

THINKING IN-BETWEEN, ACTIVATING CHAOS, UNPREDICTABILITY, AND CURIOSITY TO REFLECT ON THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE, TRUTHS, AND SUBJECTIVITIES AT THE INTERFACE BETWEEN CURRICULUM AND SEXUAL HEALTH

Danilo Araujo de Oliveira¹

Federal University of Maranhão

Tim Dean²

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Marcio Caetano³

Federal University of Pelotas

Anderson Ferrari⁴

Federal University of Juiz de Fora

Perhaps, when we think of a dossier, or when we are invited to write together, the first assumption that comes to mind is that it brings together a set of texts or arguments that express a common way of thinking. Thus, some questions may arise: *what degree of coherence and argumentative alignment connects so many authors who have chosen to reflect on a particular topic?* We believe here, along with Davis and Dean (2022, p. x), that when proposing a debate and articulating with other researchers to do so, what is central is the predisposition for a *thinking in-between* "which is not exactly a dialogue, nor yet a synthesis of what could be considered our respective positions".

¹ PhD in Education. oliveira.danilo@ufma.br. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3222-3172>

² Ph.D. is in English and American Literature. timdean123@gmail.com Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0138-665X>

³ PhD in Education. mrvcaetano@gmail.com Orcid: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4128-8229>

⁴ PhD in Education. anderson.ferrari@ufff.br. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5681-0753>



The "thinking in-between" methodology is an epistemological approach that refuses dialectical synthesis and conventional academic authority, based on *the relativization of expertise*. By articulating Jacques Rancière's political philosophy with Freudian psychoanalysis, this perspective recognizes that both the commitment to radical equality and the hypothesis of the unconscious destabilize the notion of the subject's mastery over their own knowledge. In a similar way, Foucault (2006) also questioned the production of knowledge, relating it to power, and showing how truths are produced in that game of true and false. Thus, the act of thinking is dramatized as a process that does not seek a unified voice or consensus, as the search for discursive coherence, for Davis and Dean (2022), is interpreted, under the psychoanalytic lens, as a form of repression of disruptive ideas and an imposition of institutional hierarchies that are inherently hostile to equality.

The proposal of this dossier emerges from the desire to produce a field of reflection that does not seek to stabilize meanings, but to multiply them. Inspired by the *thinking in-between* exercise proposed by Davis and Dean (2022), we mobilize here a writing that moves between perspectives, knowledge, and experiences, refusing the pretense of a single and coherent voice on sexuality, curriculum, and health. This gesture does not seek to synthesize positions, but to create productive frictions between different ways of thinking. Hence, this dossier constitutes a meeting space among studies that interrogate the ways in which knowledge, truths and subjectivities are produced at the interface between curriculum and sexual health, especially when crossed by LGBTQIAPN+ experiences and existences.

In the context of discussions on sexual health and biopolitics, *thinking in-between* allows us to analyze human sexuality as an intrinsic *disturbance*, analogous to democratic disorder, as argued by Davis and Dean (2022), resisting attempts at normalization and capture by neoliberal governance. By treating authorial authority as necessarily provisional, this approach prevents knowledge about sex from being reduced to a normalizing psychology—as observed in the transition from radical psychoanalysis to theories of adaptation—or to strictly identitarian categories that may end up excluding the complexity of pleasure. In this way, the production of truths about LGBTQIAPN+ bodies is presented not as a dogma of specialists, but as a multitude of voices that preserves the chaos and unpredictability necessary to sustain a democratic and sexual practice open to difference.

In this movement, we recognize that thinking about curriculum and sexual health requires facing the disturbing and unpredictable character that crosses human sexualities. As argued by Tim Dean and Oliver Davis (2022), the so-called "hatred of sex" emerges from the same source as the "hatred of democracy": a deep aversion to that which escapes attempts at domestication and normalization. In times marked by political setbacks, the precariousness of rights, and the intensification of moralizing discourses on gender and sexuality, this aversion becomes particularly visible. In contemporary Brazil, such a scenario manifests itself in intense disputes about what can or cannot be said, taught, and lived in educational spaces, transforming curriculum into privileged territories for the regulation of dissident sexualities (Caetano, Lima, and Castro, 2019).

These disputes become even more complex when observed in the light of the notion of biopolitics. Since Michel Foucault's formulation (2008), biopolitics has enabled us to understand how contemporary forms of power are dedicated to the management of life, regulating bodies, pleasures and modes of existence. In contemporary times, as suggested by Nikolas Rose (2013), this politics of life shifts toward the administration of one's own capacities to live, producing new forms of governing populations. In this context, LGBTQIAPN+ experiences become simultaneously the target of control and space for the invention of new subjectivities, evidencing how sexual health is constituted as a strategic field in which biomedical knowledge, public policies, social moralities, and curricular practices are intertwined.

An example of these transformations can be observed in contemporary biomedical technologies, such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), integrated into the Combined Prevention policy of the Ministry of Health. By allowing individuals to negotiate new ways of living their sexualities with less fear and greater autonomy, PrEP displaces traditional narratives about prevention and highlights tensions in the ways sexual health is taught and discussed in school and non-school curriculum (Oliveira, 2021). When educational practices insist on condoms as the only legitimate prevention strategy, ignoring biomedical advances and the concrete experiences of LGBTQIAPN+ subjects, limited narratives are produced that reiterate restrictive truth regimes about sexuality, pleasure, and care.

In light of this scenario, it is essential to recognize that both democracy and human sexuality share a constitutive dimension of disorder and unpredictability. As the

authors engaged in this debate suggest, attempts to eliminate this “chaos” through the exclusive authority of experts or through normative discourses are not merely strategies of control, but also forms of oppression grounded in the fear of equality. When sexualities are excessively regulated by bodies of knowledge that intend to define their legitimate forms of existence, there is a risk of transforming care for life into normalization devices that silence dissident experiences.

Davis and Dean (2022), drawing on Jacques Rancière's thesis, explain that disorder and unpredictability are not flaws of democracy, but rather its constitutive and vital condition, as it represents the rule of "anyone", breaking with the idea that only experts or elites would have the natural right to govern. This "disorder" refers to the centrifugal energy of popular participation that disperses power and prevents it from being monopolized by bureaucratic institutions. The "hatred of democracy" arises, therefore, as a defensive reaction of those who fear this radical equality, labeling the participation of the crowd as "chaotic" or "incapable" in order to justify social control and the imposition of an order. Thus, far from being something negative, the recognition of this democratic "chaos" is what ensures that politics remains open to equality of capabilities, resisting attempts to silence the plurality of voices in the name of a false coherence or absolute security.

This association reveals that hatred of sex and of democracy share a common root: a deep aversion to everything that escapes control, normalization, and domestication. Just as democracy is viewed with suspicion by elites who fear the "disorder" inherent in the participation of the multitude - the so-called government of the "rabble" - human sexuality provokes a defensive reaction of the ego due to its ability to generate a disturbance or fragmentation that threatens the coherence of identity. Therefore, defending sexuality requires accepting the same level of chaos and unpredictability that defines genuine democratic practice, recognizing that both sex and politics are inherently messy and destabilizing domains. Attempting to eliminate this disorderly dimension through expert discourses or curricular norms that seek only appropriate behavior is not only a pedagogical setback, but a form of biopolitical oppression that fears the radical equality of bodies and desires that refuse to be domesticated by neoliberal governance.

It is within this horizon that this dossier is situated. By bringing together studies that explore the interface between curriculum and sexual health, we seek to broaden

debates about the knowledge, truths, and subjectivities that traverse LGBTQIAPN+ experiences in times of biopolitics. The contributions gathered here question how biomedical advances, political disputes, and pedagogical practices produce different ways of teaching, learning, and living sexuality. More than offering definitive answers, this dossier relies on the potential of critical and interdisciplinary thinking to challenge the regimes of truth that permeate the curriculum and to affirm the importance of educational practices capable of sustaining the complexity, diversity and unpredictability that characterize sexual and democratic life.

Deborah Britzman's (1999) arguments are powerfully articulated with the thinking of Davis and Dean (2022), especially in challenging the idea that knowledge about sexuality should be stable or merely informative. Britzman (1999, p. 90) introduces the concept of "passion for ignorance", defined as the "paradoxical desire not to know what we already know" and the "passionate work of denial and disavowal". For her, this passion for ignorance is not a simple lack of information, but an active defense against knowledge that disturbs ego coherence, which resonates with Davis and Dean's (2022, p. x) thesis that the search for coherence often serves to "repress the most interesting" and disruptive ideas.

In the field of curriculum and sexual health, Britzman (1999, p. 90) criticizes how formal education transforms sexuality into a "didactic, explanatory and 'desexualized' language". She argues that school culture requires "stable answers" (p. 85) and prioritizes the teaching of facts to the detriment of the understanding of intimate issues which end up silencing curiosity. This official "will to know" often functions to contain and control populations, operating as a tool of biopolitics that attempts to normalize what is inherently disorderly.

Thus, we mobilize Britzman's (1999) writings of and the "thinking in-between" proposed by Davis and Dean (2022) in a commitment to valuing sexual curiosity as a driver of thought. Britzman (1999, p. 89) argues that "without sexuality there would be no curiosity and without curiosity the human being would not be able to learn". She evokes Freud's "little investigators of sex" (Britzman, 1999, p. 93) to propose a pedagogy that does not seek to fix identities through knowledge, but that accepts sexuality as an alterity that refuses the "rules of culture". Rather than using knowledge as a form of mastery or unquestionable authority, Britzman (1999, p. 104) suggests that education should be a study of the "vicissitudes of knowledge, power, and

pleasure."

In this sense, Britzman (1999) proposes that meaningful learning should tolerate uncertainty and *the insufficiency of knowledge itself*. By recognizing that "all learning is also unlearning" (p. 105), she comes close to Davis and Dean's (2022) argument regarding the *necessarily provisional nature of authority*. Both perspectives converge on the idea that a curriculum on sexual health should not offer a "final destination" but rather incite a *multitude of voices* and questions that destabilize the *docility of education* and preserve the chaos necessary for freedom and self-care.

This also brings us closer to the distinction made by Foucault (2006) between the problematizer and the polemicist. In the author's thought, the distinction between the "problematizer" and the "polemicist" lies in the ethics of the search for truth and in the relationship established with the other. The polemicist operates within a "dictatorship of opinion," where the right to speak serves to close the debate rather than to incite it, remaining "invested with the privileges he holds in advance, and which he never accepts to call into question" (Foucault, 2006, p. 225–226). For the polemicist, the interlocutor is not a partner, but an "adversary, an enemy who is mistaken [...] and whose very existence constitutes a threat" (Foucault, 2006a, p. 226). This stance is close to Davis and Dean's (2022) critique of the search for *discursive coherence*, which they identify as a form of repression of what could become the most interesting ideas and an imposition of hierarchies hostile to equality. Just as the polemicist avoids the disorder of thought, neoliberal governance tries to tame the "disturbance" intrinsic to sex and democracy through the discourses of experts who refuse uncertainty.

In contrast, the "problematizer" engages in a "serious game" of questions and answers, in which any authority is recognized as "necessarily provisional". The problematizer exercises the right "not to be sure, to perceive a contradiction" (Foucault, 2006a, p. 225) and to transform thought itself into an object of investigation. This openness to the unfinished is connected to Deborah Britzman's (1999) defense of a mode of thought structured by *curiosity*, which "refuses security" and allows pedagogy to engage with the "vicissitudes of knowledge, power and pleasure". While school culture often demands "stable answers", acting in a polemicist way by privileging facts to the detriment of understanding, problematization requires confronting the "passion for ignorance", the desire not to know what one already knows, so that learning may also become "unlearning". Therefore, to problematize in teaching and sexual health

means embracing the “chaos and unpredictability” that Davis and Dean (2023) and Britzman (1999) consider vital for a practice of freedom and for the care of the self.

We conclude by reaffirming the commitment to this *thinking in-between*, an approach that deliberately renounces the illusion of mastery and the search for a final synthesis, recognizing, as Davis and Dean (2022) argue that the demand for coherence often entails the repression of the most interesting and disruptive ideas. By assuming the posture of the Foucaultian problematizer instead of the polemicist, we transform thought into a “serious game” of questions and answers in which any authority is recognized as *necessarily provisional*. This process requires confronting what Deborah Britzman (1999) calls the “passion for ignorance”, the desire not to know what disturbs the ego, so that learning about sexual health and curriculum may become, fundamentally, an unlearning of normalizing truths and of “desexualized” didactic languages.

By summoning the multitude of voices rather than a unified authorial voice, this dossier does not seek to establish a new specialized dogma, but rather to dramatize a thought open to the *disturbance* and *chaos* that are constitutive of both sexuality and democracy. This invitation to collective thinking is grounded on *radical equality*, recognizing that we must allow each voice to have its own say and that sex education must be indistinguishable from *the care of the self* as a practice of freedom. Only by accepting the tension of opposites and the unpredictability of desire can we confront biopolitical regressions and strengthen LGBTQIAP+ subjectivities against attempts to domesticate their bodies and pleasures.

The discussion about sexuality in contemporary times reveals itself to be an exercise intrinsically linked to the maintenance and expansion of democracy, since the LGBTQIAPN+ movement has become a “place of political struggle” (Ferrari, 2004, p. 114) that seeks to move beyond invisibility to reach the “space and public debate” (Ferrari, 2004, p. 114). As Ferrari (2004) points out, this engagement is configured as a “political cause” in which the production of knowledge and the right to speech are directly “associated with freedom”, approaching a perspective of the future that challenges the prohibitive legacies of the past. By producing knowledge about desire and fighting for visibility, the movement assumes a transgressive character that “disrupts the law and anticipates future freedom” (Ferrari, 2004, p. 114), showing that the construction of a more just society is a continuous educational process that “can

only be built through dialogue, confrontation and negotiation with the broader society" (Ferrari, 2004, p. 114). Therefore, to discuss sexuality is to project a democratic future that requires the courage to "challenge the 'established order'", bringing forth chaos, unpredictability and curiosity. That is precisely what this dossier seeks to do.

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Corresponding author: Danilo Araujo de Oliveira, UFMA, oliveira.danilo@ufma.br, Address: Avenida dos Portugueses, 1966, Bacanga, Cidade Universitária Dom Delgado, ZIP code 65080-805