PRÁTICAS EDUCATIVAS, MEMÓRIAS E ORALIDADES

Rev.Pemo – Revista do PEMO

Jump and watch: norms of masculinities in the play of a “black queer child”

ARTICLE

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Abstract
This article aims to analyze the processes of subjectivation and bodily production, with emphasis on gender and sexuality dynamics observed in the games of “jumping elastic” and “jumping rope” in a public school in Porto Ferreira, São Paulo, during Elementary School I, between 2001 and 2005. The study is autobiographical, in which the author conducts a reflective analysis of his own memories, aiming to understand how the construction of masculinities and the experience of being a “black queer child” manifest in educational formation. The reported experiences were interpreted considering ethical aspects related to confidentiality and the critical analysis of personal experiences. It is observed that these influences extend beyond the school environment, encompassing recess and family interactions, where tensions related to religiosity and gender and racial expectations emerge. Finally, the article discusses how certain behaviors are naturalized as exclusive to boys or girls, reflecting established social norms
Keywords: Education. Play. Autobiography. Masculinities.

Pular e vigiar: normativas das masculinidades no brincar de uma “criança negra viada”

Resumo
Este artigo objetiva analisar os processos de subjetivação e produção corporal, com ênfase nas dinâmicas de gênero e sexualidade observadas nas brincadeiras de “pular elástico” e “pular corda” em uma escola pública de Porto Ferreira, interior de São Paulo, durante o Ensino Fundamental I, entre 2001 e 2005. O estudo é autobiográfico, no qual o autor realiza uma análise reflexiva de suas próprias memórias, visando compreender como a construção das masculinidades e a experiência do “ser criança negra viada” se manifestam na formação educativa. As experiências relatadas foram interpretadas considerando aspectos éticos relativos à confidencialidade e à análise crítica de vivências pessoais. Observa-se que tais influências extrapolam o ambiente escolar, abrangendo o recreio e o convívio familiar, nos quais emergem tensões vinculadas à religiosidade e às imposições de gênero e raça. Por fim, discute-se como determinados comportamentos são naturalizados como exclusivos a meninos ou meninas, refletindo normas sociais.
Palavras-chave: Educação. Brincadeiras. Autobiografia. Masculinidades.

1 Introduction

This article results from activities carried out within the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (Campo Grande Campus) during the second semester of 2024. It was specifically developed in the course Special Topics in Cultural Studies: Gender, Play, and Childhood, offered at the Aquidauana Campus, under the guidance of Professor Dr. Solange Izabel Balbino and Professor Dr. Marcelo Victor Rosa. The study's objective is to analyze subjectivation processes from an autobiographical perspective (Passeggi, Nascimento, and Oliveira, 2016) and a post-critical perspective in education (Meyer & Paraíso, 2014), using personal narrative as both the source and method of investigation. The research focuses on the author's childhood experiences as a "Black Queer Child" in a public school in Porto Ferreira, a municipality in the interior of São Paulo (SP) state, which is known for its high-quality ceramic production but is situated in a peripheral socioeconomic context.

The temporal scope covers the period of Early Elementary School (4th grade), between 2001 and 2005, with special attention to school recess (break time), a space marked by greater student autonomy and less teacher surveillance. This environment fostered the emergence of practices of agency, resistance, and the construction of alternative subjectivities (Rios; Dias; Brasão, 2019). This imbrication demonstrates how the body and subjectivity are configured in the field of social representation, revealing processes of agency, identity construction, and the production of meanings that make the subject visible within a complex matrix of social intelligibility, intersecting gender, sexuality, and race/raciality (Butler, 2013; Carneiro, 2023). It is important to emphasize that the notion of agency goes beyond the idea of a simple passive action or occasional deviations from established norms. It refers to the capacity to reinforce, contest, and re-signify—though not always strategically or consciously—social and cultural spaces such as the school recess, the family environment, and the religious narrative (Wenetz, 2012).

Although often perceived as moments of freedom, these spaces are embedded within a system of power that continuously categorizes and normalizes bodies and

Rev. Pemo, Fortaleza, v. 7, e15353, 2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.47149/pemo.v7.e15353
https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/revpemo
ISSN: 2675-519X

behaviors (Louro, 2000). Thus, the conception of childhood and the child as a "pure" body-mind, untouched by culture, where free play would escape the prevailing norms of gender and sexuality—especially the heterocompulsive norm (Spolaor; Grillo; Prodócimo, 2020)—is questioned. On the contrary, it is argued that while spontaneous play can allow for a certain shuffling of these codes, it can also reinforce binary mechanisms of gender and sexuality, albeit in new guises. Therefore, the impossibility of a complete break with this structural binarism is highlighted, necessitating a new perspective to perceive the world beyond the dualism inculcated in the child even before birth (Silva; Jorge; Ferreira, 2020).

To interpret these dynamics, which are permeated by "games of power" (Foucault, 1988), it becomes essential to adopt an intersectional perspective. According to Crenshaw (2002), social markers must be understood as axes that intersect, structuring systems of oppression and inequality and demonstrating how multiple forms of discrimination overlap, interdependently shaping experiences. By adopting a constructionist intersectional approach, inspired by Piscitelli (2008), it is recognized that differences are not limited to the production of oppression; they can also open pathways for experiences of agency and transformation, especially in contexts of alterity, where subjects re-signify their lived experiences in the face of the tensions of social norms. Such actions do not always produce predictable or controllable results, and may even reinforce norms or generate unexpected effects. To understand these complexities, one must consider that categories such as gender, race, sexuality, and class do not operate in isolation but interact continuously, shaping experiences in a relational and multifaceted way.

In this context, the author starts from his own experience, which will be analyzed in the following sections, noting that, even without direct school intervention, and often implicitly, play activities were gender-segregated by the students themselves. Although some activities were perceived, in certain social contexts, as appropriate for all genders, in practice they were rigidly assigned to one or the other, according to the school context analyzed. An example of this is the activity of Chinese jump rope, generally associated with the feminine universe, while jumping rope, although also practiced by some boys, occurred less frequently among them.

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ISSN: 2675-519X

This distinction became entrenched because such play was widely recognized—by family members, teachers, and the children themselves—as feminine activities, diverging from the normative expectations of what is expected of a "real boy." By reflecting on these practices, the reader is expected to consider their own processes of constitution. Regardless of whether we are formally recognized as teachers, everyone, in different social spheres, is continuously involved in processes of formation and learning, mediated by daily interactions, both online and offline. These contemporary spaces of interaction promote exchanges that are fundamental to the construction of what we commonly call "reality" (Novelli, 2010), challenging us to reflect on our role in the educational process, especially in the school context—a space socially structured to discipline bodies, making them docile, productive, and, at certain moments, sensitive to the multiple differences that characterize contemporary society (Meirelles; Ecksmidt; Saura, 2016).

2 Methodology

The present study adopted an autobiographical narrative approach (Valente, Silv; Jucá, 2025) as both a source and a method for post-critical research in education (Meyer; Paraíso, 2014), where the author's personal experience simultaneously constituted the object and the instrument of investigation (Passeggi, Nascimento, and Oliveira, 2016). The objective of this autobiographical account was to analyze the subjectivation processes and bodily production experienced during childhood, considering the intersectional dynamics of gender, race, and sexuality present in play activities, leisure practices, and daily interactions in family and school settings. The study is characterized as descriptive-analytical, centered on an autobiographical autoethnography that allows for the detailed investigation of the author's lived experiences (Gama, Raimond; Barros, 2021), articulating them with theoretical frameworks from the human and social sciences, including cultural studies, queer theories, childhood studies, the production of the "self" (Rose, 2001), gender normativities (Butler, 2013), and power relations (Foucault, 1998). The data analysis is also anchored in the ideas of Moraes (2015), who suggests that autobiographical narratives

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ISSN: 2675-519X

corroborate the possibility of “emancipating consciousnesses” by positioning the personal in the investigation, allowing subjects to reflect critically on their experiences and the ways in which these shape life and learning. The author emphasizes that the narrative biographical perspective is based on storytelling: “To try to see myself from the outside as if I were another (person), one who is affected in the act of reading by the very story being told” (Moraes, 2015, p. 4).

This approach understands the act of narrating as a “knowledge of experience,” an awareness that the subject constructs about themselves and the effects of their lived experiences. Therefore, to produce the autoethnography, the methodological process involved a systematic movement, articulating memories, cultural artifacts, and theoretical references (Gama, Raimond; Barros, 2021). Initially, the author surveyed childhood materials, including old photos, videos, magazines, music, and everyday objects, which were later archived digitally in the cloud and stored on physical devices such as CDs and flash drives. These objects functioned as memory triggers, allowing for the evocation of experiences, sensations, and affects lived during childhood. Based on this material, detailed documentation of the memories began, recorded in a retrospective field diary, in which each entry sought to capture not only the facts but also the associated feelings, emotions, and social contexts.

The process included revisiting old photographs, watching videos, consulting printed materials, and searching the internet for magazines and other records, both print and digital, that would evoke fragmented memories. Sounds and music from childhood were also recorded, alongside the recollection of details of everyday objects, such as the grandmother’s curtain, and bodily and sports practices observed among family members, which acted as stimuli to reconstruct lived experiences, sensations, and memories. This organization was configured as a mood board or memory mural, allowing for a sensitive immersion into past experiences and creating a space for critical and affective reflection.

In parallel, the author conducted continuous theoretical consultations with the texts studied in the course Special Topics in Cultural Studies: Gender, Play, and Childhood, offered at the Aquidauana Campus under the guidance of Professor Dr. Solange Izabel

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https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/revpemo
ISSN: 2675-519X

Balbino and Professor Dr. Marcelo Victor Rosa. This academic phase served as an incentive to systematically and attentively revisit his own memories, reflections, and bodily practices, allowing for a critical analysis of the subjective and corporal production that was already underway, but without the same previous depth and attention. In this sense, according to Ricoeur (2007, p. 46), the course experience made possible the "relearning of forgetting," creating time and space to remember, provoke memory, and reflect upon oneself. The methodological process followed the logic of affectation proposed by Dilthey (2010, p. 36), according to which "the thinking subject and the sensible objects that stand before him are mutually cleaved." These narratives combine memory, affectivity, and theoretical interpretation and, according to Moraes (2015, p. 9), have the potential to connect the reader to the author's experiences, sensitizing them and creating possibilities for imagining other worlds and forms of existence.

To analyze the data obtained, the perspective of autobiographical reflexivity (Passeggi, 2014) was adopted, in which the focus lies on analyzing the representations of the author's lived experiences and the construction of personal and social meanings based on these experiences. As pointed out by Passeggi, Nascimento, and Oliveira (2016), the object of autobiography in education consists of "exploring the genesis processes of individuals, investigating how they give form to their experiences and sense of existence," that is, understanding how everyday practices and lived moments—such as play in childhood—contribute to the constitution of the subject in its multiple dimensions, including gender, race, sexuality, religious, and socioeconomic context. The study sought to understand how these experiences manifest through representations and cultural practices, understood as "an infinite number of narratives that are transmitted to them and that they themselves elaborate about what happens and what happens to them" (Passeggi, Nascimento, and Oliveira, 2016). For the authors, this movement stems from an innate human disposition to reflect on empathy and lived experiences, articulating memory, the affective dimension, and the construction of the meaning of existence.

A central epistemological principle of this approach is the critical reflection on "how we know what we know," that is, the appropriation of one's own history as a form of

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ISSN: 2675-519X

knowledge and empowerment (Rocha; Passeggi, 2012). In the words of Abrahão (2003, p. 82), “unlike the process of interpreting information, we utilize a conception in which the subjects’ categories are understood as spaces of enunciation, where the pertinent elements are outlined according to the relationship between the narratives and their contexts.” The production of this autoethnography therefore required careful ethical reflection, as the memories explored involve not only the author but also family members and other individuals who participated in the narrated experiences. To preserve confidentiality and protect the privacy of third parties, all identities were safeguarded, and the accounts place the subjects in their respective contexts of enunciation, recognizing that they speak from social and cultural norms similar to those that traverse the author. In this sense, the analysis does not constitute a judgment or personal critique but rather a situated reconstruction that considers the effects of the experiences on the subjects and their life trajectories.

As Moraes (2015, p. 9) points out, “autobiographical narrative writing implies profound attunement and involvement of the narrator with themselves, with the events, memories, sensations, and with the social universe that traverses them; it is a practice that mobilizes body, mind, and spirit, promoting pulsating reflections for both the writer and the reader.” In this context, autobiographical writing allows experiences and memories to be accessed in a sensitive manner, enabling the author to “create metaphors” (Moraes, 2015, p. 12) capable of expressing meanings that the literal word cannot always reach. Thus, the autobiography produces meanings that transcend individual experience, integrating critical analysis, affectivity, and memory. It is for this reason that, in the results section, a narrative tone is chosen: the memories, play activities, and other childhood practices are recounted with attention to the sensitive dimension of experience, always maintaining a dialogue with theoretical and scientific analysis. This procedure highlights how school, family, and cultural spaces engender and can re-signify subjects. Thus, autobiography as a research methodology (Valente, Silva, and Jucá, 2025), crossed with the post-critical perspective in education (Meyer; Paraíso, 2014), is configured as a seam between experience, account, and analysis, integrating memory, theory, and educational reflection, while simultaneously

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offering the reader the opportunity to reflect on new ways of existing, acting, and imagining the world.

3 Results and Discussion

Amid the murmurs of the kitchen, the women's voices dissolved into the intense aromas that saturated the air: annatto, garlic, onion, herbs, tomato, and the dense fragrance of cooked fish, which gently bubbled in the pot. In this feminine space, laughter escaped between whispered conversations, fragments of words that were sometimes permitted to exist, and other times were lost like forbidden secrets. Children, in quick, agile steps, crossed the room like small comets, interrupting the flow between the kitchen and the living room. There, the curtain of fluorescent orange fabric strips, hanging in the frame of a doorway that didn't exist, swung to the rhythm of their play. In the living room, the men remained in restrained silence, their voices sparse, like rivers hesitant to flow. They spoke of work and other things that escaped me or simply didn't spark my interest. A tense rhythm, an implicit vigilance, hung in the air, as if every word were weighed before being spoken, as if something needed to be hidden or feared.

Between these two worlds, music flowed as a third presence, emanating from my grandfather's old record player. The poetry of the song echoed, reaffirming that “the man without God was nothing,” using its melody to ward off the enigmatic conversations in the kitchen and the careful vigilance of the men sitting on the sofa. On that threshold, a young "I" was playing, Black and "Queer" (viada)—terms and "things" that I did not even know what they were, they simply existed within that regime of gender and racial intelligibility (Butler, 2013; Carneiro, 2023).

I took the curtain strips and turned them into long hair, which swung to the rhythm of my imagination. Sometimes, that same curtain became a dress, brushing my skin and dressing me as another "I," an "I" that did not know it could fully exist within the boundaries of that house. I traversed this space under the watchful eyes of the women, sometimes burdened with vigilance, other times with judgment, and the men, whose expressions

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oscillated between curiosity and discomfort. But it was under my uncle's bed, hidden among the un-swept or unreachable dust, that this threshold intensified and became blurred in terms of religious morality. There rested something that the elders seemed not to understand—or, if they understood, they did not admit. And even if they did admit it, there was one certainty: the women could never know. The secret, though hidden, rested in a small shoebox, where period Playboy magazines and some pornographic tapes were mixed with copies about bodybuilding and physique, which instructed my younger uncles on how to gain muscle and be virile. There, among pages that exalted idealized bodies, were tips on training, supplementation, and the use of anabolic steroids, composing a narrative that was both practical and symbolic for the body-gender-sexuality of those men.

"*There's something strange about this boy*", I "heard" in the glances that weighed more than words. The play of adorning the "hair" made with curtain strips was interrupted by orders such as: "*Go play with your cousins*," "*Stop listening to the women's conversation*," "*Speak properly*." These episodes echoed a clear perception among my cousins, my mother, my father, and other family members: the dissidence of a body and a "way of being" that did not align with the gender and sexuality norms that the domestic environment and the backyard seemed to try to impose. The attempt to reproduce the gestures and movements of the men in the house—tall, strong, with defined bodies under tight-fitting shirts that highlighted their muscles—was not just physical but also symbolic: it sought to conform to a hegemonic masculine ideal. However, this norm was never fully achieved; as Butler (2013, p. 111) observes, "bodies never conform, [...], to the norms by which their materialization is imposed." My mother often grew irritated with my disinterest in all these gender expectations. I frequently saw her, still in the early hours of the morning, pleading to God that I gain weight, or in the conversations she had with my aunts, while I remained at her side, listening to talk about something that only later, in university, did I come to understand as "gender prostheses"—a concept by Preciado (2014) that refers to social and pharmacological technologies conceived to shape bodies and subjectivities according to the gender norm, with the goal of consolidating a heteronormative regime.

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According to Preciado (2014; 2018), this regime, which the author calls "pharmacopornographic," implies the construction of identities and desires through substances and the global capitalization of image, revealing how social, political, and economic practices articulate in the production and normalization of bodies and subjectivities. Examples of this include the contraceptive pill, which, throughout history, transformed the dynamics of heterosexual desire, and the use of synthetic hormones like steroids, dilators, testosterone, creatine, growth hormone (GH), as well as sex toys—all cultural symbols that reinforce the norms of the binary gender system. This "heterosexual regime" places individuals, even before they are born, into fixed categories of men or women, strictly determining that they should be attracted to the opposite sex (Machado, 2005). In this context, Biotônico Fontoura, an appetite stimulant that my mother forced me to take in the hope of making me gain weight and achieve a "man's body," exemplifies how, even when driven by family concerns, gender discourses and prostheses, these mechanisms seek to produce and make intelligible something that my biological materiality—by its very "nature" and functioning—resisted: to become embodied according to the previously assigned sex-gender-desire.

Extending Butler's (2018) conceptualizations of gender performativity, Preciado (2014, p. 29) describes "gender is, above all, prosthetic"; its constitution occurs not only through the reiterative power of language or social constraints but also through technologies that we attach to our bodies, which inscribe us and incite desire, shaping subjectivities and affecting bodily practices. My uncles' pornographic tapes and DVDs, shown to me in adolescence, also acted as agents of this system. They not only sought to correct the desire they presumed to be mine (homosexual) but also dictated how "correct desire" should be experienced (man with woman/woman with man), configuring a symbolic effort to perform an idealized masculinity. Now an adult, openly gay and legally married to another man, I remain non-conforming to the bodily and behavioral models that, due to their rigidity, could never fully encompass what "I am." As Silva (2013, p. 197) points out, the curricular marks resulting from this learning—which extends beyond the school walls—"accompany us until death," reverberating in every gesture, desire, and attempt to exist.

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Even when the subject becomes aware of these normativities and seeks to question them, they continue to operate, often subtly and persistently, marking bodies and delimiting possibilities.

In this intertwining of experiences and social norms, I later realized, based on Butler's (2018) reflections, that in a binary society governed by the heterosexual regime, the constitution of subjects occurs through discourses that, by repeating themselves, become naturalized, creating the illusion of an essential existence prior to human identity. For Butler (2018), gender is a productive effect of discourse, constantly remade and reiterated, taking the form of acts that seem natural but are, in reality, constructed and performative. This process, often unconscious, is reinforced daily, including in the play and interactions observed in childhood. In other words, the author invites us to understand that, rather than a passive process in which culture acts upon pre-existing biological materiality, normativities of cultural intelligibility actively traverse the construction of differences. They do not just act upon the biological body but also contribute to its production and reconfiguration, in continuous dialogue with the system of meaning that originates them. At the same time, this does not imply that biological differences do not exist. Indeed, they exist, but the way we understand them—between "penis," "vagina," and the functional non-conformities with these differences—is symbolically attributed and agented by us, being captured as part of the process of becoming "someone" within a certain historical and social temporality (Machado, 2005).

For didactic purposes, biological differences are not denied, but the way they are interpreted, lived, and assigned meaning is immersed in the cultural constructions that mold them/we mold within a normative order. However, contrary to what may seem at first glance, Butler (2013) does not suggest the existence of something or someone outside this system, nor a pure essence to be revealed—a utopia of salvation that would escape the binarism that shapes our perception of the world. For the author, discourses make us intelligible; that is, they make us susceptible to recognition and belonging within a culture that sees us only under specific conditions. This means that "there is no subject outside of discourse" (Butler, 2013, p. 119). Thus, while constructing subjects capable of inhabiting

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the world, these same discourses relegate to limbo everything that escapes the “standard.” Everything that is strange, illegible, or incapable of being absorbed by the system is silenced, displaced to the most violent margins of discourse—not outside it, but trapped in its fringes, like an uncomfortable presence that is desired to be invisible, but never absent (Miskolci, 2009).

It was this same discourse that, although coming from a heterosexual, evangelical, and progressive couple—the traditional Brazilian family, which would later be configured in a scenario of paternal abandonment, maternal overload, extreme poverty, and insalubrity—contributed to reconfigure me, distancing me from the idea of a plural “queer” child who values and reinforces their own difference. Reflecting on my childhood play experiences, I perceive an echo in the experience reported by Preciado (2018), even though I am not a trans person. Reading his account of vulnerability and normativity allows me to recognize points of precariousness that traverse different trajectories, establishing a connection with the experiences of trans children or trans people at some point in their lives. This is not about equating lived experiences or establishing a hierarchy of suffering, but about perceiving how certain conditions of life precariousness can converge on the border of gender and sexuality experience, creating spaces for recognition and potential coalitions (Butler, 2011).

As Preciado (2018, p. 72) observes, “what my father and mother were protecting were not my ‘child’s rights,’ but the sexual and gender norms that they themselves had painfully learned through an educational system that punishes any form of dissidence as a threat, intimidation, and even death.” Such a passage suggests that, just like mine, their heterosexuality was also a construction—something presented as natural by the social norm, but which, in the face of my existence and my practices, revealed its fragilities and contradictions. In line with Preciado (2018), the goal of exposing these memories is not to file a complaint, seek culprits, or absolutions, but rather to stitch together the tangle of forces that traversed me and shaped the “self” that I am attempting to auto-biograph. It aims to contribute to a broader reflection on localized processes of subjectivation that constitute me but transcend the individual dimension, being deeply rooted in a collective

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social environment and its multiple ramifications. These processes unfold according to the power relations, the experiences of alterity lived and produced by the people around (Rose, 2001), and the way such relations intersect differences of gender, race, and sexuality (Duque, 2018).

Based on Spivak's (2010) ideas on experience, narrating these lived experiences does not imply assuming they precede or determine subjects, but recognizing that they are products of the relationship between the subject and the world—processes that traverse us and that we simultaneously produce, resulting in effects that are always incomplete, mutable, and often unpredictable. It was precisely in this sense that I experienced the Sud Mennucci Municipal Elementary School, where I completed the 4th grade in 2004 (Porto Ferreira – SP), a school space steeped in historical traditions. The building, a historical symbol of the city, still conserved traces of the old separation between boys' and girls' classrooms, reflecting an institutional dynamic that indirectly influenced learning, but was perceptible in daily interactions. Although the separation was no longer strictly enforced, its marks reinforced ideas of gender displaced in time, manifesting subtly in student relationships.

In this environment, where every gesture seemed observed by watchful eyes, I constructed small fictions that allowed me to exist safely. I invented that my family was rich and that my house had a swimming pool, even knowing that, upon returning home, only "bread with sugar" awaited me—an improvised solution in the face of scarcity. I tried to appear intelligent, even if I did not fully master the content of the classes, as a way to disguise my disinterest in the boys and my appreciation, considered "strange," for being close to the girls. These strategies, conscious or unconscious, reveal how I articulated ways of existing and positioning myself, straining the limits imposed by the prevailing gender norms in that school space. However, the classroom was not the center of my anxieties. The true field of tension was the recess. There, with little surveillance from teachers and inspectors, the running of the students and the noise of loud conversations created a "non-place" where my inventions of "self" did not require justification. It was a space where simple choices—like who to sit with to eat or how to play—became complex and laden with

uncertainty. In flashes, I recall the feeling of insecurity due to the absence of adults, which conferred unprecedented freedom, but also required caution to avoid revelations about aspects of myself that I did not yet know how to name.

Among the games, I especially liked to observe the girls jumping elastic (Chinese jump rope). The dynamic was simple: two people stretched the elastic between their legs, while a third person tried to jump without exceeding the limits of the movement. When successful, the child—almost always girls at my school—advanced to more difficult levels, starting with the elastic tied to the feet, then rising to the knees, and finally reaching the neck. Invisible at first glance, this scene—the game, the play—might seem trivial and meaningless. But what can be reflected upon concerning the production of gender and sexuality differences in something as simple as jumping elastic? As Spolaor et al (2020) point out, when observing children's play, we must avoid treating it as a sphere separate from the adult world. On the contrary, when considering the dynamics of social production in childhood, play reveals itself as an essential activity for the child, who, through the ludic, acts outside/inside the culturally established parameters. The ludic, here, does not refer to a strategy to deceive the child into learning something disguised, but to the very act of playing, which transgresses norms and creates a space for experimentation and freedom. In this process, play does not follow a pre-established logic but opens a field where the child strains the body, explores possibilities, and expresses themselves uniquely.

When playing, the child not only uses the symbols and rules imposed by the toy or the way they learned to play but also constructs and shapes a specific way of acting, which, at times, challenges the social norms and expectations related to gender and sexuality. Although, throughout their development, the child may escape certain established norms, they are never completely free of rules. Therefore, when reflecting on this play, the researcher needs to “estranhar” (make strange)—that is, to denaturalize an action that, at first glance, may seem trivial and meaningless, in order to understand how it organizes and structures the way of “making oneself a person” within a sociable context. This happens because, often, these actions are subtle, too latent to be perceived at first glance, or so common and accessible to the researcher that they can go unnoticed,

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requiring a certain experimentation and laboratory questioning for their proper interpretation (Wenetz, 2012). In other words, one must look beyond the surface and consider the invisible dynamics that shape children's interactions and choices, recognizing that the process of socialization occurs not only through explicit norms but also through subtle manifestations of power and identity that impose themselves almost imperceptibly.

Revisiting my memories and experiences, I recall the girls who excelled at Chinese jump rope (pular elástico)—those who possessed greater flexibility, such as those who practiced ballet. Their slender, rigid, and well-maintained bodies, as well as their consistently neat hair, reflected a femininity carefully cultivated, both by themselves and their families. These girls, besides being skilled at the game, were the ones who had glitter pens, always in pink, and character backpacks, clear symbols of a cultural demand that sought to ensure their “intelligibility”—that is, the capacity to be understood and accepted within that social context. They were viewed as the most studious, the “best,” perpetuating the idea that their femininity was directly linked to fulfilling the expectations of behavior and appearance associated with academic and social success. In this scenario, the act of jumping, designated to them as a natural role, transcends the game itself, functioning as a kind of social symbolism. The game seemed to represent the act of “stepping on the boundary” or “walking the line,” with the elastic acting as a zone of control, transitivity, and dexterity. This game, although simple, is part of a regime of expectations and behaviors that are often invisible but profoundly present in every gesture and interaction, reinforcing gender normativity silently yet effectively.

Hall (2016) helps us understand that the representations present in the mentioned play activities, such as “Chinese jump rope” or “jump rope”—activities traditionally experienced by me as “girl stuff”—do not reflect reality directly but constitute an active process of meaning attribution. With a constructionist approach to language, Hall (2016) argues that the meanings that sustain language, and consequently social representations and power relations, are not natural or given but are constructed. In other words, the way we produce and understand the world through language and its multiple cultural possibilities is a continuous process of social construction. These representations are

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.47149/pemo.v7.e15353
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ISSN: 2675-519X

therefore not fixed but dynamic ways of producing and interpreting reality, being constantly negotiated and reformulated within specific contexts. This means that, when "jumping elastic"—and when specific performances are assigned to girls—something more happens, going beyond the play itself. These are practices embedded in a regime of meanings that transcends immediate gestures, connecting with broader cultural and social structures.

In this context, the slender, rigid, and well-maintained bodies of the girls successful at "Chinese jump rope"—a practice that transcends the limits of play—along with objects like glitter pens and character backpacks, can be seen as gender prostheses (Preciado, 2018). Many of these girls had elastic poses and accessories acquired by their mothers or made by themselves with recycled scraps at home, functioning as performative signifiers of a culturally codified femininity. Such objects and gestures act as mediators of gender identity, materializing and reinforcing social expectations about feminine and masculine behavior, since these differences are always established relationally. When my mother discovered my liking for "girl games," she justified that activities like "Chinese jump rope" or "jump rope" would grant girls thick thighs and delicacy—characteristics that, according to her, I, as a boy, should not access. She forbade me from playing on the street, worried about what the "neighbors would see," as if the simple act of playing could expose my sexuality and, consequently, generate shame regarding her own heterosexuality.

In this context, play became a mark of conformity to the rigid norms of gender and sexuality, which were reinforced by the social and cultural discourse of the time. It became necessary to "learn to be a man" through play, establishing relationships of proximity with other boys, as a way to affirm and reproduce a performative ideal of heterocompulsive masculinity, in line with the prevailing normative social model (Rios, Dias, and Brasão, 2019). However, this distinction between genders, based on physical attributes like "thick thighs," is not sustained when observing practices like soccer, which also results in muscular and strong thighs. In soccer, a "boy's game" at my old school, the emphasis on physical strength is equally valued, but only within a cultural context that defines this type of body as part of the masculine performance. This shows how gender normativities do not

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ISSN: 2675-519X

follow a consistent logic but are instead social constructions, mutable and arbitrary, that vary according to the context and cultural practices (Louro, 1999).

The elastic, in this sense, not only served as a ludic practice but also positioned the girls in power relations within a discursive field of differentiated hierarchies. This discursive process, according to Foucault's (1988) understanding, is immersed in a "knowledge/power" network that not only organizes what can be said or done but also constitutes subjects within these practices. Reflecting Foucault's (1995) ideas, discourse is not limited to describing the girls or their actions; it positions them within a regime of power that creates and sustains norms and truths about what it means to be a "girl," a future "woman," and therefore feminine. Chinese jump rope, in this sense, far from being a simple recreational activity, is part of a field of discursive practices that regulates and defines bodies and behaviors, reaffirming gender norms and consolidating the idea that femininity is intimately linked to a set of desirable attributes and behaviors. This discursive network, therefore, contributes to the maintenance of a social order that delimits the boundaries of what is acceptable for the feminine subject, shaping both their actions and their representations.

Still based on Foucault's (1995) ideas, Chinese jump rope can be understood as a "device of sexuality control," as it regulates the bodies and behaviors of girls and and boys, imposing norms about what is considered appropriate for each gender. These distinctions are not natural but are produced relationally and through the opposition between the sexes (Almeida, 1996). However, by integrating Deleuze's (1990) ideas on the "society of control," we broaden this understanding, since power is no longer centralized in traditional disciplinary institutions, such as the school or the prison. On the contrary, it spreads diffusely, operating continuously and almost imperceptibly. This control is no longer imposed externally but is internalized by subjects, who become responsible for their own surveillance. Thus, by practicing or not practicing "Chinese jump rope," girls and boys are not just following external rules but are also controlling themselves, adjusting their bodies and behaviors to gender-sexuality expectations. In this context, Chinese jump rope transforms into a social technology that, in addition to regulating the body, incites a process

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ISSN: 2675-519X

of self-control. The practice reflects how, in contemporary society, power is no longer something that comes from outside but is inscribed in the subject themselves, who becomes the agent of their own conformity to social norms.

According to Foucault (1995), power is not something one possesses but rather a network of relations that permeates society, shaping subjects and their behaviors. Therefore, even if they did not carry a clear gender identification when we suspend the context of the "jump rope" or "elastic" production, socially established power relations attributed specific meanings to them, reinforcing the division between what was acceptable for boys and for girls. The "social unintelligibility" of these actions led me to adopt self-control strategies, such as avoiding going to the bathroom during recess for fear of peer hostility. To regulate this, I started going to the bathroom before class, often holding it to the limit or even wetting my clothes, which led to complaints from my mother. However, I never revealed the true reason to her, afraid that this "strangeness" might reinforce the idea that I was outside the established gender standards. This self-control and vigilance can be understood as forms of agency, since, by acting within these limits, I did not directly oppose the norms but internalized them, reinforcing a mechanism of regulation over my body.

Therefore, by adjusting to social expectations, I not only preserved an appearance of conformity but also consolidated the internalization of norms that molded my being and my perception of myself. Takakura (2017), in his analyses of masculinities, highlights how men are socialized to conform to an impossible-to-reach ideal of virility, which nonetheless exerts constant pressure on their bodies and behaviors. In this socialization process, men are molded by complicity, silence, and vigilance, generating a cycle of perpetuation of gender-sexuality norms. In my case, being a Black, effeminate boy who liked games seen as "feminine" placed me in a position of constant subordination to this hegemonic masculinity model. Considering these points, the physical violence I suffered—such as shoves—and the symbolic violence—such as the humiliations directed at my behavior—expressed the constant attempt to fit me into a model of virility that, at the same time, proved unattainable and oppressive. The constant vigilance of the "others" and the imposition of an unattainable masculine ideal ultimately generated physical and emotional

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ISSN: 2675-519X

suffering, as in situations during school recess, an environment with less teacher surveillance and future interventions. In this context, "I" was forced to avoid using the bathroom or suffered from the ridicule of my actions, which intensified the pressure to conform to a rigid and exclusionary gender model. This pressure not only affected my choices at the time but also contributed to the construction of an identity based on inadequacy and the need to hide my "strangeness" to avoid stigma.

4 Final Considerations

Throughout this autobiographical work, it was possible to reflect that Black and "queer" children, like the one I was, carry on their bodies the mark of multiple intersections—of race, gender, and sexuality—that position them in places of marginalization, making them more exposed to the normative gaze and, consequently, more vulnerable to sanctions. However, it is also these bodies that, precisely by inhabiting such borders, invent deviant modes of existence, straining norms and broadening the limits of what can be lived and recognized as a possible life. It is in this horizon that the title of this work finds its meaning: "Jump and Watch". Between memories and theories, I sought to demonstrate that the act of auto-biographing is not just reminiscing but an act of epistemological and political resistance, especially in the field of qualitative education research. In this movement, writing also becomes a way of displacing normative pedagogies, re-inscribing dissident experiences into the space of knowledge production. And, by resisting, the possibility opens up for other jumps—jumps that are not a flight, but the creation of possible worlds.

As Foucault (1977) points out, technologies of vigilance do not only observe but also punish, creating subjects who partially adjust to expectations, even if incongruently. Today, although the school has changed compared to the one that welcomed me as a child, conservatism has intensified, accentuating divisions and reinforcing the boundaries of gender and sexuality. The risk, therefore, is that, instead of fostering a space of freedom and experimentation, the school institution ends up further reinforcing a system of control

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ISSN: 2675-519X

that limits the potentialities of subjects and bodies, transforming childhood into a field of struggle and resistance, but also of constant gender and sexuality vigilance.

In my case, the physical violence of shoves and the symbolic violence of humiliations operated as mechanisms of correction, attempting to align me with a virility that was both unattainable and oppressive. This socialization process imposes limits on what is acceptable for each gender, perpetuating rigid patterns that shape identity and behavior. However, there are also spaces for escapes, moments when subjects, despite normative pressures, subvert or question these expectations. The subject, therefore, is not passive in this process of social conformation; they exercise a certain agency, negotiating their identity and not fully submitting to external impositions.

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Contribuição de autoria: Escrita – Primeira Redação.
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Editora responsável: Genifer Andrade

Especialista *ad hoc*: Késia dos Anjos Rocha e Manuelle Araújo da Silva

Como citar este artigo (ABNT):
BOLDO, Silas Miquéias da Silva. Pular e vigiar: normativas das masculinidades no brincar de uma “criança negra viada. **Rev. Pemo**, Fortaleza, v. 7, e15353, 2025. Available in:

Received on March 31, 2025.
Accepted on September 23, 2025.
Published on December 1, 2025.