Joice, Ema broadens it to the scale of "humanity". Going in a similar direction, Paula positions herself in agreement with her classmate, addressing the questions she poses straightforwardly. She calls forth a biblical time-space, incorporating the acceptance of people's choices and opinions to the notion of respect. As she does so, she resorts to a personal scale that transfers the authority of religious discourse to the realm of people's individual choices.

<p>Ema, on 20 March 2015 at 0:28 :</p> <hr/> <p>"Boy who was beaten at school for being the son of a gay couple dies" here is the link to the news noticia:http://gazetaweb.globo.com/noticia.php?c=390185&e=17 This case is another example that really drew my attention. Where will we end up? When will people respect each other? When will they accept each other's choices? For as long as we lack respect for humanity, and have no respect for other people's opinion, more and more we will move away from the Enlightenment ideals.</p>
<p>Paula, on 26 March 2015 at 21:32 :</p> <p>I find it outrageous that people are killed for not being traditional or because their parents aren't ... these people have to understand that we've got no right to take anyone's life least of all to educate their choices, the Bible itself says that we can make our own choices. So who are these people who think they can DECIDE how we live our lives.</p>

Fig. 3.7 Ema's and Paula's post

Joana, on 28 March 2015 at 23:45 :

I will tell you a story about my uncle who was a man and now is a woman, my family didn't accept this situation very well because my family is traditional, from a small town in the countryside of Pernambuco State, my grandfather did not accept my aunt (aunt, guys, please she doesn't like it when I refer to her as he) cause she was different from other people, he didn't treat her well and stuff, he wouldn't even look her in the face. She realized that she was "different" after one of the frequent parties in the country house where she lived, my other aunts and uncles, my mother and my grandmother accepted her well, the problem was my grandfather. At the age of 17 my aunt left home and moved to sao paulo, she went through many hardships there, was homeless and sleeping on the streets for one year, but she had a purpose in life, one year later, God knew what to do, he introduced her to a very important person in her life. after they had been living together for 10 years He gave her 2 gifts that would change her life forever, the much-dreamed sex reassignment surgery and more, the most beautiful, He gave her 3 kids, 2 girls and 1 boy who are now the heart of the family. today my aunt owns 3 businesses and is very happy with her kids who are 3-year olds and are the cutest things. you know what happened to my granddad, he fell at home and my granny couldn't take care of him on her own. my father couldn't help her cause he worked a lot and was constantly travelling and my other aunts and uncles couldn't care less. my aunt left sao paulo and moved back to pernambuco to take care of him, left her husband in charge of her businesses and took the 3 children with her, thank God my grandfather has recovered, today he lives with my aunt and is really grateful to her. prejudice starts at home and this part of aunt [REDACTED]'s story.

Fig. 3.8 Joana's post

Joana proceeds the conversation (see Fig. 3.8), engaging in an unexpected narrative performance that functions as a significant confessional moment.

Enacting a personal scale, Joana produces a narrative articulating "out-of-place" discourses, bodies, and spaces (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) that conflict with the parameters regulating the traditional educational order. The topicalization of trans identities, the experience of a family member who has undergone sex reassignment, the student's positive evaluation of such experience, and her ratification of her aunt's new identity decenter the binary gender and sexuality matrices that have been banning "abnormal" subjects and their bodies from official curricula—as identified in the first stage of our research.

It is noteworthy that the "exceptional" discourses Joana shares with the bloggers emerge amidst other surprising discourses that, while favoring diverse ways of being human, are utterly critical of our socialization into

ways of dealing with difference. Their precipitation in the focused digital environment frames educational action on an unusual basis. Working as a group, students shared authority for their own textual production, considered the contributions of conversational partners, and promoted the development of the discussion, without the teacher's interference. This was accomplished by the association of the official History curriculum and the blog's reflexive task. Their dialogue promoted students' responsibility for interactional work, making room for the negotiation of different scales, involving time-space contextualization, evaluation, narrative production, and a mixture of institutional and personal anchorage. Such scalar activity helped interlocutors to question dualistic views of gender and sexuality. It is thus fair to say that these young bloggers have enacted a possible form of *critical resistance* (Pennycook, 2012) to contemporary social fascism.

TOWARD A NEW SCALAR IMAGINATION

In this chapter, we have argued that queer pedagogies are paramount in reimagining social life and in rehearsing a future that does not legitimize social fascism. We have done so by drawing on a performative view of language and identity. Furthermore, we have also associated this notion with a scale-sensitive approach to discourse and social life (Carr & Lempert, 2016). The former asserts that humans come about as a result of the repetition-innovation language games they play. The latter encourages the surveillance of the complex semiotic work comprised in what we name "reality". From this dialogue, a theoretical-analytical framework emerged, one that incites us to scrutinize the way we interlace discourses upon scaling our daily experience.

Firstly, it has helped us delineate the present sociopolitical moment in different countries according to a receding scalar project whose orienting credos recycle modernist tenets and fascist practices. Within a configuration of this sort, emotional scales such as fear and hatred are returning in the organization of affective responses to difference. The scalar sociopolitical portrayal we have designed encouraged us to revisit two different stages of our research.

Using scales as an analytical tool to deal with stretches of data, we have shed light on how signs in use project meanings about who we can be. Therefore, stimulating students to observe and reflect about their semiotic labor and its interactional effects plays a central role in schools. The first part of the research we discussed showed that students, as early as 12 years

old (in fact, much younger), are experiencing difference and learning to do gender, sexuality, and race performatively in schools. This happens even when teachers do not want to talk about it, as a response to either the way they were educated or to the constraints of official school boards. Or as a reaction to the “gender ideology” religious movements we have referred to earlier. We have hence pondered that teachers need support from queer pedagogies and moved on to the second part of our research in which the collaboration of a History teacher and a researcher managed to operationalize queer scales in the classroom.

We focused on an interactional activity on a blog that featured discussions about sexuality-based identity-difference dynamics. Students were able to move away from habitual thematic agendas, repetitive interactional routines, and time-space-content confinement. Moreover, they overcame binary scales toward more performative perceptions of social life. The reflexive work about queer lives they put forth indicated that crystallized discourses may be reassembled in educational environments through small-scale initiatives like the digital project implemented at Admiral School.

Students’ ability to question deep-seated meanings about gender and sexuality was enhanced by the critical scale that frames the blog activity. Its overall construction invited bloggers to observe different layers of historicity and to understand how locally situated actions are embedded in wider historical processes. We argue that the blog configuration and the way participants were encouraged to mobilize different scales created an agentive context that rescaled what we defined as traditional schoolwork. It made room for new perspectives about social life to emerge. The scalar trajectory the group reconstructed suggests that social fascism in the contemporary historical context may be disputed at schools.

Schools therefore are fundamental social spaces for imagining different worlds or for confronting students with social justice and social rights. These may be harnessed by a theoretically informed apparatus that entwines queer pedagogies with scalability.

NOTES

1. We are grateful to our research grants (CNPq 302935/2017-7 and CNPq 302989/2013-7) that have made the investigation reported on here possible.
2. In order to challenge modernist all-encompassing categories such as “homosexual”, which standardize the multiple ways of experiencing human

- sexuality, we employ the abbreviation LGBTIQ+, the initials for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and + (to include other diverse possibilities such as asexual, pansexual, etc.).
3. It goes without saying that we are not criticizing the teacher but the kind of modernist and positivist education she had, which prepared her for dealing with homogeneous idealized students while sexuality, race, and feminism were being loudly voiced, already on those days, by the media and discussed by the students, as shown below.
 4. We have used fictional names in all excerpt transcriptions to preserve the identity of research participants (the institution, the teacher, the students, and the blog).
 5. The age group ranged from years 14 to 15.
 6. The guidelines and students' posts were written in Portuguese and were translated into English for the purposes of this chapter.
 7. Different groups worked on the task in several areas of the blog. Each group had a specific password to access the pertinent interactional space.
 8. This stretch of data is part of a longer conversation analyzed in Fabrício (2017).

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