

The formation of subjectivities in a female vocational school: analysis of a registration form

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Abstract

This study analyzes a registration form filled out by girls applying for the Senador Ernesto Dornelles Women's Vocational School (Porto Alegre/RS, 1940). Its archive contained 195 folders with documents from students who enrolled in the institution from 1946 to 1950, including registration forms. Made by the Psychotechnical and Educational Guidance Service of the Department of Education and Culture of Rio Grande do Sul, these files consisted of two parts: I) the family, which included information on family members' economic, educational, and social conditions and respondents' interest in their daughter's profession and II) the student, inquiring about girls' education, way of life, vocational tendencies, and general impressions. We use Foucault's theoretical contributions on examination procedures in disciplinary institutions and their subjectivation effects. The analysis of these forms found some of the social expectations and possibilities open to the formation of young applicants' professional subjectivities based on the formulated questions and the possible answers available for families and students.

Keywords

Subjectivity – Vocational Training – School bookkeeping – Women's education.

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<https://doi.org/10.1590/S1678-4634202450271093en>
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Introduction

How can the simple act of filling out a document for admission to an educational institution participate in the process of forming students' subjectivities? This study aims to contribute to the elucidation of this issue by analyzing a registration form³ that were to be filled out by girls applying for admission as students at the *Escola Técnica Feminina Senador Ernesto Dornelles* (Senador Ernesto Dornelles Women's Vocational School) (Porto Alegre/RS, 1940). We found 195 folders with documents from students who enrolled in the institution from 1946 and 1950 in the school archive, which included these forms.

This study analyzes the two models of a *ficha social* (social registration form) the school used in the period, which were printed by the Psychotechnical and Educational Guidance Service of the Department of Education and Culture of Rio Grande do Sul and contained fields for elementary information (such as students' name and date of birth) and questions on students and their families' objective living conditions and girls' usual activities, experience with work related to the offered courses or the domestic space, and cultural taste.

This documentation belongs to a wide and varied set of records produced aimed at the practical organization of the institution. Such bookkeeping offered a source for historical research. Bookkeeping functions were articulated with the need to organize schools, supervise teaching work, classify performances, characterize students, record and control behaviors, attest to conducted activities and completed stages, among other possibilities. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, school bookkeeping continuously changed toward greater specialization and detail. Such documentation organized school activities and enabled schools to function but produced other effects, including subjectivation, for example, as we aim to argue in this study. Michel de Certeau (2014) points out that *scriptural practices* have had great centrality in the configuration of modern societies, which tend to consider activities further away from orality as more legitimate. As schools play a vital role in this process, school scriptural practices stand out for their relevance in understanding the ways in which modern subjectivities have established themselves in the last two centuries. Certeau (2014, p. 204) defines writing as "the concrete activity that consists in constructing, on its own space, the page, a text that has power over the exteriority from which it has first been isolated". Thus, writing supports and frameworks (as the forms in this study) circumscribe certain possibilities and exclude many others.

The *Escola Técnica Feminina Senador Ernesto Dornelles*, aimed at professional technical education, was inaugurated in 1946, offering courses in "Sewing" and "Hats, Flowers, and Ornaments" in its Industrial Gymnasium. This study focuses on the items and questions on the two types of registration forms in students' set of documents. Forms consisted of two parts: I) *the family*, which included information on family members' economic, educational, and social conditions and respondents' interest in their daughter's

3- Data availability: the forms analyzed in this article were fully published in Gil, Viana and Grando (2023).

profession; and II) *the student*, a section inquiring about girls' education, way of life, vocational tendencies, and general impressions.

This analysis mobilized Foucault's (1997) theoretical contributions on examination and control procedures in disciplinary institutions and their subjectivation effects. As the author observed in *Discipline and Punish*, an important part of these procedures is related to the production of a dossier for each individual, consisting of documents with detailed information about the conditions of each individual since their admission and throughout their life within the institution. The author relates the practice of documenting the presence and trajectory of each subject admitted to an institution to the process of fabrication and normalization of the individual in modern societies. In schools, the enrollment of children or adolescents usually involves filling out a series of forms (such as entry applications, registration forms, health records, etc.) that are gathered in individual dossiers and participate in the process of student individualization as they enable their location and identification by the set of information that concerns them alone and distinguishes them from other students. They also enable comparisons, show their distance from what is observed as normal in that group, and measure their deviations from the norm. Many other institutional productions join this initial document as time goes by, recording students' school life and individual path in the institution: performance, absences, delays, behavior, and possible transgressions, awards, and distinctions. The institution keeps these files so it can use this information in cases requiring decisions about students' fate, e.g., in the face of a more serious transgressions, a more earnest difficulty, or even an unusual situation in student's lives that may impact their academic trajectory.

Thus, the questions and answer options provided in the forms to be filled out by applicants produce a double individual subjectivation: on the one hand, the individual becomes a subject as subjected to the power of those who use this information to make decisions about their life; on the other hand, the questions and available answers in these documents induce the individual to elaborate their own subjectivity in truthful answers about themselves to those specific questions and their commitment to these declared truths. Analysis of the forms at the *Escola Técnica Feminina Senador Ernesto Dornelles* found some of the social expectations and possibilities of making up the young applicants' professional subjectivities based on the formulated questions and available answers to families and students.

After this brief introduction, this study brings some important elements regarding the time and space that produced these forms, i.e., it is important to outline the characteristics of the school these forms served as registration records and the very meaning of the existence of a female vocational school in Porto Alegre in the second half of the 1940s. A detailed description and analysis of form sections, requested information, and proposed questions follows the above outline. The final considerations section resumes the fundamental aspects of this analysis.

The Escola Técnica Feminina Senador Ernesto Dornelles in the educational scenario of Porto Alegre

The establishment of compulsory primary schooling in Rio Grande do Sul State required a long time. Provincial legislation only established compulsory schooling for children aged from seven to 15 years in 1871. Enrollment in elementary education system progressively expanded, but at the beginning of the Brazilian Republic, these institutions were still too scarce to serve the youth. The continuity of studies after elementary school followed this rule and was even rarer. Thus, the state offered few options for enrollment in gymnasiums (junior high), colleges (high school), and normal schools (teacher training) in the early 20th century. The situation was even more complicated for girls. Even in Porto Alegre (the state capital), education remained scarce. The *Escola Complementar* (formerly *Escola Normal*, which later became *Instituto de Educação Flores da Cunha*) had been created in 1906 to train teachers (Louro, 1986), beginning to offer a normal course and junior high and complementary courses in 1939. Some confessional schools also offered women's junior high school at the time, such as the Bom Conselho and Sevigné schools, Catholic schools, and the Methodist Porto Alegre Institute. From 1942 to 1946, the *Leis Orgânicas do Ensino* (Organic Education Laws) were federally instituted, organizing vocational education in Brazil and expanding its schooling options, among other attributions (Medeiros Neta *et al.*, 2018). The *Escola Técnica Feminina Senador Ernesto Dornelles* was created in 1946 in Porto Alegre, belonging to the set of initiatives that sought to expand the list of options for continuing studies (including for girls) in this period.

In the 1940s, although Porto Alegre still greatly appreciated traditional moral values, it stood out as a capital attentive to the needs of modernization of urban space and society. The *Escola Técnica Feminina Senador Ernesto Dornelles* began its teaching activities in a context that articulated the modern and the traditional, offering a curriculum to prepare women for professional activity and their instruction as mothers and wives (Louro; Meyer, 1993), offering options for job training that would avoid keeping students away from the tasks that were considered especially suitable for women. Its courses ("Sewing" and "Hats, Flowers, and Ornaments") focused on knowledge socially understood as "inherent to the feminine universe" (Scholl, 2012). Courses lasted four years and the school received girls aged from 11 to 17 years. Guacira Lopes Louro and Dagmar Meyer (1993) analyzed its curriculum and found a process of "schooling of the domestic". The authors highlight the importance of better understanding the functioning of the institution and the profile of the students who attended it to "understand the purposes of education that mobilized them and the powerful and subtle imbrication between professionalization and the instruction of housewives" (Louro; Meyer, 1993, p. 46). We believe that analyzing registration forms (which should be filled out during enrollment application to the institution) can contribute to advance this purpose.

However, before we scrutinize these forms, it should be noted that these documents were produced outside the school, although its professionals may have participated in its formulation. The header of the form states the following: Rio Grande do Sul State

/ Department of Education and Culture / Superintendence of Professional Education / Technical Division / Psychotechnical and Educational Guidance Service.

Brazilian education field, especially after 1930, expanded its initiatives to rationalize school administration. It was important to improve inspection services and pedagogical guidelines and carry out systematic records and studies that could remove imprecisions and arbitrariness from actions and increase their objectivity and scientificity. In line with a movement that had been taking place in several Brazilian states, the extreme south of the country tried to set in motion a process of pedagogical renewal that encompassed several types of knowledge, especially psychology, experimental pedagogy, and new education (Peres, 2020). Within these renewing initiatives (since 1909, but especially from the 1940s onward after the creation of the *Centro de Pesquisas e Orientação Educacionais (CPOE)* (Center for Educational Research and Guidance), for example), the administrative structure of the Department of Education and Culture changed, evincing an “effort to base educational administration on technical-scientific principles” (Peres, 2020, p. 128). The forms configuring our object of analysis results from this set of initiatives.

Psychotechnical and educational guidance service forms and their subjectivation effects

The elaboration of a ficha social (social registration form) by the Psychotechnical and Educational Guidance Service to be filled out by students at vocational technical schools represents a transformation in the psychological study of individual differences. Up to the 1930s, emphasis prevailed on the biological aspects associated with heredity, which were considered to be determinants of students’ (in)capacities. The interest in the influence of social conditions of existence subsequently became an especially relevant factor in defining individuals’ potential. It can be hypothesized that this form, which requested information related to the social, economic, and lifestyle conditions of students’ families, replaced and updated previous documents that detailed students’ bodily characteristics. An example of this type of document was elaborated in the first republican period in the state of São Paulo, as the Escola Normal Caetano de Campos (Caetano de Campos Teachers Training School) created the Gabinete de Antropologia Pedagógica e Psicologia Experimental (Office of Pedagogical Anthropology and Experimental Psychology) in 1914. The Biographical Handbook of students had nine pages that had to be filled with anthropological and physiopsychological measurements and “anamnestic data of the family” and the student, the latter collected by medical examinations (Carvalho, 1997; Tavares, 1995). Produced at another time, the form we examined shows the change of emphasis from the organic to the social in psychology.

For Foucault, subjectivation and individualization processes configure operations that involve knowledge and power and depend on a series of articulated actions for their effectiveness. Thus, they can deviate from the initial plan, showing flaws or distortions. As we argue in this study, the simple filling out of the forms shows such phenomenon. Its model was drawn up outside the context of the technical schools in which it had to be filled out (probably by technicians from the aforementioned sector), suggesting a possible

distance between its initial purpose and the one guiding its filling out, which was probably carried out by a school employee who received enrollment candidates and their guardians. This study doesn't analyze students' answers⁴ but it can at least indicate that the several blank gaps in numerous forms suggests that not all the information considered relevant by the formulators of the form was considered necessary or pertinent to the school.

In addition to the form, the typical dossier of each student enrolled in the institution—her dossier—included other documents. Although these dossiers have varying forms and documents, they generally contain the following materials (in this order):

- 1) A form with a registration application to the Women's Vocational School entrance exams, which requested the following data from candidates: name, city and state of birth, parents' name, fathers/guardians' profession (but not of mothers), fathers/guardians' place of work, candidates' address, and if they had taken these exams once before. The following documents should be attached to this form: birth certificate; certificate of absence of a communicable disease; a recent vaccination certificate; certificate of instruction, six 3×4 photographs, in which candidates faced the camera and “wore no hat”;
- 2) Social form, to be detailed below;
- 3) “School life,” a document corresponding to what we now call school history describing the list of subjects taken by year and recording the grades obtained in the first, second, and final exams and the final grade obtained in each subject, followed by the approval or failure in the field intended for observations. This document draws attention to the record of candidates' performance in entrance exams as they refer to mental, Portuguese language, and mathematical aptitude tests. The separation of students' academic performance in General Culture and Technical Culture in the calculation of yearly “global grades” is also noteworthy;
- 4) Attached documents, especially birth certificates and, if necessary, other certificates.

According to Foucault, this record of subjects' lives in institutions is correlated with the examination procedures to which they are regularly subjected and participate in their process of individualization. The information in individual dossiers enable informed decisions about each individual as it enables the comparison between each individual and the group to which they belong and the production of precise knowledge about the typical characteristics of that group, offering us the apprehension of the norm for that specific group.

Thanks to the whole apparatus of writing that accompanied it, the examination opened up two correlative possibilities: firstly, the constitution of the individual as a describable, analysable object, not in order to reduce him to 'specific' features, as did the naturalists in relation to living beings, but in order to maintain him in his individual features, in his particular evolution, in his

4- However, this analysis was carried out within the scope of its research group since its documentary corpus consists of about 150 completed forms. The results of these analyses were published in Gil, Viana and Grando (2023). In any case, the authors are aware of the answers, which offer them a better understanding of the questions respondents' interpretations.

own aptitudes or abilities, under the gaze of a permanent corpus of knowledge; and, secondly, the constitution of a comparative system that enables the measurement of overall phenomena, the description of groups, the characterization of collective facts, the calculation of the gaps between individuals, their distribution in a given 'population.' (Foucault, 1997, p. 158).

The following description of the form in *Escola Técnica Feminina Senador Ernesto Dornelles* students' dossiers enables us to glimpse this apparatus of writing in operation and analyze the process of transformation of young candidates into students at the institution. From their elements, we can claim that filling out the forms invited a development of subjectivity as specialized knowledge directs attention to sociability: less interested in bodily or properly psychological characteristics, it aimed to better detail students' living conditions and moral environment and their families' economic resources and cultural habits. By filling out the form, students and the guardians accompanying their admission to the institution had to think about themselves regarding their social conditions of existence.

Form analysis: part I – The family

The first section of the form aimed to obtain information on students' families. Its initial framework offers fields to be filled with each of its members' age, profession, and income. Only one form demanded information on gender. The list of people making up the family was printed on the form: "father," "guardian," "mother," and "tutor". The subsequent fields required students' information. A form asks for "siblings living in the same household" and another, for "unmarried daughters and sons". One of the forms had a 1-10 numeration regarding children in the family; another, one up to 15. Only one form had a field for "other people".

The way the form presents this list of people explains the supposed structure of students' families. Although not all fields would necessarily be filled, it portrays social expectations regarding the composition of a normal family at the time. Thus, individuals remain formally free to compose their family but are led by the categories in the analyzed forms to choose between predefined alternatives. As Nikolas Rose (2011, p. 114) points out,

Within contemporary political rationalities and technologies of government, the freedom of subjects is more than merely an ideology. Subjects are *obliged* to be 'free,' to construe their existence as the outcome of choices that they make among a plurality of alternatives (Meyer, 1986). Family life, parenting, even work itself are no longer to be constraints upon freedom and autonomy: they are to be essential elements in the path to self-fulfillment.

How would these forms be filled out if, for example, a student lived with her grandmother? Family arrangements unlike those in the form could generate a perception of inadequacy in students' way of life in face of school expectations. The specification "unmarried" about children living in the same house suggests that the expectation was that, once married, children would leave their parents' home. The number of children that

could be listed in each file is also noteworthy as a mark of a different time. Finally, it is interesting to note the category “guardian” in a position that suggests the replacement of fathers and/or mothers. In this case, the observation of the completed forms shows that guardians could perhaps refer to girls’ stepfathers in cases that indicated information about mothers and guardians. However, this forms also includes situations referring to tutors. Some possibilities arise in these circumstances, including orphans who were raised by people unrelated to them or even “kinship care”, a very common practice in Brazilian sociability at that time (Arend, 2005).

Another aspect deserving highlight is that the form varyingly expresses the intention of apprehending families’ socioeconomic conditions as its categories outline the urban, bourgeois, and modern society in which students were supposed to live. Thus, for example, the chart requesting a description of family members offered a field to indicate each member’s “profession” and monthly income, as per the “salário” and “vencimento”⁵ categories. This constitutes a specific framework for the world of work, which was, at the time, much more diverse and nuanced than the suggestions in the form. Discussing “profession” diverges from addressing occupation or work fields. The form also has no provision for variable income arising from sporadic work or variable earnings (as with business owners or liberal professionals), which could generate difficulties answering the form. The fields following the chart complement the information on family’s earnings and spending. It is worth noting that they greatly differ between form types, although both aim to understand families’ financial lives.

After the table dedicated to the income of each family member, one form demands information on “other income” (subleases; pensions; real estate; securities; dividends, etc.; vegetable gardening, livestock, etc.; others) and “burdens.” The latter aimed to record monthly expenses with house rent, schools, various institutions, employees’ salaries, and others. Finally, it asked for the “monthly balance maintaining the family.” It is interesting to note that filling options bring items more likely to occur in affluent families and others that refer to more economically modest families. The other form shows the same demand for information as questions. An inquiry differs between both models: “Does the children’s salary help the family?” As this is the same form in which the descriptive table asked about “unmarried daughters and sons”, it suggests that the question also aimed to scrutinize married children. Moreover, many parts of the form and this set of questions often restrict answer options, which could generate a feeling of inadequacy for respondents for whom these options were unsuitable. Referring to the way the rule of subjectivities incorporated psychology in institutions such as schools, factories, and asylums, Rose (2011, p. 113) observes that rather than preventing the manifestation of subjectivity, it induces subjects to certain ways of expression and self-evaluation: “these apparatuses did not seek to crush subjectivity but to produce individuals who attributed a certain kind of moral subjectivity to themselves and who evaluated and reformed themselves according to its norms”. For example, on whether the family “lives in their own or rented house”, what would someone who lived in a borrowed house answer? Next, a question asks whether she lives “in an apartment or boarding house room”, if she “receives food from

5- *Salário* refers to the payment received due to employment contract and *vencimento* is the payment received for the exercise of public office.

others”, and if she “has a maid”. Finally, the form asks whether the family has additional resources: “livestock, vegetable gardens, rents, subletting, pensions, etc.”. Care must be taken in the historical analysis of the family profile outlined in the form. Although this type of analysis is not the focus of this article, it would be worth noting that the meaning of a practice changes over time and differs by location; what may mean distinction in one context designates something common in other circumstances (Bourdieu, 2017). This is the case of the mention of income from renting real estate, which tends to make us think of families owning several properties, but as it appears on the form suggests a greater variety of possibilities, such as subletting rooms in one’s property, even if rented.

However, the characterization of the family the form proposed is unrestricted to the economic situation. Both form types contain questions on cultural and religious practices, educational status, and some social practices of family members or the family considered as a unit. It is important to note the frequent designation of the family as a unitary whole, even in circumstances in which the answers could vary from one member to another, e.g., membership in a trade union or professional association tends to only refer to a family member in a particular profession. Likewise, playing a musical instrument or engaging in art can also be an individual practice. In one form type, the title preceding the questions refers to “educational and social conditions”, whereas the other calls this section “social conditions and culture”. In the first type, a table asks fathers, mothers, or guardians’ “nationality”, “color”, and “level of education”, followed by the options “higher, secondary, complete elementary, literate”. It offers no possibility of indicating illiteracy, which should be rather common given the demographic data on the 1940 census⁶. Next, applicants are asked if they practiced any religion⁷ and, if so, which, offering two attendance possibilities: “regularly” or “occasionally”. The form also asked whether they attended professional, recreational, sports, union, or other associations.

The other form follows a similar scheme, but its questions differ, aiming at detailing cultural practices. The difference lies in the table to be filled with information about fathers, mothers, and guardians. It ignores nationality but asks for information on color and level of education. The latter offers only one field for answers with no preset of possible levels as in the other form. Although inclusion in the forms suggests that all members could offer such information, one can only indicate “none” if one’s parents were illiterate. In this form, religion is an item in a table, thus offering the possibility of applicants indicating situations in which fathers and mothers have different religions. As it appears on the form, it individualizes answers, on the one hand, and suggests the expectation that this refers to all people, on the other hand.

The form also investigates whether parents attended cultural, religious, political, charitable, professional, union, recreational, sports, or other associations. Moreover, it asked:

Do they perform any unpaid social functions? Which one?
Do they make music at home? What genre?

6- The 1940 census (IBGE, 1940) indicated a 38.8% literacy rate in the population aged five years and older and 43.3% in the population aged 10 years and older.

7- Based on their position on the form, these questions seem to refer only to the fathers, mothers, and guardians.

Who participates?

What instruments do they employ?

Do they dedicate themselves to other arts? Which?

Is there a library at home? No. of volumes.

What genres of books predominate?

Did they go on any trips? Where?

Which people participated?

Of the analyzed questions, the form offers an interesting set of assumptions for scrutiny, outlining a cultural life with markedly bourgeois characteristics, which may indicate the student profile the school expected to receive and investigate the proscribed practices. Respondents' understanding of whether it would be one or the other case depends on the proximity between their social origin and the sociocultural references organizing school practices. Based on what is known about the cultural capital valued by the school in the period, supposing that it expected to receive students whose families could answer these questions may suggest that having no answer or realizing that the given answers differed from what the school expected could configure a subtle practice of exclusion of certain social groups that, as they enrolled, realized that their ways of life were considered inadequate and that their experiences were unvalued or insufficient in that institution.

The section referring to the family ends with questions about "interest in the daughter's profession"⁸. In this item, the two forms also differ greatly. One is succinct, asking what profession the family wants for the child and why, what is their child's vocation and in what the family based their answer, why they enrolled his/her in the school, and, finally, what is the traditional profession in the family. It is interesting to observe this notion of the family's traditional profession, which, due to its position in the questionnaire, suggests the understanding of a possible relationship between vocation and insertion in a specific professional field. The other form markedly focused this item on the possibilities for women's professional performance in the period. The first question already indicates a crucial difference. Instead of asking "What profession do you want for your child?", it contains "Do you want your daughter to pursue a professional career?". As girls were enrolling in a vocational school, answers would probably be "yes", explaining the following question on the "desire for the daughter to pursue a professional career". It is worth noting that this question only offers three possible answers (although more than one could be answered as "yes"): "to give her a complete education for the home", "to offer her a future livelihood", "to help the family by completing the course". Next, the social curiosity the next few questions express may be surprising: "Do you want another career for your daughter?". Why does it suggest that the family enrolling their daughter in a vocational school would want a career for her other than the one proposed by that course? The form brings a few options: "Teacher? Tradesperson... Liberal professions (medicine, philosophy, engineering, industrial chemistry, law, music, fine arts, etc.)?". If the family wants another career for their daughter, wouldn't they already know which one? Why did

8- It is worth noting that one form refers to "daughter" and another uses the masculine term "son". This may be due to the fact that other technical schools also used the form.

the proponents of the form consider it necessary to provide options? It is interesting to note that the form enunciates some possible horizons, opening the possibility that the girl and her family thought about acceptable professional careers for women that perhaps had never been thought by the respondents. This may constitute an ambiguity: the attempts to control the subjectivities implied in the practice of examination inadvertently opened a crack by creating the possibility of escaping the social norm. Or the form may indicate the discreetly combative action of people who worked in administrative sectors and wanted to expand the field for women's action in society. This possibility can be considered based on Foucault's concept of power (2010, p. 288), for whom it corresponds to "a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions" to avoid representing the exclusion of freedom. For the author, the relationship between power and freedom is more complex since it "operates on the field of possibilities in which the behavior of active subjects is inscribed". Moreover,

Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole there is no relationship of power - slavery is not a relationship of power, because man is in chains (in this case it is a question of a physical relationship of coercion) - but only when he can move and, at the limit, escape. (Foucault, 2010, p. 289).

Form analysis: part II – The student

The two sections in the second part of the examined form models specifically refer to students: "Educational Conditions and Way of Life" and "Vocational Trends". The seven items in the first section ask for information on students' previous education: attended schools, obtained degree, acquired diploma (and which one). The following questions about religion should be answered next: "Do you practice the religion of your parents? Regularly or occasionally?". It is worth noting that this form provided neither the possibility of students practicing a religion other than that of their parents nor for each of the parents to have different beliefs. The second form model replaced these questions by "What religion do you practice?", which left students who eventually practiced no religion with no comfortable answer. These details are important to think how filling out forms such as these affect students' subjectivation process as they induced them to perceive themselves as adjusted or unadjusted to expectations of the institution. Cases in which students' situation failed to fit the form led them to view themselves as exceptions.

Questions related to religion lied halfway between those related to schooling and the following ones, which referred to "way of life", i.e., routine and living conditions, such as: time and means of commuting to school; number of meals per day (the first form also asked whether these meals were had at a fixed time); and at what time the student went to bed and got up. These day-to-day issues enabled the institution to predict the greater or lesser ease candidates would adapt to its routine and requirements. It could have a warning effect for applicants, suggesting that it would be appropriate to maintain regular sleeping

and eating habits, evincing the interface between psychology and hygiene knowledge and prescriptions for school life.

The second section of this second part aimed to investigate vocational tendencies and may best characterize this *ficha social* (social registration form) as the product of a psychotechnical and educational guidance service as it specifically focuses on evaluating the psychological tendencies of students by questions related to their abilities and desires. This section also expresses the orientation of the psychology of the time to the social factor as, despite the fields reserved for desires and inclinations, students were not required to examine themselves based on a psychological vocabulary that includes terms such as shyness or extroversion, insecurity or self-confidence, etc. This section directly associated skills and desires with social condition and way of life, suggesting the production of a more “superficial” subjectivity based on the identification of habits, routines, living conditions, and activity preferences instead of “deeper” more introspective subjectivity related to dreams, feelings, and intimate experiences.

To understand the process of subjectivation the forms induced, it is important to consider their aspects and alternatives leading the student to talk more about herself and the available and unavailable options for this in the form. It is worth remembering the following warning by Nikolas Rose (1998, p. 31): “Thoughts, feelings and actions may appear as the very fabric and constitution of the intimate self, but they are socially organized and managed in minute particulars”. The request to fill out an individual form offering a set of alternatives evinces this detail in an administrative procedure and its subjective effects. The following constitute the aspects of herself on which the candidate should report: favorite occupations in her free time, including games, sports, outings, drawings, reading, handicrafts, and housework, leaving no room for other possibilities, such as meeting friends, dating, putting on makeup, meditating, writing, etc. Such elements show that the student and family sections expressed the social and cultural norm of the time for bourgeois girls living in urban areas. The student was also asked to indicate her favorite subject in the books, magazines, and newspapers she read and her favorite subject at school. In the first form model, the respondent should also indicate whether she preferred study or manual work, suggesting a significant opposition of the educational field of the period, the bifurcation of propaedeutic and professional secondary education. The form also contained an item about cinema attendance frequency and preferred film type. The first form model also asked with whom the candidate went to the cinema, thus disregarding the possibility of a young woman going to the cinema by herself, troubling those who perhaps did.

There followed questions about previous work experiences and expectations regarding her profession and life after completing her studies, which were associated with the identification of desires and dislikes. The form asked if candidates had had occupations outside their home and their reason for leaving them, a question respondents had to consider carefully as it could have importantly influenced their evaluation. Next, students had to provide which course they intended to attend at the vocational school and their reason for it. Then, respondents were led to conjecture about their future, indicating their desired profession, the occupation they would refuse, and their reasons for it. Finally,

applicants should answer the following questions: “What ideal position do you want to occupy in the future? Why?”. It is interesting to note that “profession you would like to pursue” and “ideal position” are two different questions, which implies that girls’ ideal position could have nothing to do with their professional aspirations.

Since candidates filled out this registration form for a professional course in a technical school, one can imagine that some of the questions related to their profession and future had been the object of their reflection before their application. Nevertheless, answering the questions in the offered sequence and justifying each answer was probably a new occasion, leading them to think (perhaps for the first time) about the possible connection – entailed by the form – between leisure habits, reading and cinema preferences, previous work, etc., and the choice of professional course and even their future “ideal position”. Thus, the form led to the elaboration and commitment to a life project consistent with a subjectivity produced in terms of the alternatives in the document. Assuming true answers, respondents were led to identify themselves with their document, which recorded the information they had provided no matter how great their strangeness or confusion filling out the form given the questions and alternatives that may have surprised them. From the perspective of Nikolas Rose, who supports this analysis, this process makes explicit a characteristic aspect of the formation of subjectivities in modernity.

Lifestyles must be constructed by choices from a plurality of alternatives, each of which must be legitimized in terms of personal choice. The modern self is impelled to make life meaningful by searching for happiness and self-realization in their individual biography: the ethics of subjectivity are inextricably locked into the procedures of power (Rose, 2011). The end of the form contained fields so the institution employees in charge could record their general impressions on candidates’ attire, cleanliness, attitude, and expression. The next field aimed to record “special observations” and was followed by another with an equivalent field for a “final appreciation”.

Final considerations

The translation of the individual into the domain of knowledge makes it possible to rule subjectivity according to norms that claim the status of science by professionals who anchor their authority in an esoteric but objective knowledge. In schools, factories, prisons, and the army, psychologists would become experts in the rational use of the human factor. Psychology began to claim an ability to individualize and classify, advise on all facets of institutional life, and increase efficiency and satisfaction, productivity, and contentment (Rose, 2011).

The simple act of filling out a form for school bureaucracy, such as the examined forms, illustrates the way in which psychology, its services, and procedures have become an unavoidable reference for the formation of modern subjectivities. We have become accustomed to requests for filling out documents such as this and their variations and emphases in the most diverse situations: at the time of admission to educational institutions or hospitals; in searches for job openings; and applications for visas to enter foreign countries. The form is sometimes replaced or added to an interview with related

questions. Each case leads us to always reveal the truth about ourselves in the terms proposed by the questionnaire, which offers us the support, vocabulary, structure, and limits within which we must produce our own subjectivity; also inducing us to commit ourselves to the formulated truths.

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Received on: 01.12.2023

Revised on: 03.13.2023

Approved on: 04.24.2023

Editor: Prof. Dr. Fernando Luís Cássio

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