

## **VIOLENCE OF/WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND SCHOOL: WHAT DO PAPERS SAY?**

### **VIOLÊNCIA DE/COM CRIANÇAS E JOVENS E ESCOLA: O QUE DIZEM AS PESQUISAS?**

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#### **RESUMO**

No âmbito de um problema investigado em tese de doutorado – ou seja, compreender, à luz da obra de Corazza e Foucault, como o exercício do poder-saber, nas escolas, pode constituir as crianças como sujeitos para que construam uma forma de experiência em comum, que pode superar o fenômeno da violência cometida por crianças e jovens – este artigo realiza uma breve análise bibliográfica de algumas produções científicas que estão ligadas à nossa tese. Conclui-se que os estudos reforçam a tese de que o investimento na população infantil para conduzir a partir do modo de vida neoliberal, acaba por incitar a prática da violência.

#### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Escolas; violência; poder-conhecimento; crianças e jovens.

#### **ABSTRACT**

Within the scope of a problem investigated in a doctoral thesis – that is, to understand, in the light of the work of Corazza and Foucault, how the exercise of power-knowledge, in schools, can constitute children as subjects for them to build a form of experience in common, which can overcome the phenomenon of violence committed by children and young people – this article performs a brief bibliographic analysis of some scientific productions that are connected to our thesis claim. It is concluded that the studies reinforce the thesis that the investment in the child population to lead from the neoliberal way of life, ends up inciting the practice of violence.

## **KEYWORDS**

Schools; violence; power-knowledge; children and young people.

## **1) A GOAL**

The objective of this reflection, as part of a study of a doctoral research in progress, is to understand how the exercise of power-knowledge in schools can constitute children as subjects to construct a common way of living in which differences are considered. This reflective exercise is carried out in the light of the studies by Michel Foucault (2007; 2006; 1979) and Sandra Mara Corazza (1988), and with the help of other philosophers, seeking to overcome the phenomenon of violence manifested by children to those who are incongruous: this is the central research problem of the author of this article. It is conjectured that such an event is effective because of the way in which minors are produced as subjects, especially by educational institutions. Through the concept of childhood – this concept, according to Corazza, elaborated after the 18th century, which points to a phase of life characterized by being weak, fragile, dangerous, and which therefore must be adultized – children are led to the majority way of life: this was given from the perspective of man, white, European, capitalist, heterosexual. Such governance is based on the reason why it analyzes everything in a recognitive manner: so this attribute condemns what is different to it. The result, then, is violence: the individual considers the styles of existence and thinking that do not fit into this dominant model as inferior, ridiculous, etc.

The phenomena of violence are carried out by children, not only within school, but in all instances of society. However, as it is in this educational apparatus in which the minors spend much of the time, it is thought of how in this institution, the manifestation of the aggressions can be overcome in such a way that the children themselves play a role in this event.

In the scope of this Article, a brief analysis is made of some scientific productions that connect to our thesis claim: these studies are accompanied by some comments from the authors of this Article. In addition to presenting recent approaches, these studies will help researchers to think about the continuation of their work.

## **2) BRIEF CONCEPTUAL EXPLANATIONS**

Before exposing and analyzing studies that connect to our study purpose, it is necessary to point out, some Foucauldian concepts . The subject (the way in which one acts, enunciates, how certain visibilities are about life) is the main object of investigation by the French philosopher, Michel Foucault. This subject is built in the midst of the relationships he or she obtains with other individuals: such a constitution is effective through what he calls power and knowledge.

Power is understood by Foucault as actions on actions. Whereas knowledge, Foucault understands the discursive formation that is given in specific times and spaces: at a given moment, something is mentioned that ends up being defined as a true knowledge and such knowledge, when taught through the relationship of power, acts in a disciplinary manner. In a school, for example, when teachers see students sitting incorrectly, they can rebuke and correct them, putting them in a position considered appropriate. In this case, this was an action of the masters on that of the students who based on a knowledge considered true, such as, for example, that poor posture compromises the body development: thus, the student will grow according to the right posture and also think about this knowledge.

The subjects are constituted in a planned manner to serve a certain historical urgency. Forging individuals who act in the neo-liberal way of life is an example of this: above all, it is this historical urgency that we highlight. Thus, children are forced into an idea of childhood – as already explained – so that they are constituted as a future people. And also, as already highlighted, such an enterprise of the subject promotes the manifestation of violence by children. Therefore, in order to report on the problem of thinking about school as an institution that allows the exercise of power to the point that children act to overcome the phenomena of violence that they practice, studies about the violence of/with children and young people and school are verified and analyzed. What do the studies on this topic say?

### 3) SAYINGS

The qualitative study ‘School violence: effects of normalization and criminal practice’, elaborated by Estela Scheinvar and Luan Sávio (2015), checks in the Foucauldian context, some relationships between the school and the manifestations of violence by the students, the connection of this phenomenon with the very modality of life that such an institution spreads and how this educational apparatus is linked with other strategies to deal with this situation.

The authors state that through schools, many individuals are made up as subjects to attend a historical urgency. Thus, such an apparatus is effective as a device<sup>1</sup>.

Power-knowledge naturalizes life strands. At the same time, the return to school is naturalized: “It sounds absurd that a child does not attend an educational system today. The contemporary Western human being believes in schooling as a premise for the exercise of life”(SCHEINVAR; SÁVIO, 2015, p. 54). Yes, it directs to life, however, to the majority modality. By manufacturing children and young people for this urgency, it guides “[...] processes that define ways of life, tastes, contents, feelings” (SCHEINVAR; SÁVIO, 2015, p. 55).

Due to defining tastes<sup>2</sup>, contents and feelings of students, the school relies on the help of certain mechanisms (which make a device work, that is, tactics of power) so that its goal is achieved more effectively.

When someone turns on the television, for example, they watch a program that induces them to think about how to dress up, what slang to use, what beautiful places are, then passionately the so-called sports or a literary work, under the camera optics in central scenes or at commercial intervals, it is defining the ‘personal taste’, always historical, collective and therefore social. [...] (SCHEINVAR; SÁVIO, 2015, p. 56). [Emphasis on original].

It means that students, outside school, are bombarded with information that instigate them in the various ways that may exist, which must be in accordance with the majority model. It is like saying “be a rapper, a funkier, a literary, anything, but, that their form of being complies with the values of dominant existence”. The various tactics thus contribute to the school performance in fulfilling its device duty. Thus, incitement “be a rapper, a funkier, a literary”, means saying, “be a consumer of these works, and produce others that can be consumed.” It is to be noticed that the

<sup>1</sup> Devices, according to Foucault, are strategies that aim to constitute subjects to meet a historical urgency: prison, for example, is a device that, from the 18th century onwards, is responsible for correcting individuals who behave themselves at the margin of work way of life. See Foucault (2006; 1979).

<sup>2</sup> The school, because it is a social institution, also works with values and ways of being and thinking.

diversification of the forms of existence, subject to the majority of the rules, follows the neo-liberal logic, where an entrepreneur of himself<sup>3</sup> and also a consumer is concerned.

Guiding children so that they have such visibility makes them seek what is useful and the consequence of this will be the disposal of what does not fit into this neoliberal perspective: thus, consequently they will begin to exclude differences, because they do not see them as something positive or necessary. It is from this perspective that the manifestation of aggressions to other forms of existence is observed, which, above all, is observed by the authors when they say: “Violence in school emerges from the very idea of a universal ideal, brought with bourgeois rationality”. (SCHEINVAR; SÁVIO, 2015, p.55-56)

It is interesting a point raised by Scheinvar and Sávio, namely who are the students considered violent in school. These are identified as such when 1) they break with the school standard: when they do not fulfill a lesson, when they rebel against superiors in the school hierarchy, among others; 2) when they attack minorities. By constituting subjects in a totalizing aspect, which sees, leads and judges from this greater form of life, (which rejects what is not in conformity with the model) automatically, the educational apparatus forges a violent subject. And violence is something that is aimed at combating. Perhaps this is an undecidable factor of school, because it manufactures exactly what it aims to eliminate.

Scheinvar and Sávio also comment on the various devices that assist the school in combating violence manifested by children and young people: calling the students' families to help them overcome this phenomenon is an example of this. Moreover, the researchers observe the legal device, which works in conjunction with the school: “The family is charged, judged, penalized when young people and themselves do not meet the standards, under the threat that their children's lives will be at risk.” (SCHEINVAR; SÁVIO, 2015, p. 65). In short, laws are triggered when a student behaves violently and when the family itself does not contribute to overcoming this difficulty. It is a question of these devices being rooted, especially legal ones, in school operations.

The teachers' own actions are based on this legal device, which invades the school and assists it in its goal. The adults of this institution, when they see that a student breaks a standard, apply certain punishment to him or her: it is a similarity with the legal model, where this educator looks

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<sup>3</sup> Creating forms of existence that obey the majority model allows the extension of the forms of domination. In times of crisis, capitalism appeals to the diversities desired to overcome this difficulty. In order to make children entrepreneurial, it becomes highly advantageous to this aspect of life: that is why it instigates them to the invention of music, literature, services, among others, provided that they can be consumed.

like a court – as Foucault points out in *Surveilling and Punishing* (2007). Another perceived similarity is in the scope of sanctions, when school imports universal laws for its apparatus: by law it is prohibited to disrespect an officer, attack, steal, which are acts liable to penalties. At school, the same offenses, when committed mainly by students, they also lead to a certain punishment. The “[...] transformation of the students' life, their productive function becomes clear in their intention of controlling and obeying a law in which they are believed and to which, coercively, if applicable, they must be submitted to” (SCHEINVAR; SÁVIO, 2015, p. 68).

In another qualitative work, also in a Foucauldian analysis, entitled ‘Device-bullying and securitarian governmentalism: dialogs with Michel Foucault's thought’, elaborated by João Barros (2017), the manifestations of violence by children linked to *bullying* are addressed. This concept was brought to light, according to Barros (2017), inside the school, but related to the analysis of journalists and experts: in the Columbine case, in the United States, for example, the press pointed out that one student killed two others and then committed suicide due to the humiliations he felt at school. Another similar tragedy in Brazil is pointed out in Realengo, in which press professionals also claimed *bullying* as a cause of the problem.<sup>4</sup>

According to the author, from these media-pointed denunciations, by professionals, educators, arguments were built to approve Law 13185 that aims to combat *bullying* in addition to making programs emerge that aim: 1) the instruction of parents and educators to identify such practice 2) psychological assistance for aggressors and assaulted.

Barros (2017) emphasizes that such violence is linked to the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics: these are power-knowledge strategies that aim to maximize the lives of individuals from one place, to the point of being a population. It is a way of the power to act directly on the biological traits of this population to the point of forging it for a certain historical urgency. Therefore, aspects concerning the biological life of these people should be taken into account, such as sex, birth rate, mortality, diseases, crimes, among others. Biopower – power over life that allows this bio policy – will make calculations about problems and verify whether investments are needed to solve such difficulties (and only if these compromise the lives of the population).

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<sup>4</sup>“In the ‘Columbine case,’ in 1999, two students shot 13 people at a school in the United States and then suicide. In Brazil, in Realengo neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro, in 2011, a former student invaded his old school and shot 12 teenagers. In videos recorded on the eve of the attack, the shooter said he was suffering humiliations when studying at that school institution.

The safety devices of the population, are based on some aspects to provide this calculation, among them, 1) the risk factor: *bullying*, thus, is seen as something that has a form of risk for the life of a population. 2) as to the cases: allied to the risk, it focuses on the place where such risks can occur and with which portion of these people such a phenomenon can occur: in this case, the focus is the school. Not that it is the only place of manifestation:

We believe that the bullying event, more precisely the speeches and institutional practices that operate mainly in the school territory triggered by this category, is a powerful clue as to how the security devices operate through the government of conduct, within the framework of neoliberal governmentalities (BARROS, 2017, p. 56).

The security mechanism imposes nothing – unlike the disciplinary measure that aims to impose an *a priori* rule – due to the fact that it is a let do. Such a perspective is given to the extent that this aspect allows the aggressor to be known: this will be studied in order to know what leads him or her to commit such aggression, what the likelihood is of doing it: it is from this that such individual is punished.

Just as in the Article by Scheinvar and Sávio (2015), Barros (2017) verifies the legal question: he states that the legal means are transported to the school interior as an attempt to overcome *the* bullying phenomenon: so much so that those who commit such an act and the one who suffers are labeled, respectively, as aggressor and victim (legal terms). The author highlights school procedures linked to the legal sphere, such as training professionals to diagnose, intervene and direct cases; to establish partnerships with other public institutions, such as Guardianship Council, Children's and Youth courts and Children's and Adolescent Police Stations.

These steps show, according to the author, the school transferring its decision to deal with a particular problem to the legal means: teachers, even lament the lack of tougher laws to face the manifestation of these assaults at school – which is characterized as such a request for the judicial aspect to increasingly enter this school apparatus.

In our view, this is not a transfer of activities, but rather a complement of these. As Foucault (1979) says, the devices end up complementing each other: orphanages solve problems of infant mortality, medicine diverts unfavorable normality (disease) to favorable (healthy), prison kidnaps the one that puts the life of the population at risk, among others. The devices complement each other, they impose recurrence, they are leveraged: in fact, the knowledge built by the devices (which

are knowledge and security) are brought to the legal device that will formulate laws, which will serve as tactics to combat an evil that devastates a population.

Another study about the manifestation of violence is the entitled 'Gender provisions and School violence: among betrayals and other socializing strategies used by young students of a private institution of São Paulo, by Paulo Neves (2013). This is his doctoral thesis, a qualitative research, based on field work, and is set up in a study that has as its theoretical reference the studies of Pierre Bourdieu and which sometimes mentions the writings of Michel Foucault.

Neves (2013) realized the effect of violence in schools, mainly by girls (among themselves). Considering the scarce academic production in this sphere, the researcher focused on investigating this problem in the Master's degree: the research comprised the Public School. However, the author wondered if this phenomenon also occurs in private schools: this was the issue of his Doctorate. Neves (2013) wondered: in private institutions, which mostly serve a better-off social-class public, when such a phenomenon occurs, is it also carried out in accordance with the family sphere? What are the actions of the School in trying to refrain such a problem?

First the author draws attention to the point that private schools are believed to protect students more than public institutions: it presents research that addresses exactly the opposite, pointing out that students in the private sphere have consumed more drugs than those in the public network.

Violence, such as *bullying* and physical aggression, is also referred to in this thesis, which also occur in private institutions. However, even as discussed in the literature review of the study of Barros (2017), there is a lack of respect for the adherence of programs outside the school to solve problems of violence within this educational apparatus. About this phenomenon in private institutions, it is verified that principals do not know violence prevention programs at school or, yet, do not accept external interventions, an aspect that contradicts the thesis that the public are more vulnerable; in a questionnaire, the students still show that there are more aggressions than the principals report.

Neves (2013) concentrates his work on the violence manifested by schoolchildren, especially in a gender context: acts of boys trying to kiss girls forcibly, of homosexuals intimidated due to their condition, among others. The author draws attention that a discursive idea predominates that requires individuals to behave from the delimited for each gender, however, this delimitation was created from the male perspective: so, "that must be done by men, and that by

women” was something invented by the male sex themselves. And more than that: women, including, begin to express the social relationships from what was traced to them by this patriarchal form. The researcher brings an account of a girl who was harassed at a bus stop and, when she arrived at home and told her mother of the event, she heard her question about what the girl had done for that man to act that way. This is symbolic violence, which requires women in particular to act in a way that makes them guilty, which diminishes them.

According to Neves (2013), Bourdieu has as objects of investigation the symbolic violence, the gender, and the way to behave from the constructed social group (what he calls *habitus*)<sup>5</sup>. Based on that Neves (2013) observes the manifestation of violence in school, within the gender sphere, especially when manifested by girls. Thus, the researcher reaches the concept of gender *habitus*.

The girls in the school researched by Neves (2013) report that such structures that demarcate how they should be – as if it were something natural – are also reproduced inside their families: one of them, under the name Paola, says that her mother does not allow her to take a taxi alone because she did not know the driver, who could rape her. The student still says that he would like to have traveled with her boyfriend – without her parents – and that her mother did not authorize: however, her brother, for being a boy, had been allowed to travel with his friends, without the presence of adults. This reproduction, which must behave in a certain way because it belongs to a particular gender, is one of the factors that reinforce the manifestation of violence inside the school.

Neves (2013) brings the case of two heterosexual couples in school, being a couple made up by the Boy Y and Girl Y; and the other by the Boy Z and Girl Z. It occurs that the Girl Y was secretly having a relationship for months, with Boy Z. When the ‘betrayed’ knew of the occurrence, she posted on her social networks that would attack the ‘traitor’ and, days later, at school, they fact really happened: the ‘traitor’ then revenged and both of them had a fight. This effect of violence is anchored in this *gender habitus*: the girl who was secretly involved in the romance was guilty both by the aggressor and by her own friends and classmates, because she was recognized as someone who carried out the patterns traced to the female gender, as for example, preserving the honor of her boyfriend. Another approach because of this *habitus* is that such a fight was seen as an anomaly, because girls are quiet and could not become involved in violence.

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<sup>5</sup> This is the set of different behaviors that are internalized and naturalized by individuals.

The unfolding of this event can also be observed by this form of gender *habitus*. The pedagogical counsellor of this institution suspended the girls and, in making such a decision, informed their mothers. The up bringer of the girl who assaulted the 'traitor' shouted at the pedagogue, stating that the one who should be punished was the one who was guilty of that situation. What about the boys? The boy 'betrayed' said that the best way to defend his honor was to have no more contact with the boy 'traitor.'

In addition to the above, the study by Neves (2013) brings other forms of violence related to students inside school: 1) acts of violence which the students commit toward the staff of the pedagogical staff; 2) forms of such intimidation which the students manifest among themselves, such as *bullying*; and 3) when such aggressions are carried out by teachers toward the students. These are points that will also contribute to the development of research in formation.

### 3) CONCLUSION

Through this review of commented literature, it is possible to notice diversity of possible points to be analyzed on the subject of violence by children. The studies reinforce the thesis that investing in the child population to lead from a single way of life, considered normal and acceptable from a neoliberal perspective, ultimately incite the practice of violence by children. Acting only on pragmatic values as consumption and utility causes the minors to commit such assaults against those who do not live in the dominant form: *Bullying* against minorities (identified at school), symbolically violating, from the idea of gender, are forms of this violence. This consideration also reaffirms the thesis that this phenomenon, although identified at school, is performed by the minors in other instances of society.

The studies analyzed embodies the premise that children are configured as subjects from a world that has been traced to them, what they can or cannot do, how they should act: it is therefore a childhood idea, as approached by Sandra Mara Corazza (1998). This concept is disseminated in the devices and responds to the majority way of life: therefore, by deduction, it is realized that the idea of childhood is related to the practice of violence.

Another point reflected here is that even though this aggressive phenomenon must be combated – because it puts the life of the population at risk – it ends up being realized: it is an opposition, as Foucault (2007) states, that is, an effect contrary to that intended, produced by a device. According to the philosopher, all opposition is used in other strategies. Therefore, how is this effect used in other historical emergencies?

It is within the scope of the approach to date that it is intended to think of school as an institution that, in some way, allows power to be exercised in such a way that students become subjects and build a common way of life, which, consequently, can overcome violence against minorities. This is a perspective of coexistence that considers the differences. Thus, the power understood as a mutual exercise among the minors to become subjects – not limited to the idea of childhood that the devices, especially the school, incite them – but to think about the extent to which they bend it to themselves, mutually, and not from what is imposed on them. As Foucault (1979) states, it is from power that a form of majority existence is modified.

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