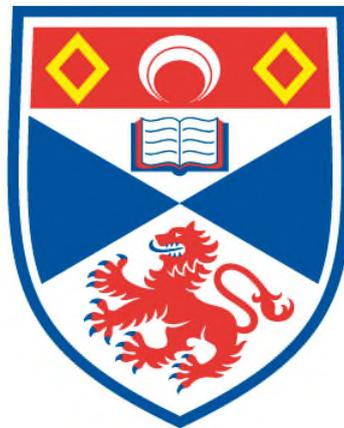


**SELF-ESTEEM, DREAMS & INDIGNATION:
LESSONS FROM AN EMERGING MIDDLE-CLASS PRIVATE
HIGH SCHOOL IN NORTHEAST BRAZIL**

Michele Wisdahl

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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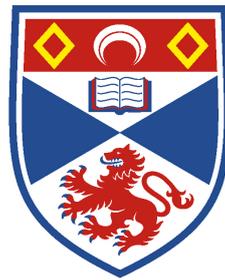
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Self-Esteem, Dreams & Indignation:
Lessons from an Emerging Middle-Class Private High School
in Northeast Brazil

Michele Wisdahl



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

28 September 2015

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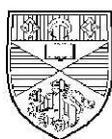
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Thank you for submitting your application which was considered at the Social Anthropology School Ethics Committee meeting on the 8/7/11. The following documents were reviewed:

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- 2 Enhanced Disclosure Scotland and Equivalent 30/11/10

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Yours Sincerely,

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Abstract

This thesis provides an ethnography of the final year at an emerging middle-class private high school in the Northeast of Brazil. I draw on 15 months of fieldwork, including participant observation in the classroom wherein I followed students whilst they prepared for vestibular (the university entrance exam). Students' movements through Fortaleza, one of the world's most unequal cities, produced knowledge about the kind of person that one could and should be in the future. Private schooling appeared to provide a route for students to realise that metaphorical (and perhaps physical) movement. Vestibular served as a sort of rite of passage that could transform (emerging middle-class) youth into (middle-class) adults. Students and teachers characterised vestibular as a *luta* (fight) that could be won with enough training, flexibility and commitment. Good or high self-esteem was needed to overcome laziness and endure this *luta* and, thus, teachers and students worked on producing better self-esteem through affective work. Dreams (aspirations for the future) also played a critical role: the school encouraged students to engage in time work, to imagine appropriate future(s) into which students could channel their energies in the present. This version of individual power differed from the political and economic power structures portrayed in the classroom. Students grew indignant as, through curriculum and pedagogy, they came to understand that they were oppressed and that Brazil was underdeveloped and not quite modern. The university entrance exam served as a national meritocratic ritual that portrayed Brazil as becoming modern with governable and governing citizens. Students resisted these assertions and/but their cynicisms belied hope for better imagined futures. Using the classroom as container, this thesis presents a portrait of people and ideas in formation during a post-Lula era.

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First, I wish to thank Dr Mark Harris, my supervisor, for his kind and thoughtful encouragement throughout this project. Mark met my spirited outbursts of “Maybe I’m just not smart enough” with the right combination of humour and sensitivity. His support was instrumental in my own time work.

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In Brazil, I must thank the Martins, the host family who provided my introduction to Fortaleza in 2005. The Martins generously welcomed me (and my partner) back in 2011.

Friends we made in Fortaleza opened their lives, providing invaluable understandings of their city and setting a new standard for kindness, care and hospitality.

Colégio Ceará did indeed help me to realize my dreams. Director Costa and the staff at Colégio Ceará provided an invaluable educational experience. Beyond the contents of this thesis, I learned Portuguese, history, geography and an intriguing new way to see the world. I have lost count of the number of times I have said, “I learned that in Brazilian high school.”

I am forever indebted to the students at Colégio Ceará. They tolerated my peculiar questions, made me feel welcome in the classroom and ultimately provided inspiration and motivation throughout this endeavour. I fear that I have only managed to capture a fraction of the brilliance that emanated from these young people. I am especially thankful to Giulia, Mayrluce and Vitoria for their friendship.

I must also thank my family. Amy Haynes, my family by choice, talked me through what turned out to be my *annus horribilis*. Richard Wisdahl, my father and the guy who insisted that I do a PhD, commented after reading my thesis, "I would have liked to have seen some answers." I will see what I can do, Pops. Finally, Nicola Wisdahl wins for the love and support she has provided over the past five years. Parabéns! You beat the PhD.

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

ENEM: *Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio*, National High School Exam

Fies: *Fundação de Financiamento Estudantil*, Student Finance Fund

IBGE: *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*, Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics

IME: *Instituto Militar de Engenharia*, Military Institute of Engineering

INEP: *Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais*, National Institute of Educational Studies and Research

ITA: *Instituto Tecnológico de Aeronáutica*, Technological Institute of Aeronautics

LDB: *Lei das Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*, National Educational Law

MEC: *Ministério da Educação*, Ministry of Education

Prouni: *Projeto Universidade Para Todos*, Project University for All

PT: *Partido dos Trabalhadores*, Worker's Party

Seduc: *Secretária da Educação do Ceará*, Secretary of Education for Ceará

Sinepe-CE: *Sindicato dos Estabelecimentos Particulares de Ensino do Ceará*, Union of Private Schooling Establishments of Ceará

SISU: *Sistema de Seleção Unificada*, Unified Selection System

UECE: *Universidade Estadual do Ceará*, State University of Ceará

UFC: *Universidade Federal do Ceará*, Federal University of Ceará

Unifor: *Universidade de Fortaleza*, University of Fortaleza

Glossary of Portuguese Words

acabar em pizza	literally “to end in pizza”, to result in nothing
aluno	pupil, student
apostila	reader or set texts produced by the school
arrastão	a raid or robbery en masse
autoconhecimento	self awareness, self knowledge
autoestima	self-esteem
bagunça	a mess, farce, nonsense
bandido	bandit, petty thief or criminal
batalhador	literally “battler”, a hard worker
bolsa família	social welfare programme that provides support for low income families
cara de ladrão	literally “the face of a thief”, meaning the stereotypical race and class features associated with criminality
carrão	literally “big car”, meaning SUV or 4x4
cearense	person from the Brazilian state of Ceará
colégio	school
concurso	public competitive exam for recruitment
concorrência	competition
conjunto	public housing project
consideração	consideration, regard
corno	cuckold
cursinho	literally “little course”, cram school
dar força	to give strength, empower
dica	a tip or hint
doido	crazy, mad
emocionado	emotional
ensino básico	basic education, primary or elementary level
ensino médio	medium-level education, i.e. secondary school
ensino superior	higher education, university or college
faculdade	private university
feio	ugly, but also a gloss for poor
festa	party
força	strength
formatura	graduation, literally “formation”
fortalezenses	person from Fortaleza, the capital of Ceará, state in which field research takes place
gringo	foreigner
ladrão	thief, criminal
luta	fight, struggle

marginal	criminals, people who literally and figuratively live on the city's margins
namorado/a	boyfriend / girlfriend
nordeste	the Northeast region of Brazil, which includes the state of Ceará
nordestino	a person from the Northeast region of Brazil
novato	new student
paulistano	a person from the city of São Paulo
pirangueiro	regional slang denoting a skinny individual perceived to be threatening, similar to <i>cara de ladrão</i>
praça de alimentação	food court in a shopping mall
preguiça	laziness
projeto de vida	life project
primeira chamada	literally "first call", first round of candidates admitted to a university course
redação	essay-writing, composition exercise
recuperação	literally "recuperation", meaning the extra lessons for those who fail the first time
self-service	a self-service restaurant, usually priced by weight
shopping	a shopping mall, shopping centre
sonho	dream
terceiro ano	"third year"; here, the final year of high school
telenovela	Brazilian soap opera
topic	local term for a minibus
trabalhador	worker, with connotations of being hardworking and honest
treinar	to train, practice
turma	year group, class, cohort
universitário	university student
vestibular	university entrance exam
vestibulando	person taking vestibular
vontade	desire, will

Introduction

During my first visit to Brazil in 2004 I met Cristina, a single mother of two young children who lived with her mother and brother. Though her part-time job as a social worker generated a meagre income, Cristina managed to maintain a modest middle-class lifestyle – *until* her brother embezzled and then gambled away a substantial sum of money. Cristina’s brother was fired from his job and, thus, overnight she became the primary household earner who would bear the brunt of repaying her brother’s debts *and* supporting the family. Understandably, Cristina was distraught. Here is where I make my brief entry into Cristina’s story: visiting a North American friend of Cristina’s, I was drafted into the effort to lift her spirits over dinner at a shopping mall. Speaking almost no Portuguese at the time, I cannot imagine that I fulfilled these duties; rather, I took in Cristina’s sadness as she recounted the story that I could not understand (on more than one level). During a lull in the conversation, my friend explained that most demoralizing about this turn of events was that Cristina could no longer afford to send her daughter to private school. I pushed for further details: surely Cristina’s situation was terrible but why the emphasis on the loss of private schooling? My host explained that, in Cristina’s mind (and perhaps in reality), public¹ primary and secondary education would never prepare her daughter for the rigorous entrance exams of Brazil’s prestigious (free) state and federal universities. Though a (lesser esteemed) private (fee-charging) university might be an option, Cristina quite simply believed that, without private schooling, her 6 year-old had no future.

I did not see Cristina again but, over the next 6 years, I turned this story over and over in my mind. Regardless of whether or not Cristina’s daughter would (or could) have “succeeded” with (or without) private schooling, I became fixated on the social, economic, and political circumstances that would allow a parent to imagine that her child had “no future”. Though Cristina’s story was far less shocking than Michael Taussig’s (2011) witnessing a woman sewing a man into a bag in a Medellin tunnel – the event that ultimately prompted him to write *I Swear I Saw This* – this incident became the thing that

¹ Through my thesis, I use the term “public” to refer to services provided by the state. This mirrors the designation made in Portuguese: *escola pública* is “public school”.

I swore that I had seen. As such, cracks in my naïve understandings of social class and meritocracy began to show. As Taussig writes about his experience, this encounter generated a “new way of understanding one’s understanding... [it offered] medicine for rethinking reality more than idea because it [tore] away at the edifice of thought and assumptions that allowed me to navigate my world until then” (2011: 51).

This thing that I swear that I saw began to make sense when I read Bourdieu alongside ethnographies like O’Dougherty’s (2002) *Consumption Intensified: The Politics of Middle-Class Daily Life in Brazil* and Caldeira’s (2000) *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*. As Caldeira asserts, “Certainly it is not only because public schools have deteriorated that middle- and upper-class children attend only expensive private schools” (2000: 99). Cristina’s story is not only about the perceived failure of the state education system; it is about an education system (and, indeed, a nation) with a shifting configuration of public and private, it is about the mechanisms of social mobility and class reproduction, it is about the imperative for consumption in middle-class identity, and it is about ideals of “good” parenting.

Through further study, I became interested in vestibular, the university entrance exam that Cristina feared her daughter would not pass without private schooling. The word “vestibular” is derived from *vestibulo* (vestibule or entrance hall); therefore, vestibular is that literal and figurative test at the end of basic schooling that provides (or denies) entry into university and, it is widely imagined, a “successful” future. For my doctoral research, I endeavoured to study *terceiro ano*², the third and final year of *ensino médio* (high school) when students prepared for vestibular. I studied (alongside) emerging middle-class students in a private high school in the Northeast region of Brazil.

This thesis is not *just* about vestibular preparation, Brazilian private school education or class (re)production. The classroom also offers a setting to examine people (and ideas) in formation during Dilma Rousseff’s first term as president. In this post-Lula era, social and economic policies instituted by the

² Brazilian education is divided into *ensino infantil* (nursery), *ensino fundamental* (primary school), *ensino médio* (secondary school) and *ensino superior* (university). *Ensino fundamental* is made up of 9 years whilst *ensino médio* has 3 years.

Partido dos Trabalhadores' (PT, Worker's Party) benefitted the emerging middle-class students that fill my ethnography. The world was constituted (and contested) by Brazil's newest citizens within the classroom through discourses, curriculum and pedagogical practice. My thesis examines how students' dreams for the future were shaped and how emotional states (like confidence and indignation) were enacted and given force.

Brazil: Country of the Past, Present and Future

In 1941 Stefan Zweig, a Jewish Viennese-born immigrant granted refuge in Brazil, penned the book whose title would stick with the country for decades to come: *Brazil, Country of the Future* (Romero 2011). Since then, Brazil and Brazilians have been trying to reach that future. President Juscelino Kubitschek's 1955 campaign motto epitomized that ideal: "fifty years in five" (Caldeira & Holston 2005). The country would will itself to leave its past-present (or present-past) and jump ahead fifty years in the span of five. Through successive iterations of development plans during the Military Dictatorship (1964-1985) and the subsequent return to democracy, Brazil never quite reached that promised "future"³, leading many to quip that "Brazil is the country of the future – and always will be".

Pensamento Social Brasileiro

A multidisciplinary field of research sought to suss out the reasons for Brazil's continued failures to reach the future. Was there something inherently wrong with Brazil and/or Brazilians? These theories make up some of the earliest contributions to *pensamento social brasileiro* (Brazilian social thinking), the field of research that examines Brazilian intellectual, cultural, social and political traditions (Schwarcz & Botelho 2011). Sociology, anthropology, political sciences, psychology, history, literary theory and other disciplines contribute to this body of research. Ianni (2002) describes *pensamento social brasileiro* as "explanations of Brazil... a wide polychronic,

³ A 2015 interdisciplinary Brazilian Studies conference at Aarhus University entitled "Brazil: Land of the Future" explored the theme of "futurity in everyday life, art and politics in contemporary Brazil". This conference provided inspiration for connecting many of the ideas in my thesis.

polyphonic map of the Brazilian imaginary⁴ (179). Though the field gained its name over the past 35 years (Schwarcz & Botelho 2011), the intellectual project stretches back much further.

Beginning with Pero Vaz de Caminha's letter written about the newly "discovered" land of Brazil in 1500, Leite (1992) examines historical literature and theories to show how an ideology of Brazilian national character developed. Leite (1992) catalogues phases in which suites of behavioural and psychological characteristics came to be attributed to "the Brazilian". After Brazil gained its independence from Portugal in 1822, the monarchy worked to create a positive image of Brazil, emphasising a romantic view of its first inhabitants: "Like a good tropical savage, the mythologized Indian allowed this young nation to make its peace with an 'honourable past', while proclaiming a promising future" (Schwarcz 2006: 38). However, by the end of the 18th Century, social Darwinists had contradicted this view and miscegenation was said to have produced degeneration such that the Brazilian was characterised by, amongst other qualities, his apathy, lack of initiative and intellect, irritability, imbalance and anxiety (Leite 1992). In particular, the *nordestino* (person from the Northeast) was portrayed as "the principal degeneration in its physical and mental forms" (Albuquerque 2014: 8) who was not suitable for "true civilization" (31). Though scientific racism eventually lost favour, social scientists continued to associate similar characteristics with Brazilian "culture".

Subsequent *pensamento social brasileiro* scholarship sought to explain Brazil as a sort of "puzzle" or "dilemma" wherein "modernity" continually evaded Brazil and Brazilians (DaMatta 1995). Tavolaro (2008) argues that, "The issue of *modernity* has occupied the center stage of Brazilian sociology ever since its beginning. It is fair to say that 'reaching for modernity' is a sort of obsession" (109). He outlines two types of theories put forward by scholars to explain Brazil's situation: the dependency strand and the patriarchal-patrimonial strand. Dependency theories focus on the historical development of Brazil's market and the economy. Throughout these, Brazil is often described as

⁴ Throughout this thesis, I offer English translations from documents written in Portuguese. Any text cited from a document with a Portuguese title has been translated by me.

beholden to the whims of its elite as well as victim of the caprices of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and globalisation (see also Ianni 2002). The patriarchal-patrimonial line posits an “alleged incapacity or unwillingness to establish an impersonal, sharp and effective normative framework” (Tavolaro 2008: 111); in other words, Brazilians cling to their traditional, personalistic and patriarchal methods of interaction and thus the nation cannot become modern. Both of these strands posit a Brazil that is always measuring itself up against (and falling short of) so-called First World nations. Though scholars like Leite (1992) and Pina-Cabral (2007) have critiqued this type of *pensamento social brasileiro*⁵, Souza (2012) points out that these ideas of Brazil’s “modernity” (or lack thereof) have been forwarded “in the universities, the media, the public sphere and, from there, [have become] ‘second nature’ for every Brazilian of any social class or political orientation” (17).

Are We There Yet?: Brazil’s Emerging Middle Class & the Future

Five months before I would begin my fieldwork, President Obama praised Brazil in a speech delivered from Rio’s Teatro Municipal:

Over the last decade, the progress made by the Brazilian people has inspired the world. More than half of this nation is now considered middle class. Millions have been lifted from poverty... For so long, Brazil was a nation brimming with potential but held back by politics, both at home and abroad. For so long, you were called a country of the future, told to wait for a better day that was always around the corner. Meus amigos, that day has finally come. And this is a country of the future no more. The people of Brazil should know that the future has arrived. It is here now (White House 2011).

It seemed that the long hoped-for future might have finally arrived and Brazil’s expanding middle classes were proof of this. Brazil’s weekly newsmagazine *Istoé* declared that, with increased schooling levels, inflation control and increased access to credit, “Classe C goes to paradise” (Nicacio 2010).

⁵ Current *pensamento social brasileiro* attempts to explain how particular notions of “Brazilian-ness” have come to be, without reifying these notions.

Classe C: The Emerging Middle Class

Classe C is the designation for those with a monthly family income of between R\$1734 and R\$4076 or a per capita monthly income of R\$441 to R\$4076⁶ (Gasparin & Amato 2012.) (See Appendix I for minimum wage information, class breakdown by income, and British Pound Sterling to Brazilian Real exchange rate.) Between 2003 and 2009 more than 29 million Brazilians joined Classe C, turning this group 50.5% of the total population (Saraiva et al 2015). Often referred to as the *nova classe média* (new middle class), this group boasted 98 million Brazilians (Yaccoub 2011). News of this revolution came in the form of a report authored by Neri (2008) for Fundação Getúlio Vargas in 2008. Following the release of Neri's report, "[t]he existence of a 'new middle class' affirmed and reproduced itself without questioning, coming to be treated as an absolute truth and fixed category" (Yaccoub 2011: 201).

When I told my (solidly, historically) middle-class host family⁷ that I would be conducting research on the *nova classe média*, my host father laughed and said, "What new middle class? Do you see a new middle class? Where?" My host mother explained that the government and the media said that there was a new middle class but this did not match up to reality. My host family's understanding of middle class seemed to overlap with the imaginary of the middle class described by Salata (2015):

people with high household income, university-level education, involved in medium to high prestige occupations who are likely to have health plans and savings, to frequent the theatre, to travel abroad, to have children studying in private schools, etc. (134).

This profile overlaps with the 1990s ideals of the middle class that O'Dougherty (2002) details. Since those in the emerging middle class did not fit within this description, there was doubt about whether or not they should be labelled "middle-class". It was not just my host family who challenged

⁶ As the chart in Appendix I shows, various Classe C classifications exist. I include this particular Classe C income bracket as it was released during my field research.

⁷ I first came to know Fortaleza through a Portuguese language programme in 2005. My host family from that experience was kind enough to host me and my partner for the first month of field research.

this class distinction: amongst others, Souza (2010) and Pochmann (2012) published works refuting this designation. Pochmann (2012) calls the move of categorising this new middle class by income and consumption practices: “a never-ending alienating orientation, orchestrated in order to highjack the debate about the nature and dynamic of social and economic changes” (8). According to Pochmann, designating these working-class poor as *nova classe média* depoliticizes workers⁸ on low salaries, turning them into individualist consumers.

Though there remains great debate about whether or not the *nova classe média* is “really” middle class (see Anderson 2011), Classe C looms large in the national imaginary (Grijó 2014). In recent years, Brazil’s *telenovelas* (soap operas) have begun to represent Classe C, turning the emerging middle class from “voyeur to protagonist” (Grijó 2014) in programmes like *Fina Estampa* (2011) and *Avenida Brasil* (2012). The media⁹ constructed images of Classe C with articles entitled: “Nestlé and Samsung are the preferred brands of Classe C” (Veja 2012) and “Classe C goes shopping” (Ferreira 2010). Furthermore, Datapopular and A Ponte began offering their “expertise” of Classe C to help clients to better market goods and services (Yaccoub 2011). Whether or not Brazilians believe that Classe C is *truly* middle class, the national imaginary of this group looms large.

In a volume entitled *Os Batalhadores: Nova Classe Média ou Nova Classe Trabalhadora? (The Fighters: New Middle Class or New Working Class?)*, Souza (2010) presents ethnography of those in Classe C. Souza labels this disparate group the *batalhadores*, a word which means “fighters” or “those who do battle” but also references *trabalhadores* (workers) to denote “workers who fight or battle”. Tied to the current incarnation of flexible finance capitalism,

⁸ Related to this assertion of depoliticization is the realignment of politics in Brazil between 2002 and 2006 (Singer 2012; Saraiva et al 2015). According to Singer (2012), *Partido dos Trabalhadores*’ (PT, Worker’s Party) policies broke the left/right orientation of the political system, replacing it with *lulismo*. In the 2002 presidential elections, PT Candidate Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s victory was secured by leftists’ votes. By 2006, however, the *mensalão* corruption scandal and the PT’s neoliberal policies had alienated leftists. Still Lula swept into office – this time, overwhelmingly with votes from Brazil’s poor. *Lulismo* signalled a new era of voting strongly aligned with social class. PT Candidate Dilma Rousseff followed that wave in 2010 and become Brazil’s first female president.

⁹ O’Dougherty (2002) offers an analysis of the ways in which Brazilian media constructed Brazil’s middle class during the 1990s.

batalhadores engage in intense 8 to 14-hour work days (often in small family businesses) as they believe that this hard work will allow for a better future.

[R]esearch showed that this class achieved their place in the sun at the cost of extraordinary force: owed to their ability to resist the exhaustion of various jobs and shifts of work... [and] as important or even more important... is an extraordinary belief in themselves and in their own work (50).

Souza and his collaborators' work draws on *batalhadores* from a variety of geographic locations and occupations. In each of these contexts, *batalhador* parents are portrayed as working hard to ensure that their children might have an easier life.

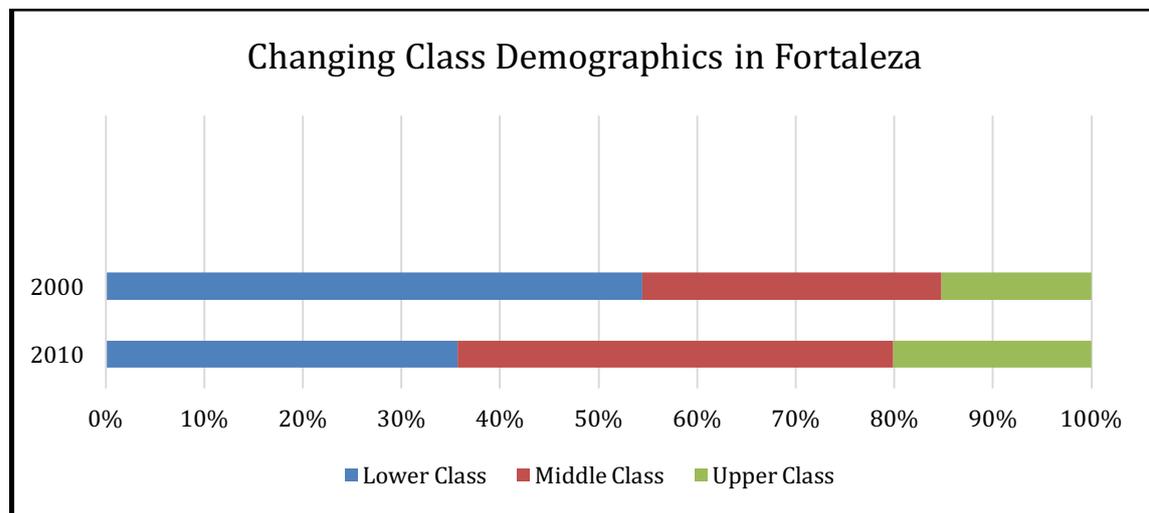


Figure 0-1: Changing Class Demographics in Fortaleza. In 2000, over 50% of the city's population was labelled "lower class" but, by 2010, the largest category had become "middle class". Source: O Povo 2013

My thesis focuses on the children of these *batalhadores* in the Northeast city of Fortaleza. The 2010-2011 UN's State of the World's Cities named Fortaleza the fifth most unequal city in the world (UN-Habitat 2010). Though Fortaleza remains a divided city, Figure 1 shows that the proportions of inequality have shifted in recent years as *batalhadores* have entered the ranks of the middle classes and expanded their purchasing power: the middle class has grown from 30.4% of Fortaleza's population in 2000 to 44.2% in 2010 (O Povo 2013).

Most families of the students at the private school that I call Colégio Ceará¹⁰ did not fit the idealised middle-class imaginary (medium-high prestige occupations, university-level education, ability to travel abroad, etc.); still, in sending their children to a particular kind of private school, these emerging middle-class parents were attempting to give their children better (social and economic) futures.

Class & Education

Education can be viewed as a means to acquiring cultural capital and developing the *correct* habitus (Bourdieu 1979). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argue that success in university education is “a function inculcated by all previous forms of pedagogic work, and, ultimately, by the family” (72). Thus, private schooling may serve as one form of early “pedagogic work” that might offset and/or compliment the familial class-based habitus.

As Woronov states, “Analysts have long acknowledged that schools are primary sites for social sorting and the reproduction of class hierarchies” (2011: 98). Much of the anthropological and sociological literature on class and education centres on these kind of sorting processes of the working classes (Kaufman 2005). Willis (1977) describes the ways in which masculine, anti-authoritarian “lad” culture in the Midlands shapes working-class schoolboys for working-class jobs. Evans (2006) demonstrates the incongruence between working-class home life and the formalized (middle-class) learning of school life in London. Woronov (2011) argues that vocational schooling in China creates new (lower) social classes as students enrolled in vocational school are “defined by their failure to get a more valued form of education” (99).

But what about the middle-class referent from which the working class deviates/resists? Kaufman suggests that a lack of literature exists as middle-class reproduction “is often assumed to be a structurally determined process lacking human agency” (2005: 245). His study of American university students demonstrates that agency and structure work together to (re)produce the middle class.

¹⁰ I have assigned pseudonyms to the school, teachers and students. In addition, I have changed some details in order to keep participants anonymous.

Brazilian Education

A key element in the project of private education in Brazil is class reproduction and social mobility. Students with parents in the top twenty percent of incomes made up 66.4% of all private school attendees in the Northeast (Neves et al 2007). The top income quintile also accounts for 74.2% of all public university students and 82.2% of all private university students in the Northeast – both the highest in Brazil. Private secondary education, access to university, and class are strongly linked in Brazil. But what about those students who attend private schools in the Northeast but whose parents are *not* in the top twenty percent of earners? My research concerns these students. Below I provide an overview of some of the related literature on Brazilian schooling.

Brazilian (Public and Private) Schools in the Literature

Brazilian sociologists and education specialists began investigating private education and education of elites fifteen years ago (Cattani & Kieling 2007). This work inspired a variety of ethnographic-type research projects set mainly in the South and Southeast regions of Brazil. Nearly all of the research has focused on primary schools and has been comparative (public versus private) in nature.

Comparative literature focuses on classroom practices, school reputation and teachers' attitudes towards their pupils. Almeida et al (2010) studied the reputations of private and public schools and found that private schools were differentiated by their unique pedagogies whereas public schools were seen as pedagogically uniform and distinguished "in terms of the reputation of the students (school for 'bad students' or 'where there are kids that use drugs') or in terms of the quality of the school" (Almeida et al 2010: 19). DaSilva (1988) examined the pedagogies of three Porto Alegre primary schools and found that students at public schools spent their days filling in workbooks whilst, at the private school, teachers and students engaged differently: in addition to written assignments; fieldtrips, classroom discussions, and group work facilitated learning. Public school teachers did not articulate a consistent pedagogy while private school teachers easily pointed to guiding principles specific to their institution (DaSilva 1988; Rocha & Perosa 2008). Furthermore,

teachers at low-income public schools tended to believe that their pupils had little hope of succeeding in school and assigned negative characteristics on the basis of their economic status. Thus, teachers at a low-income school articulated a link between the “real lack of material resources [in the community/school and] a lack of moral values, ‘good habits’, affection, motivation, and linguistic skills... The children and their families present these ‘bad’ traits because they are ‘needy’ and they are ‘needy’ because they have these ‘bad’ characteristics” (DaSilva 1988: 65).

The comparative nature of the literature on private education means that private schools have rarely been examined in their own context. These comparisons – wherein private education is replete with virtue whilst public education fails – collapse the multiplicity of private schools into a monolithic private school that offers a well-defined pedagogy, small class sizes and caring teachers. Realistically, the “quality” and content of private schools vary (as do those of public schools). This type of assessment reinforces the “common knowledge” that private education is better than public. Moreover, secondary schools seem to be missing from these studies. Given that income is strongly correlated with university access, secondary schools are perhaps *the* vital link between private schooling and university access. My year-long ethnographic study of a *nordestino* emerging middle-class high school attempts to fill some of these gaps.

Aspirations of Youth

Young people’s aspirations have been explored in a variety of Brazilian contexts (Presta & Almeida 2008; Nogueira 2004; Mattos 2012; Dalsgaard et al 2008). Presta and Almeida (2008) attempted to grasp the different “symbolic boundaries” constructed by poor- and middle-class children: “[w]e are interested in discussing the genesis of these symbolic borders that form, for the individuals themselves, the territory of the possible and impossible, of the desired and the undesired” (403). A notable difference between lower and middle-class adolescents was the way in which they described university: lower-class children used words like “possible,” “desirable,” and “obligatory” whereas middle-class children referred to university as “natural” and “automatic”. Lower-class children discussed university in the abstract, as “a

necessity in the struggle against unemployment and exhausting manual labour” (407); middle-class children, on the other hand, had detailed plans about the steps (high school, entrance exam, university) they would take to achieve their career goals.

An earlier study investigating academic achievement amongst a group of wealthy business families in Minas Gerais provides an interesting contrast (Nogueira 2004). How did high-income private school students view education? Wealthy students and families “do not have the feeling that studies imply upward social mobility” (Nogueira 2004: 143) and accordingly university studies are *not* viewed as the most important priority. Students and families saw business-related jobs and internships (often gained through familial connections) as more important than education in preparing children for the future. Thus, students’ aspirations are formed as a process of school and familial socialization (Presta & Almeida 2008; Mattos 2012). In the case of the wealthy business families, aspirations were formed through a lifelong process of cultivating a “taste” for business (Nogueira 2004).

My ethnography looks at those private school students who fell somewhere in between Presta and Almeida’s (2008) distinctions of poor and middle class. Many Colégio Ceará students’ life conditions had improved in recent years. (Students described gaining access to consumer goods and services, including private education at Colégio Ceará.) Though many of their parents had not attended university, entrance to university – particularly public university – became part of the “script” (Dalsgaard et al 2008) for these young people’s lives. This thesis explores the ways in which aspiratons were cultivated in the classroom. I emphasize the perceived power of self-esteem, confidence and belief in these endeavours.

Research Methods

I carried out field research between August 2011 and November 2012¹¹. I spent the first three months orienting myself in Fortaleza and its schooling

¹¹ In May 2014, I returned to Fortaleza for two weeks. During that visit, I spoke to seven former Colégio Ceará students (and their assorted friends and family) about my thesis findings.

communities. I first made contact with Colégio Ceará in mid-October 2011 when I conducted an informational interview with the school's pedagogical director. I carried out participant-observation in Colégio Ceará classrooms from November 2011 to November 2012.

As this is an ethnography of third year and vestibular preparation, I conducted research primarily from (what I saw as) a student perspective. While Colégio Ceará staff suggested that I was welcome in the teachers' break room, I rarely entered this (decidedly male) space. Although teachers' classroom lectures and discourses make up a large component of the research material, I consciously aligned myself with students as much as possible in the classroom and thus my research methods reflect this decision. To that end, I spent classes, breaks, and lunches with students; I sat at a student desk, taking notes in/on classes with students daily; and, after five months, I began to hang out with students before or after school.

On Being 17 at 34

On my first day observing high school classes in November 2011, I fretted as the girl next to me attempted to engage me in conversation whilst we should have been listening to a Biology lecture. I wondered: would we get in trouble? Unfazed, the girl asked about my nose piercing before getting my name so that she could add me on Facebook. That day I came home with a pounding headache owed to the incredible decibel level of the classroom: chairs scraped across the floor, students carried on multiple conversations whilst the teacher lectured, teachers shouted over students' voices and pounded on the white board to get their attention. Somehow, I had not thought through this key facet of my research wherein I, as a 34-year old woman, would be attending high school; that is, I had not considered the realities of attending classes every day and attempting to relate to students. I had not understood the implications that this would have on my behaviour, dress, interests, etc. I muddled my way through the remaining weeks of the 2011 school year, attending first- and second-year high school classes so that I would be familiar with the school for the start of the 2012 school year. I participated in end-of-term parties and interacted with students on Facebook. On reflection, I was largely clueless on *how* to be a high school student.

From the start of the 2012 school year, I followed two third-year *turmas* (cohorts) of students. I attended morning classes with the honours *turma* and afternoon classes with a regular *turma*. After a few weeks accompanying these groups, most students had grown used to my presence and I sat quietly, noting how students interacted with one another. Colégio Ceará had placed few parameters on my research – beyond not wearing flipflops or miniskirts to class – and thus I had to navigate what would be “appropriate” behaviour. Should I simply observe or should I join in class discussions? What could I talk about with students and teachers? Ultimately, I followed students’ leads. I learned to dress to match the students (outside of their uniforms) more than the teachers. I slouched in the uncomfortable metal desks and bought snacks from the school canteen during the break. I engaged in the call and response pedagogical method along with the rest of the class. I completed readings and problem sets and spent breaks in the school library reading newspapers and magazines that Colégio Ceará staff had indicated would help in preparing for vestibular.

During class, I took notes on materials presented, questions that students asked, as well as students’ engagement and their positioning in the classroom. Thus, in addition to notes from Organic Chemistry class, I recorded who sat next to whom, what classes drove students to sleep and/or doodle, which books students were reading, who was absent, etc. Participant-observation of a third-year high school class often meant doing exactly what students were doing: asking and responding to questions, trying to stifle my boredom, and/or chatting to students when I should have been paying attention. I tried to not cause distractions – still, I was once called out for talking to my friends during Portuguese class.

Teachers tended to focus on my presence in class more than students. Perhaps they thought I was sent in by the Colégio Ceará to report on their performances? In fact, Director Costa *did* ask about classes but I kept my comments vague and provided feedback on issues related to logistics rather than specific teachers’ lessons. During classes, Portuguese teacher Clairton thought it wildly funny to ask me Portuguese grammar questions and Geography teacher Victor attempted to draw me into debates about United States politics. Given that I often agreed with Victor’s politics, I would

jokingly remind him, “*Eu fugi dos Estados Unidos! Moro na Escócia.*” (“I ran away from the United States! I live in Scotland.”)

Most of my interactions with students were informal¹². After five months at Colégio Ceará, I had a number of student and staff acquaintances. I grew closer to several students and began hanging out with them during breaks, eating lunch with them after school, etc. Many insights in this thesis were drawn from after-school interactions in the food court at the nearby shopping mall. A smaller group of friends came to know my partner, Nicola¹³, as I invited my Colégio Ceará friends round to our apartment to play games, watch movies, and hang out together.

Outside of the classroom and other interactions with my Colégio Ceará friends, I engaged in a variety of other research-related activities. I attended Colégio Ceará’s student recruitment day and spoke with prospective parents. I interviewed Colégio Ceará staff ranging from the hall monitor to the librarian and teachers to the director. I interviewed a Ministry of Education representative and observed classes at three public schools, speaking with staff about their perceptions of students, vestibular, etc. Finally, I prepared for and took ENEM (*Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio*, the National High School Exam used as a university admissions tool).

Other Research Considerations

Over time, the group of friends that I had acquired in the classroom limited my ability to make other friends. I attempted to balance alliances when my close friends in the honours *turma* cautioned me that the popular girls in the class were “fakes”. Likewise, students in the afternoon *turma* told me about how snobby the honours *turma* was. Age and my outsider status allowed me

¹² In terms of more formal interactions, I conducted two sets of interviews throughout the year: semi-structured group interviews with 30 students who volunteered from my *turmas* in early March and individual semi-structured interviews with 7 students in mid-November.

¹³ Having my partner in the field meant that not only did I have someone with whom I could discuss and make sense of my experiences but I also had more information/experiences to draw upon. While I conducted research in an emerging middle-class high school, Nicola taught English with a NGO in a poor community and at an expensive private language school. With our combined experiences, Nicola and I saw a range of social and economic positions in Fortaleza.

to cross the lines of classroom cliques – something most students could or did *not* do – though I did always return to my group of friends.

I suspect that my age restricted conversation topics. After several months of me insisting, Rebeca switched from addressing me as “*a senhora*” (polite, informal and detached you) to the informal “*tu*” (you). While my friends readily discussed their romantic relationships, we – I cannot say if it was me or them or some combination of both – avoided talking about sex. Still, we talked about other potentially taboo subjects like drugs, alcohol, sexuality, abortion, coming out, etc.

Gender proved another limiting factor. In the honours *turma*, girls complained that the boys were immature and the boys asserted that the girls were snobby, resulting in distinct gender-segregation with most of the girls sitting in the front or at the sides of the classroom whilst the boys clustered in the middle and back. My positioning in the back right side of the classroom allowed me to chat to the boys; however, given my female status, the girls accepted and interacted with me more readily. The afternoon *turma* was not nearly as openly gender segregated but I still found girls more willing to connect and share opinions and stories. Given that the majority of my close friends were female, their voices are strongest within my ethnography.

Because most of my participant observation took place in and around Colégio Ceará, I did not observe many family interactions. Thus, while I met the parents and siblings of some Colégio Ceará students, my contact with them was limited. For example, although I was excited to meet Ana’s family at her 17th birthday party, I found myself whisked upstairs to hang out in Ana’s bedroom with the rest of her friends, away from younger siblings and older family. As such, this ethnography cannot provide a picture of how the family relates to vestibular but draws on reports from third-year students about their relationships with their families.

Thesis Outline

In Chapter 1, I introduce the reader to the city of Fortaleza. A brief history of Fortaleza outlines the processes by which it came to be one of the most unequal cities in the world. I argue that students’ movements through the city

produced knowledge about economics and society. Through a discussion of three Fortaleza neighbourhoods, I show how one's neighbourhood determined distance (physical and metaphorical) from work, leisure and consumption opportunities. Transportation difficulties and the threat of violence constrained students' movements but did not stop Colégio Ceará students from pursuing scripts for new lives across distances in Fortaleza. Students' movements through the city produced knowledge about the kind of person that one could and should be in the future.

Chapter 2 reveals that education – particularly private education – offered a plan for realising metaphorical (and perhaps physical) movement. I chronicle a history of schooling in Brazil and Fortaleza that persuaded the middle and upper classes to abandon public primary and secondary education. I demonstrate that Fortaleza private schools have become commodities that confer class status and create distinctions. Private schooling at Colégio Ceará offered *batalhador* students and their families an imagined short- and long-term trajectory of upward class mobility. Private schooling – especially private secondary schooling – permitted families to align themselves with those who “have” in Fortaleza whilst differentiating themselves from those who do not.

Chapter 3 outlines *terceiro ano* at Colégio Ceará as preparation for vestibular, a kind of rite of passage. A history of vestibular demonstrates that Brazil's university entrance exams have consistently chosen the children of the upper classes. Given these circumstances, teachers and students characterised vestibular as a year-long *luta* (fight or struggle) for which students must “train”. I illustrate the opponents (self, system and others) that students imagined battling in order to transform themselves from (emerging middle-class) youth into (middle-class) adults. Three students' individual approaches to vestibular preparation show that, in order to withstand hundreds of hours of classes and practice tests, “successful” Colégio Ceará students must give themselves over to third year with flexibility, commitment, and determination.

In Chapter 4, I examine the co-curricula imperative of third year: self-esteem. I trace self-esteem through its associational networks to show how Brazilians

came to understand themselves as having “bad” or low self-esteem. I demonstrate the ways in which Colégio Ceará teachers and students promoted raising self-esteem in order to sustain students during the *luta*. This logic posits that, with self-esteem, a student would be capable of enduring the difficulties of third year and beyond, as self-esteem was linked to confidence, motivation and the ability to persist when facing a great challenge. Self-esteem was also understood to be relational; teachers and students boosted self-esteem through affective work: by giving and receiving *força* (strength, force) and by publicly performing self-esteem. I argue that, underlying these practices was the knowledge that belief in one’s self could transform an individual.

In Chapter 5, I investigate the relationship between self-esteem and *sonhos* (dreams): high self-esteem appeared to enable a student to construct and believe in her dreams for the future, turning that *sonho* into a *projeto de vida* (life project) towards which she could work. I draw on the concept of time work (Flaherty 2014) to show how Colégio Ceará encouraged students to imagine better futures in order to navigate difficult presents. Most students constructed dreams of prestigious careers, financial stability and consumption practices that would affirm their “modern” middle-class status.

In Chapter 6, I explore what I call a pedagogy of the indignant that exposed (past and present) barriers to better futures. I argue that a curriculum that mixed Freirean pedagogy, *pensamento social brasileiro* and populism encouraged outrage in Colégio Ceará students, as they came to understand themselves as oppressed and Brazil as socially, economically and politically underdeveloped. Students alternately characterised *o povo* (the people) as victim and perpetrator of these failings. I maintain that ENEM attempts to elicit test-takers to take personal responsibility for and participate in solving Brazil’s social problems but, through their “training” for the test, Colégio Ceará students defied this move.

In Chapter 7, I explore the national meritocratic ritual of ENEM 2012. I use ethnography of the week before ENEM to show how the issues discussed in subsequent chapters link up. In addition, I demonstrate how Colégio Ceará invoked a positive outlook on Brazil’s future to rally students during the final

days before the test. I argue that Colégio Ceará attempted to shift the national focus of ENEM back to the school or (ideally) the individual student. In the meantime, Colégio Ceará students challenged the conditions of ENEM that supposedly established it as a meritocratic tool. I provide an analysis of the content of ENEM 2012 to show how the test imagined a particular kind of modern Brazil with good (governable and governing) citizens. After ENEM, many Colégio Ceará students returned to the classroom ready to modify the dreams they had worked to create. Finally, I conclude with discussions of the contradictory (and yet complementary) versions of power imagined by Colégio Ceará students, their class (re)production, and the ideas that students believed could transform them and their country.

Chapter 1 Fortaleza as Space, Place & Knowledge

During a lesson on orientation and mapping, Geography teacher Professor Victor¹⁴ asked quiet Ignaldo, “Son, do you know where you live?”

“Yes. Barra do Ceará,” Ignaldo looked down, perhaps embarrassed to admit that he lived in one of Fortaleza’s low-income neighbourhoods infamous for its violence.

“Can you direct me there?”

“Erm... ,” Ignaldo looked puzzled, before responding, “Take the *topic* (minibus) until –”

“No! Can you tell me the *directions*? Is it south? Is it north?” Students burst out laughing at the impossibility of Professor Victor’s question but he continued, “No, you can’t! In Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, everyone can tell you what area of the city they live in but, here, no one knows directions. In Rio, everyone knows that the poor live in the *zona norte* and the rich in the *zona sul*.”

Professor Victor sketched the Atlantic coastline that makes up Fortaleza’s north and east boundaries and drew in its neighbouring cities, joking about their backwardness. (See Figure 1.1 for a reproduction of this map.) Professor Victor labelled the neighbourhood Centro, showing that, in fact, it was neither the true geographic centre of the city nor the current commercial centre; rather, like other big cities, Fortaleza was now polycentric with multiple centres in Aldeota, Bezerra de Menezes, and Messejana. Those with money had deserted the historical centre in favour of wider streets, new shopping malls and condominiums.

Juliana, whose parents sold clothes in a Centro market, interrupted, “But I go to Centro all the time! It’s the cheapest place to buy things.”

¹⁴ *Professor(a)* (teacher) is how most students referred to their teachers. Students sometimes called teachers by the first names but never by their surnames. In my thesis, I use the Anglicized “Professor” along with the teacher’s pseudonym.

Professor Victor shot back, “Listen up, my child. Are you rich? No! I am not talking about you.”

Several of Juliana’s classmates hissed a drawn-out “*vixe*” (the colloquial shortening of “Virgin Mary”), to register witness of Juliana’s dressing down.

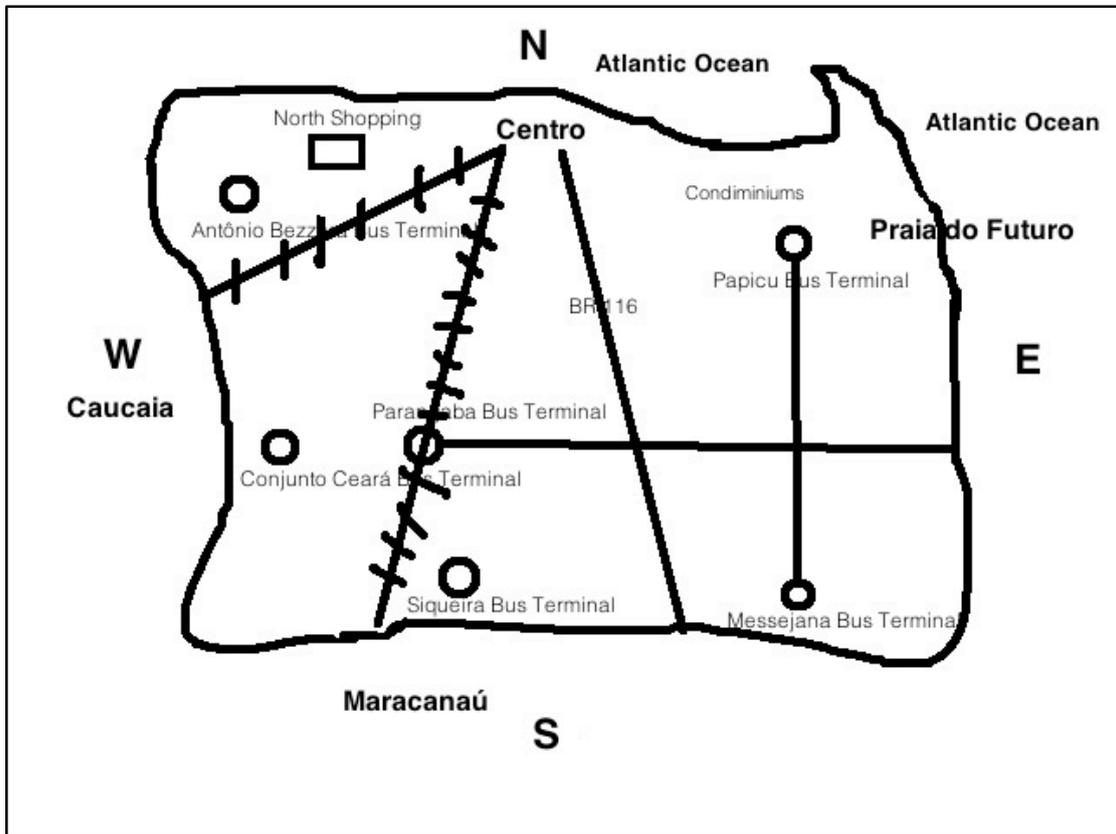


Figure 1-1: Recreation of map drawn by Professor Victor in Geography class to teach students about maps, direction and orientation.

Not fazed, Professor Victor continued, drawing in key roads that divided the city into quadrants. The BR-116 divided west from east in Fortaleza before it ran nearly 3,000 miles south to Brazil’s border with Uruguay. The road connecting Parangaba bus terminal with Castelão Football Stadium served as a north-south divide. Professor Victor drew in the railroads and bus terminals. Here, he emphasised that bus terminals served to shuttle the poor across the city, just as the railroad brought the poor into Centro from the surrounding cities he had earlier characterised as backwards. The southwest sector, home to many of Fortaleza’s poor communities, contained four of the city’s seven bus terminals whilst there was only one in the city’s northeast quadrant. According to Professor Victor, Papicu (that northeast bus terminal)

served maids and other workers who travelled across the city to work for Fortaleza's elite.

Next, Professor Victor turned to other visible differences within the city. Vertical condominiums dominated the skyline in the northeast neighbourhoods whilst horizontal houses stretched across the rest of the city. With the exception of North Shopping, most of the shopping malls were congregated in the east zone. Finished with his map, Professor Victor asked which geographic region of the city students would like to live in. Though most students resided in the west, Professor Victor answered:

East! You want to live in the east. The majority of the population is concentrated in the west. Porta das Dunas, Alphaville [Fortaleza's most exclusive gated community], that's in the east. Do they have a train? No. One hundred per cent of the rich live in the east zone. This is the reality. *They segregate!*

Here, "they" clearly meant the rich. And, thus, as many of Professor Victor's lectures did, this lesson on maps and orientations doubled as a lesson on inequality and oppression. Professor Victor sought to expose Fortaleza's rich-poor segregation and generate outrage at this insidious process. (For more about this pedagogical method, see Chapter 6.) He reinforced that public transportation was for the poor and argued that elites had re-shaped the city, limiting public transportation into these richer areas, in order to contain the poor. Whether or not students considered themselves to be poor, they were lumped into this non-elite because of where they lived in the city and/or how they moved through the city. Professor Victor's categorisation subverted the distinctions that students often made about their humble but hardworking backgrounds: Juliana was not a good consumer who knew how to economise; she was simply poor for shopping in Centro. Yet, Professor Victor also offered a view into future possibilities: moving to the rich and luxurious east of the city.

Anthropologists recognise that "place and space are bound up with the power relations between different social groups within the city" (Hansen 2008: 13). In this chapter, I move into and through the city of Fortaleza to examine the power relations that Professor Victor described to his class. As a

gringa, I came to know the unwritten socio-spatial rules through my own (sometimes accidental, sometimes purposeful) transgressions; through accompanying my friends, “ordinary practitioners of the city” (Certeau 1984: 94), on their journeys; and through our conversations about Fortaleza. Here, I make legible some of these imagined and real trajectories through the city to demonstrate how knowledge of self, other, economics and society was produced through movements. Additionally, I show how these physical trajectories through the city are mapped onto class movement.

A Brief History of Fortaleza

With roots in an early 1600s territorial dispute between the Portuguese and the Dutch, Fortaleza was not more than a discontinuously inhabited village until it became the capital of the Ceará captaincy (colonial territorial boundary) in 1799. A port city, it grew throughout the nineteenth century, thanks to its cotton crops, sundried meat and proximity to Europe (Chaves & Veloso 2009). From the 1860s, Fortaleza elites sought to demonstrate a different kind of closeness to Europe by pushing for “the remodeling process that [would] signif[y Fortaleza’s] insertion into the Belle Epoque” (Ponte 2009: 70); this modernization project intended to re-make Fortaleza in the style of Paris, the great European city (Ortiz 2001). Wide avenues were constructed around the city’s original grid plan; Parisian-style cafés lined Praça da Ferreira, the city’s main square; and the new *passeio público* (promenade) became a popular pastime for elites (Silva 2009). Further ‘civilising’ projects included an asylum and a poor house.

By the 1920s, the focus shifted from civilising to organising an increasingly bustling city. Praça da Ferreira’s cafés were demolished to make room for cars. The first bus line started to run in 1928. The 1930s brought a wave of squatters, migrants fleeing the drought in the interior of the state. The first *favelas* (shantytowns), built precariously on dunes and along riverbanks, started to crop up. Thus initiated the elites’ exodus from their mansions west of Centro: moving away from the refugees and towards the new port at Mucuripe on the eastern side of Centro, the upper class built new mansions at Aldeota and Praia de Iracema (Pinheiro & Santos 2008; Souza & Freitas 2008). By 1940, the rapidly expanding population (180,000) was making it difficult

for the city to keep up with demands on its resources as it grew ever more fragmented. Between 1950 and 1960 Fortaleza's population nearly doubled due to rural-urban migration, reaching 500,000.

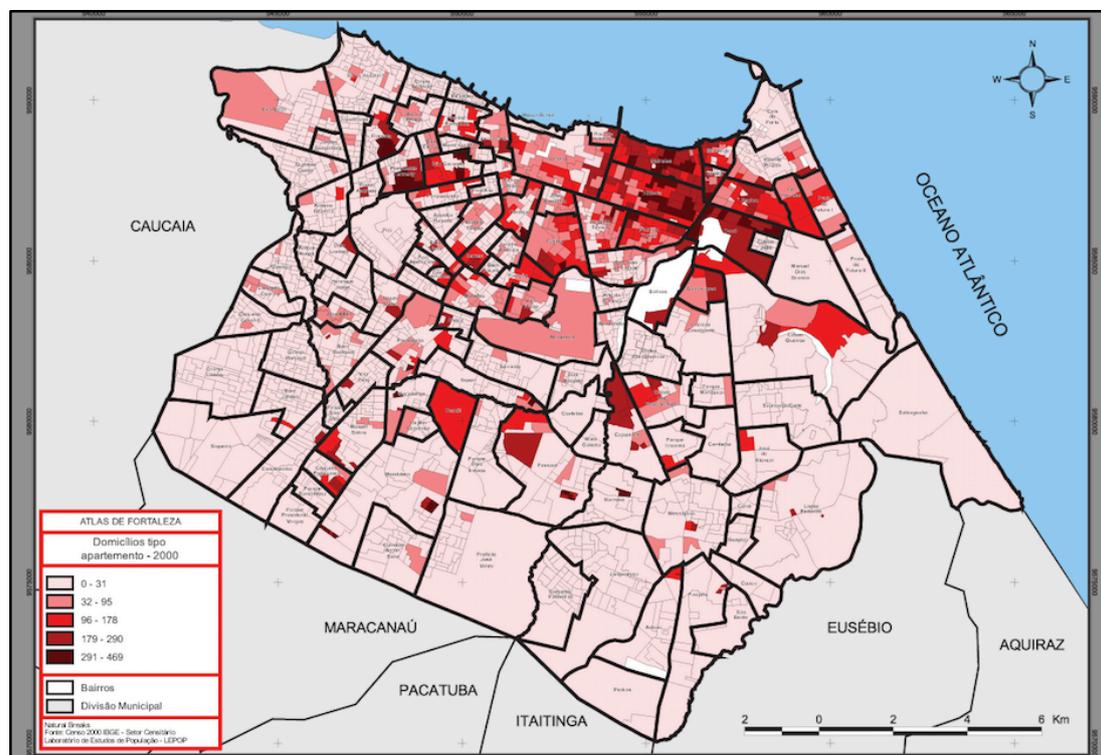


Figure 1-2: Concentration of Apartments in Fortaleza, 2000. The highest concentration of apartments (condominium complexes) lies in the wealthiest neighbourhoods like Meireles, Aldeota, and Cocó. Source: UECE Laboratório de Estudos de População 2010.

To tackle the booming population and associated problems, officials created Fortaleza's first comprehensive city plan in 1960 (Accioly 2008). As businesses moved from Centro to Aldeota, the homes of the elites also crept further east. In the 1970s, high-rise office apartments and condominiums began to dot the city's northeastern horizon. State and city policies focused on developing the area for business and tourism. At the same time, the municipal government began re-settling the poor on the south and southwestern periphery in communities that offered housing to the poor at affordable costs but failed to deliver services (Gonçalves, L. 2011). Increasingly, infrastructure and services were devoted to expanding east: the construction of Avenida Washington Soares opened up new neighbourhoods of luxurious condominium complexes and shopping centres (Castello Branco & Abascal 2013). Figure 1.2 shows how, by 2000, Aldeota, Meireles and Cocó had "verticalized" with a

high concentration of closed condominiums, “fortified enclaves” that provided security and status for the upper middle class and elites (Caldeira 2000).

By 2011, most of the Centro-area mansions had disappeared; a few had been reincarnated as businesses and university buildings whilst others stood boarded up and decaying, serving as daily reminder of how the city had shifted. Further evidence of that on-going shift appeared in countless construction projects. City planners continued to balance competing demands, expanding public housing projects whilst establishing public-private partnerships to build tunnels and overpasses to accommodate growing traffic jams around high commerce areas in the eastern zone. Preparations for the World Cup included expanding Castelão Football Stadium and developing infrastructure for transportation (metro line, roads, etc.). Developers rushed to complete hotels, condominiums, shopping malls and other businesses to take advantage of the current economic boom as well as the riches that the Confederate and World Cups promised to bring. Within this setting, the increased purchasing power of the emerging middle class offered access to an expanding city.

Summing up the social, economic and spatial segregation reinforced by city planning between 1963 and 2000, Accioly (2008) describes Fortaleza as two distinct cities:

the competitive, modern city, included in the national and world economy, spatialized in closed condominiums, flats, luxury hotels, shopping malls, and office towers; and the informal city, linked to the local economy and survival, with traditional architectural typologies distributed in the urban interstices, the periphery and areas at environmental risk (16).

Yet, as ethnographies of Brazilian cities (Caldeira 2000; Goldstein 2013) note, these distinctions are not so clear as residents from what Accioly calls the “informal city” work in the businesses and homes of the “modern city.” Moreover, emerging middle-class families living in the city’s periphery run businesses with supply chains that stretch from China to the interior of every state in the Northeast.

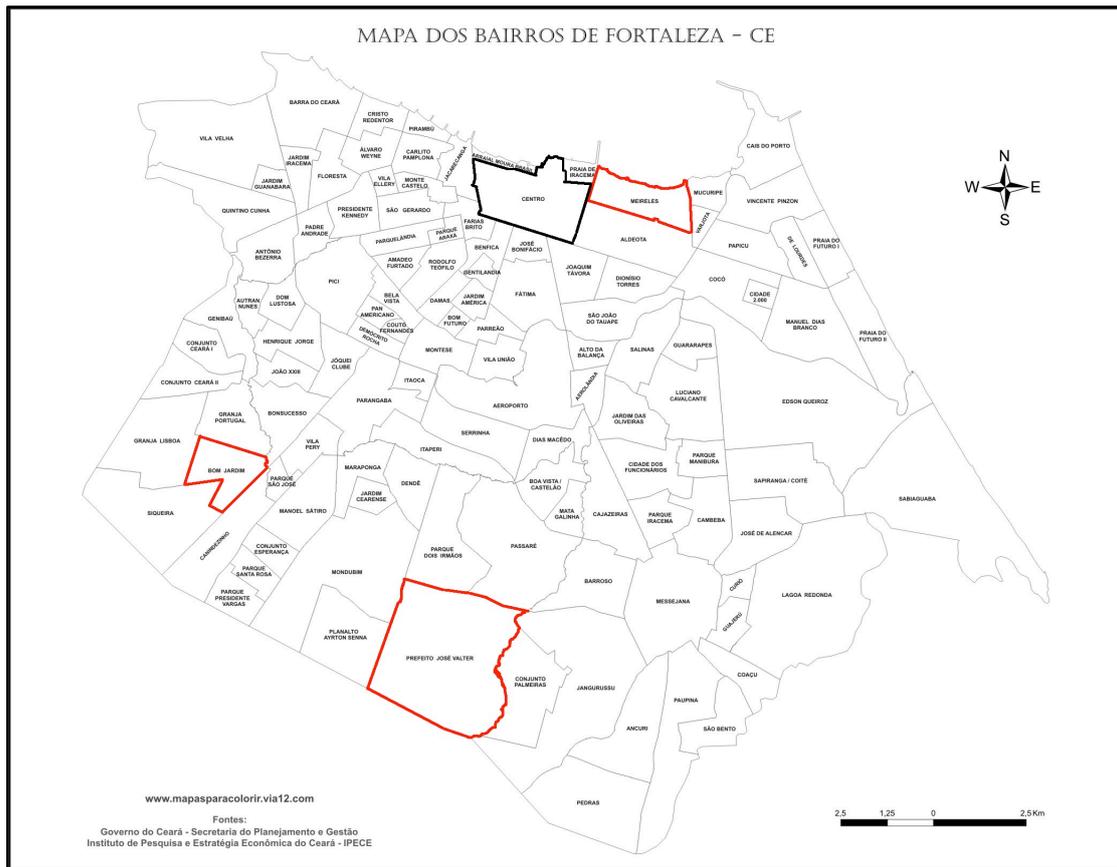


Figure 1-3: Map of Fortaleza neighbourhoods with the location of Centro (black), Meireles (red, top), José Walter (red, bottom centre) and Bom Jardim (red, bottom right)

The City (Sub)Divided: *Bairros*

Below, I offer portraits of three Fortaleza *bairros* (neighbourhoods) to demonstrate the different ways of living in (and moving through) Accioly’s “cities”. (See Figure 1.3 for the location of these neighbourhoods.) *Bairro* was a category universally recognised amongst Colégio Ceará students: they talked about their previous *colégios de bairro* (neighbourhood schools), the difference between their neighbourhoods and the distances they travelled to school. Colégio Ceará drew students from each of the neighbourhoods I mention below; however, they were more likely to hail from an emerging middle-class neighbourhood like José Walter than rich Meireles or economically deprived Bom Jardim. For each example, I include the

approximate distance from Colégio Ceará and the neighbourhood's per capita income¹⁵, as well as the ranking of that income within the city.

Meireles

- approximately 3.5 miles from Colégio Ceará

- income per capita is R\$3659.54 per person¹⁶ (1st out of 119 neighbourhoods)

Bathing in the sea and visiting the beach became a pastime for the upper class from the 1940s (Souza & Freitas 2008). The strip of beach at Meireles became so popular that a two-mile road following the coastline, the Avenida Beira Mar, was opened in 1963. Thus, the upper middle class and elites began settling in Meireles. The neighbourhood served as home and leisure for those who worked in Aldeota, the richest of Fortaleza's economic poly-centres.

High-rise condominiums and hotels – the newest of which, boasted helipads – lined the Avenida Beira Mar. Pricey chain restaurants like Pizza Hut and McDonald's were interspersed with local restaurants on the city-side whilst the beachside was home to *barracas*, small beach bars where tourists lounged in the sun during the day. Heavy police presence meant people felt safe circulating on the Beira Mar's well-maintained pavement. Running had become fashionable in recent years: middle-aged, middle-class women drove across the city to meet their friends to run in pay-to-train groups. At the far east of the Beira Mar, *jangadas* (wooden sailing boats used by poor fishermen) lined the beach near the fish market. Though limited bus routes made it challenging to access the area, the Avenida Beira Mar was one of the few remaining public spaces in which people of different classes in Fortaleza overlapped – though the activities they participated in reinforced that segregation.

Nicola and I settled on a two-bedroom flat in a 22-story condominium in the southwest corner of Meireles. Located one block from Centro and four blocks from the beach, the flat belonged to a German who had acquired the property after a fellow countryman romanced the wrong girl and got himself killed in

¹⁵ Per capita income is a somewhat misleading indicator as factors like number of people per household, age distribution, etc. are not indicated. For example, Bom Jardim is a young community with 25% of residents below 17 so income per capita is bound to reflect this.

¹⁶ For income and neighbourhood ranking data, see Diário do Nordeste (2012).

nearby Praia de Iracema. Since then, our flat appeared to have had a questionable history as short-term accommodation for European (sex) tourists. Our condominium offered round-the-clock security, underground parking, a barbequing area, a small exercise room with broken equipment and a metal climbing frame stationed in the blazing sun. As Caldeira (2000) reports in her ethnography, condominium amenities went mostly unused; their purpose appeared to be to add status. Curt notices in the lift reminded residents of the ban on hanging washing on balconies. Ostensibly, visible washing lines devalued a property – they were for those in the auto-constructed houses in the shadow of our building.

As anthropologists (O’Dougherty 2002; Dalsgaard et al 2008) have noted, gaining access to middle and upper class communities in Brazil is difficult. There were few opportunities to interact with Meireles residents. (Mariela, a Colégio Ceará student, lived in a nearby condominium. We met at the bus stop most mornings; however, she was not keen to hang out with a 34 year-old attending high school.) Most condominium residents were car owners who bypassed the common entryway and zipped back and forth from car to flat using the lift. Thus, beyond the two mothers who waited inside the gate for their children’s private transportation to their private schools, there was little room for interaction.

Beyond the walls of our condominium lay evidence that our neighbourhood was in flux. Towards the sea, most of the houses had been cleared to make way for high-rise hotels and condominiums. Caldeira (2000) asserts that urban segregation goes beyond the centre-periphery model: within neighbourhoods, people living side-by-side use technologies of security to wall themselves off from their “dangerous” neighbours. This was the case on our street: the unwritten rule seemed to be that condominium residents did not fraternise with those in the lane of auto-constructed houses. Condominium residents drove by or crossed the street to avoid interaction. (Interactions were mainly aural: residents formed *Amantes da Iracema* [Iracema’s Lovers], a Carnival group; we relished a joyful racket on Saturdays from November to February.) Heading away from the sea, the skyline dropped as one- and two-story buildings predominated on our street. High walls topped with razor wire surrounded most houses so that those

passing could only guess at what lay behind. A grand pink house defied this trend: most days its owners left windows open so passersby could revel in its stylish interior from another era. When would they erect a wall? I wondered. A friend's father had resisted a wall in his middle-class neighbourhood for years while everyone around him fortified their homes. He agreed to a wall after kids kept stealing the fruit from his trees; the wall got higher when a thief crept into the neighbour's house while they were sleeping; the wall now boasted an electric sliding door, as his daughter had been car jacked at gun point when she got out to unlock the gate.

Moving east into the heart of Meireles and Aldeota, past grander condominium complexes with European names and multiple swimming pools, was the business and leisure district. Within a six-block radius, there were three *shoppings* (indoor shopping malls), bars and restaurants, chic delis with imported food and wine and an entire street dedicated to interior design. Branches of Fortaleza's most expensive private schools sat between the *shoppings*. Armed security guards stationed outside these businesses offered peace of mind that one would not suffer an *arrastão* (an assault wherein multiple thieves work together to target a group of people) or worse. (Violence in Meireles was usually limited to muggings and carjackings but there were two homicides in 2012¹⁷.) Security-staffed car parks allowed customers to move seamlessly from air-conditioned *carrões* ("big cars," SUVs) into air-conditioned businesses. As such, patrons dressed for another climate (long sleeves and trousers in 32C) conspicuously swiped their imported iPads and smartphones, objects rarely seen elsewhere in Fortaleza. Here, elites differentiated themselves in mode of transportation, clothing and behaviour. Nicola and I felt the stares when we arrived dishevelled to a Meireles café, having ridden the bus in shorts and tank tops; ultimately though, we were written off as *gringas* so were permitted this transgression.

Conjunto José Walter

- approximately 8 miles to Colégio Ceará

- income per capita is R\$610.67 per person (61st out of 119 neighbourhoods)

¹⁷ This number appears to be inaccurate as a triple homicide occurred on our block the week after we left Fortaleza. Perhaps neighbourhood boundary lines were pushed to re-classify the location of this incident as Centro?

Colégio Ceará student Ana felt like her neighbourhood was at the end of the world. People joked about the remoteness of José Walter: “*Vai viajar pro Zé Walter?*” (Are you going to journey to Zé Walter?) The long commute made everything more difficult. She was almost never on time for the 7:20am start of school and, as a party was getting started, Ana had to decide: leave early to avoid missing the last *topic* (minibus) or call her mother and ask to stay at a friend’s house.

Conjunto José Walter (named for the Fortaleza mayor who sanctioned its creation) was Latin America’s largest planned community for low-income families in 1970. Streets of identical houses were distributed by lottery: new residents reached into a bag to pull out the address of their new home (Anjos 2015). Local government failed to deliver on infrastructure to residents in the isolated community: the *conjunto* (public housing project) lacked public transport, paved roads, schools and reliable sources of water. In the 1990s, expanded bus routes came after better roads linked the neighbourhood to the rest of the city. By 2012, personalisation, security improvements and expansions had erased the once identical nature of the houses and there were churches, schools and parks. Local businesses and banks meant that residents no longer had to travel to Centro for basics. Still, with more than 36,000 inhabitants, residents of José Walter continued to petition the city for more infrastructural updates. The *posto de saúde* (public health centre) had closed several years earlier, parks were neglected and insufficient drainage systems meant that the rainy season brought floods that washed out roads every year.

Colégio Ceará student Janaína described her corner of the neighbourhood as peaceful. Her father’s family had come from the interior to settle in José Walter in the 1980s so she grew up playing in the streets with her cousins who lived around the corner. The tree-lined streets gave the feeling of an interior town rather than a Fortaleza neighbourhood. Rumours that cows roamed the streets were (mostly) untrue but reminded Janaína and her friends that they lived at the edge of the city. Still, Janaína noted, her little sister was *not* allowed to play in the street as she had done. José Walter was not immune to Fortaleza’s crime problems. There were 25 homicides in 2012 and other crimes (muggings, burglaries, car jackings) were on the rise (IPECE

2013). Ana told me of being mugged two days in a row. She had nothing to give on the second day.

Zé Walter also had the dubious reputation as “*o bairro dos cornos*” (the neighbourhood of the cuckolds) (Romão 2014). Supposedly, bored women carried on affairs while their husbands were far away from the neighbourhood working. When Janaína first disclosed where she lived, she was quick to defend the sanctity of her family. “I know it’s the *bairro dos cornos* but my mother is a good woman. She does *not* do that!”

Bom Jardim

- approximately 7 miles to Colégio Ceará

- income per capita is R\$349.75 (110th out of 119 neighbourhoods)

Twenty year-old Roberto (a non-Colégio Ceará friend) asked Nicola and me to visit him in Bom Jardim. He wanted to show us the public school and NGO that he had described in our conversations about Fortaleza and education. We set out early to make the 10.5-mile, two-bus trek from our house to Roberto’s. We were spat out sweaty and exhausted at Siqueira bus terminal after a 75-minute ride. (Connecting in a security-staffed terminal meant paying one R\$2 fare rather than two or more fares; thus, *fortalezenses* crushed into terminals to make their journeys cheaper and safer.) We pushed through bodies of workers and students channelled through the terminal to shoehorn ourselves onto the next bus for our onward journey, 12-minutes to Roberto’s street in Bom Jardim.

Once the far-flung *fazendas* (farms) of Fortaleza’s elites, Bom Jardim was established in the late 1950s after the state bank bought the area and divided it into modest housing lots to help manage the city’s burgeoning population (Paiva 2008). Far from the city’s shifting centre(s), Bom Jardim (‘good garden’ for its lush vegetation and fruit trees) was a peaceful home to low-income workers. From the 1970s, a wave of land occupations began cutting into the surrounding *mata* (woods). Residents successfully campaigned the city to pave main roads and bring in electricity by the mid-1980s. Still, the infrastructural upgrades could not keep up with the land occupations. Between 1996 and 2000, the population ballooned from 21,498 to 34,507. Tensions between old and new residents escalated and violent crimes

multiplied. Like Barra do Ceará (Ignaldo's neighbourhood in the chapter opening), Bom Jardim was amongst the neighbourhoods with the greatest number of homicides in 2012, third out of Fortaleza's 119 neighbourhoods with 53 homicides (IPECE 2013).

Roberto met us at the bus stop. Though he was born in Bom Jardim, Roberto explained that he did not often walk in his own neighbourhood. Rather, he spent most of his time at home, studying behind the safety of his padlocked front door. When he did walk, he carried a Bible and tapped the cover conspicuously so that thieves would understand that he was a poor Christian with little to offer.

We passed houses of varying states of completion: an ornately tiled two-story house with decorative security fence on a paved street, a precarious cardboard and tarp shack on an unpaved side street. The Mormon Church jarred. An American-style brick building with a manicured lawn and large car park (in a neighbourhood where few people had cars) sat behind an ornate gold fence. Roberto had been enchanted with the Mormons when they first arrived but, ultimately, he had decided to stick with evangelical Christianity.

As we walked, Roberto told us of his first visit to the Beira Mar at 18. He had been shocked – how could *his* city have buildings like this? Some of the Bom Jardim girls took the bus to the Beira Mar quite often. A few of those girls married *gringos* and moved to the other side of Fortaleza or to the other side of the world. As a man, Roberto explained, he knew studying would be his way out of a difficult life. He led us to our next stop, the NGO where he spent most of his youth learning everything from guitar to *capoeira*. The NGO and child sponsorship allowed him access to a better life. His U.S. Christian sponsors paid tuition and a bus stipend so he could attend a private university in Aldeota. The only problem was his discomfort, the bad self-esteem he felt, in being surrounded by rich classmates who invited him to expensive nights out that he had to turn down. Would they have accepted him if they knew he was from Bom Jardim?



Figure 1-4: This Internet meme catalogues (and reinforces) stereotypes about Fortaleza neighbourhoods and their residents. Source: Facebook.

Neighbourhoods as Identity, Limitation and Imagination

Figure 1.4 offers a supposed catalogue of Fortaleza neighbourhoods and their residents: Centro is a constant traffic jam, Bom Jardim is a war zone, Antonio Bezerra and Conjunto do Ceará suffer infrastructural difficulties, Aldeota is populated with spoiled rich party girls, José Walter is remote and filled with *cornos*¹⁸, etc. While meant as humour (and presumably valorisation of Cidade dos Funcionários), this Internet meme reinforces stereotypes and fragments the city along class and gender lines. These understandings about neighbourhoods erase the wide range of internal variation that exists – perhaps this is why imagined boundaries of neighbourhoods do not always line up with boundaries drawn by the city (Almeida & Ferreira 2008). When I

¹⁸ “*Botar chifre*” (literally “to put on horns”) means to cheat on your partner (giving them horns), making them a cuckold; thus, the horned cattle have a double meaning here.

started writing letters to Ana, I found that she technically lived in Mondubim rather than José Walter. Mondubim was a neighbourhood with a lower income per capita, a higher crime rate and a different reputation. Still, since the *topic* Ana rode was called José Walter and her recently built emerging middle-class neighbourhood matched the profile of José Walter, the city's administrative labels did not matter. In Fortaleza, neighbourhoods determine distance (physical and metaphorical) from work, leisure and consumption opportunities. They stand in as shorthand for the kind of person one is and can be.

Challenges to Moving Through the City

As I have alluded throughout this chapter, crossing that (physical) distance between one's neighbourhood and work, leisure, and consumption opportunities was not always easy. In this section, I look at two of the challenges that limited movement: transport and the threat of violence.

Challenges of Transport

The ease and security of walking varied by neighbourhood. The pavements in Centro bustled with people, but elsewhere walls erected on the threat of violence turned the street into a corridor for cars (see Caldeira 2000). In middle and upper class neighbourhoods, suspicion was directed at those who walked as they were presumed to be poor and, thus, a threat. (Similarly, bicyclists were almost universally presumed to be thieves¹⁹ who would pedal up and relieve you of your mobile phone.) Those who walked faced further difficulty: cars parked on the pavements, forcing walkers into busy streets; and trees, seen as camouflage for would-be thieves, were stripped from the roadside so that there was little relief from the equatorial sun, not to mention the heat radiating off the asphalt.

Walking was confined to local areas; moving across larger areas of the city required other forms of transportation. Classes C and D made up the majority (75.7%) of public transport users (Gonçalves, J. 2011). Most Colégio Ceará students used buses regularly. Like walking, moving through the city by bus

¹⁹ A recent rent-a-bicycle scheme has changed this. When the scheme was first introduced, people talked of how thieves could now rent bikes by the hour.

was difficult. Those waiting for buses (which appeared to have no timetable) congregated in the narrow shadow cast by an electricity pole. Hailing a bus required a running start, dramatic arm signalling and/or beating on the bus door. Once on the bus, the task was no easier: un-air conditioned, overcrowded buses travelled at an average speed of 6–7 miles an hour (Saraiva 2012), crawling through traffic jams and careening through clear areas. Painted above the bus driver's head was a reminder: "Mister Bus Driver, Your son plays in the street too!" Sweaty bodies pressed against one another whilst *fórró* music or evangelical sermons blasted on the bus's tinny speakers. Those seated volunteered to hold notebooks, handbags and backpacks for those without seats since riding the bus standing required both hands and excellent balance. Asked about overcrowding on the buses, the president of the bus company blamed overcrowded buses on the citizen, "who insists on getting on them" (Maciel 2011). His solution to overcrowding was that public transport users should wait for a bus that was *not* crowded.

The city's transportation infrastructure could not keep up with the roads flooded with buses and cars. Demand increased daily as a 2012 government incentive scheme rolled taxes back such that the price of a new car was discounted by up to 10% (O Povo 2012). During the first three months of the programme, nearly 19,000 new cars joined the already congested Fortaleza roads (Fernandes 2012). Car drivers adopted tactics that they argued kept them safer (blacked out windscreens and windows, running red lights at night and slowing down for long distances to avoid stopping during the day) and others that simply kept them more comfortable (stopping in the shade of a tall building rather than moving forward to wait in the hot sun).

Given all of this, it is not surprising that a 2012 poll revealed that 74% surveyed deemed transit bad or the worst (Castro 2012). The traffic jams and added difficulties of public transport meant that a common and widely accepted excuse for tardiness was simply "the bus" or "traffic." Getting a driving licence and ultimately a car featured amongst my friends' goals as they sought to avoid the insecurity and negative connotations of walking as well as the misery of the bus. If transit was bad, at least it could be comfortable.

Me dá preguiça (It gives me laziness)

Throughout my time in Fortaleza, I came to understand that, for most of my friends, moving through the city required a combination of stamina and hyper vigilance. Thus, I understood when Carla cancelled a Sunday afternoon get together with a text that read “*hj tm preguisa*”. Her text slang translated to “Today I am feeling lazy.” Moving through the city was difficult and exhausting. “*Me dá preguiça.*” (It gives me laziness or it makes me lazy.) Why go out when it was not necessary, especially on a Sunday when the buses ran less frequently, the city was deserted and the streets were more dangerous?



Figure 1-5: A 2014 banner, placed overnight on the city’s beach, reads, “Welcome! You are in the seventh most violent city in the world! – Military Police of Ceará.” Unsurprisingly, the banner was not created by the police, but by *fortalezenses* protesting ongoing violence.

The Threat of Violence

Figure 1.5 shows a banner placed on the Avenida Beira Mar in 2014 that reads “Welcome! You are in the 7th most violent city in the world!” The banner was a tongue-in-cheek protest against the rising levels of violence in the city as Fortaleza prepared to host World Cup games. In this section, I analyse common discourses about violence (and the threat of violence) and the ways in which these shape behaviour and movement in Fortaleza.

Between 2002 and 2012, crime and violence skyrocketed as the homicide rate doubled (Waiselfisz 2014). The Citizen Council for Public Safety and Criminal Justice named Fortaleza the 13th most violent city in the world (as determined by homicide per capita) in 2012 (Castro 2013). Even worse, the homicide rate for those aged 15 to 29 stood at a staggering 156.6 per 100,000 people – the overwhelming majority of victims were men. (For comparison, Brazil’s 2012 homicide rate was 25.2 per 100,000 and the 2011 UK rate was 1 per 100,000 people.) Violence was distributed differentially across the city (Diário do Nordeste 2013). Figure 1.6 shows that, in 2012, high numbers of homicides were concentrated in the neighbourhoods peripheral to the north-central section of the city. Yet, I met very few people, regardless of where they lived or worked, who felt safe in Fortaleza. That imagined threat of violence shaped people’s movements and behaviours.

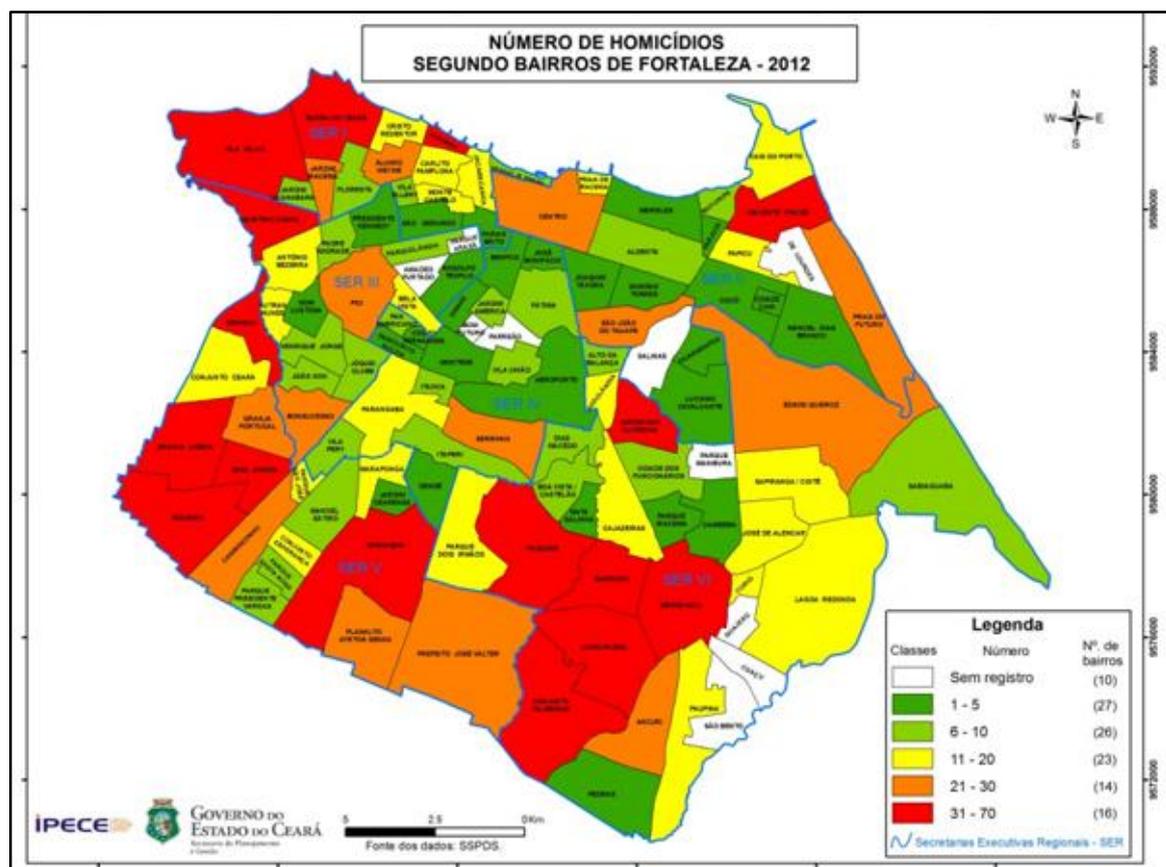


Figure 1-6 Homicides by Neighbourhood in Fortaleza, 2012. A centre-periphery pattern emerges. Source: IPECE 2013

Violence is Circling

Between the news, television crime programmes and *fortalezenses'* conversations, it seemed that violence was circling at all times. Caldeira (2000) argues that:

The repetition of histories [of violence...] only serves to reinforce people's feelings of danger, insecurity, and turmoil. Thus the talk of crime feeds a circle in which fear is both dealt with and reproduced, and violence is both counteracted and magnified.... The talk of crime is not only expressive but productive. (19)

Indeed, for me that continued talk of crime produced anxiety and fear. My body was tense, I jumped at sudden noises and I continually scanned and judged my surroundings in the street.

Still, it was not until Nicola was robbed (the first time) that I began to fully comprehend the ways in which the fear of violence and crime shaped people's behaviours and movements. Nicola was robbed on our street as she walked to her job. Up until that point, people we met would ask, "Have you been mugged?" Answering "no" shut down the conversation though people would issue cautions about the insecurity of Fortaleza. Answering "yes" opened up another round of questions: Was there a gun involved? Had Nicola been hurt? Was the thief on a bicycle? Was Nicola walking alone? What day and time of day was it? Was she carrying her documents? (Losing personal documents like an identity card prompted an administrative nightmare to become "regularized" again.) Was she carrying all her money in one place? Did she give away her real phone or was she carrying a thief phone? This battery of questions seemed to clarify responsibility since certain unwritten rules should be followed in moving through the city. Through these continued interrogations, we began to understand that, in essence, Nicola was at fault for her mugging since she had been walking on a Saturday morning (a time when few people are out) and she had foolishly placed her phone (the real phone, not the thief phone) and purse (the real purse, not the thief purse) in her handbag.

More than assigning responsibility, these questions also allowed the listener to gauge whether or not s/he might suffer a similar future assault whilst generating an ever-growing list of safety dos and don'ts. Don't walk or drive through certain neighbourhoods. Don't react "wrongly" or you may get shot. Do judge whether the thief might be willing to indulge your request for an item that they will not need. If the thief seems open, do ask nicely for your medicine or a textbook. The worrying caveat was that drugs make criminals disregard the "rules" and, according to our interlocutors, crack use was endemic in the city and it was turning criminals more unpredictable.

Popular "police journalism" television programmes reinforced the sense that violence was circling. These programmes broadcast gory details and images of Fortaleza's crimes and misfortunes. A woman lay dead in a hammock, killed by a stray bullet from a shootout. The camera showed her blood pooling on the floor as young children wailed. "How do you feel right now?" the reporter asked the eldest child. A stain on the road and a lorry were shown in sequence as the voiceover revealed that a man crossing Avenida Mister Hull had been the victim of a hit and run. The camera lingered over the scene outside a private school in Messejana where a mother was shot while dropping her daughter off at school. "How many bullets did the assassin fire into his victim? We'll tell you after this commercial break!" These programmes gathered blood and bodies from across the metropolitan area to be re-hashed over breakfast, lunch, and dinner – more than one programme showed at each mealtime. While I waited for the bus outside of school, patrons at the bar drank beer and discussed the day's tragedies.

The programmes were shocking but also formulaic. Victims (and perpetrators) were often residents of economically deprived neighbourhoods. Segments followed a familiar pattern: the crime scene (and, often, body) was shown, the victim was profiled as "good" (an honest worker, a family-oriented person) or "bad" (a known criminal), and then relatives and/or bystanders shared their outrage at the violence. One such programme, *Cidade 190*, purported to be providing "the more needy population an opportunity to speak, to demand and to fight for their rights", yet Caldeira (2000) argues that narratives of crime:

bestow a specific type of knowledge... [and try] to reestablish a static picture of the world. This symbolic reordering is expressed in very simplistic terms, relying on the creation of clear-cut oppositional categories, the most important of which are good and evil. (20)

It was unclear how placing poor bodies in the public domain would bring rights. Rather in portraying the escalating violence of “bad” people against “good” people, these programmes generated a logic of difference and segregation.

These narratives generated stereotyped portraits of the “bad” people. Tiago, a former Colégio Ceará student/current university student, joked about the difficulties of having *cara de ladrão* (a thief’s face). He had stopped wearing patterned shorts and football shirts when he noticed a woman clutching her bag. He knew that his skin colour, dark hair and eyes were features that many associated with “threatening” poor young men, features that people described to one another when detailing an assault and features that showed up on the front pages of the newspapers and on “police journalism” programmes.

Although the threat of violence (both their own fear and fear that others had of them) shaped their movements through the city, my Colégio Ceará friends laughed and joked about crime and violence. They teased one another about *cara de ladrão*. They told tales of outsmarting thieves and resisting assaults by inexperienced child *bandidos* (bandits). They delighted in posing with shirt over head as if about to commit an *arrastão*. Laughter at these perverse slippages offered an alternative to feeling *nervosa* (symptoms associated with anxiety and worry; see Scheper-Hughes 1992; Rebhun 1999) or anger at being stereotyped/feared. It allowed them to continue to move through the city in spite of the real and imagined challenges.

Moving through the City: Youth & Space

Hansen (2008) asserts that, “young people design scripts for new lives through consumption practices” (5). Colégio Ceará students sought out consumption practices (material goods, leisure activities, courses, etc.) within and beyond their neighbourhoods that would help cultivate new lives.

Transportation difficulties and the threat of violence may have constrained movement but they did not stop Colégio Ceará students from pursuing these scripts for new lives across (physical and metaphorical) distances in Fortaleza. Below, I describe some of the spaces that Colégio Ceará students inhabited and *imagined* inhabiting.

Shoppings

Shopping malls dotted throughout the north of the city served as climate-controlled temples of consumption, havens from the oppressive heat and the perceived threat of crime. Interestingly, the shopping portion of the *shopping* was often less attractive than other activities there. Recently built *shoppings* included amenities such as elaborate children's play areas, art galleries and even a 730-seat theatre. Food courts heaved with customers throughout the day. Patrons checking out dining options were bombarded with waiters holding menus – food was not always fast in the *shopping*. Everyone liked to be waited on so why should they not have this experience at the *shopping* too? Cover bands entertained customers on the weekends – the food court was a real night out! On a weekday afternoon, groups of teens dressed in their private school uniforms hung out in the new bowling alley whilst cheap days at the cinema drew tremendous queues.

In 2012, there were no *shoppings* in the periphery of the city but, savvy to the rising purchasing power of the emerging middle class, a new shopping mall was being constructed in Parangaba. Labelled a shopping mall for Class C, it would boast bus and metro access. (Only Fortaleza's biggest shopping mall offered bus access to its entrance; however, this was the air-conditioned bus that served touristy areas and cost more than twice the price of a regular bus.) While marketing *shoppings* to a specific class might seem odd, this was simply an extension of what *fortalezenses* already did.

When I asked Carla if she wanted to see a film at a particular *shopping*, she told me that she would not go to the rich *shoppings* in Aldeota as she preferred to spend her time and money at the *shopping* near her house. Carla's preferred *shopping*, located near the UFC campus and a number of private schools, catered largely to students and nearby office workers. Its enormous food court seating area made it a favourite amongst Colégio Ceará students. When

I asked about North Shopping, a larger shopping centre located in the western part of the city, Carla told me that she never went there as it was for *feios* (ugly people but also a gloss for poor people). She explained that North Shopping was a dangerous place because of the *marginais* (“marginals”, a pejorative term referring to criminals, people who literally and figuratively live on the city’s margins) who hung out there.

PIRANGUEIRO

reconheça um.. e faça carreira!



Figure 1-7: “Pirangueiro: recognize one... and make a career!” This Internet meme outlines how to spot a *pirangueiro*, from their bad moustache and favourite clothing brand names to their reggae bracelets and hands full of rings. The author further outlines the *pirangueiro*’s “natural habitat”, a particular shopping mall and a list of low-income neighbourhoods. Source: Facebook.

Carla was not the only person who had assessed North Shopping’s clientele as such: an Internet meme joked, “What is the collective noun for ‘pirangueiro’? North Shopping.” Hyper-regional slang derived from the verb *pirangar* (to beg), a *pirangueiro* is a skinny young man perceived as threatening. (The *pirangueiro* phenotype overlaps with that of *cara de ladrão*.)

Figure 1.7, another Internet meme, showed how to recognise *pirangueiros* by their brand name apparel and badly cultivated moustaches. It reads, “The natural habitat of this being is very diverse, extending from public squares like North Shopping to neighbourhoods like Antonio Bezerra, Pirambu, Messejana, Barra do Ceará...” (The meme continues with a list of low-income neighbourhoods.) *Pirangueiro* memes like these flooded Facebook in 2012. Examined together, these memes forwarded class-coded readings of people and places in Fortaleza: North Shopping was a public square (rather than a private *shopping*) and certain dangerous young men occupied (and threatened) this and other public spaces, particularly in low-income, peripheral neighbourhoods.

When Carla said that she felt most comfortable in her particular *shopping* she was positioning herself, expressing discomfort with the rich whilst also establishing distance from the *feios*. *Shoppings* were meant to be comfortable, private spaces made “safe” by having clientele of a predictable social class. Still, not all young people were content to follow the unwritten rules of the *shopping* as Carla had been. The 2013–2014 wave of *rolezinhos* (little strolls), whereby groups of teenagers used social media to organize large-scale hangouts in *shoppings*, attempted to disturb this spatial segregation. The New York Times reported that “the rowdy gatherings may be going beyond mere flash mobs to touch on issues of public space and entitlement in a society in which living standards for the poor have improved and social classes are in flux” (Romero 2014). Whether or not *rolezinhos* were overtly political (Beguoci 2014), the right to occupy the space of *shoppings* was debated widely in Brazilian society and the majority of the young people attempting to occupy that space were part of Brazil’s emerging middle class.

Festa da Formatura

Near the end of March, Colégio Ceará held a meeting about the *Festa da Formatura*, a graduation party that would take place in November, for interested third-year students and their parents. Janaína related how excited she was to be attending a school that held a *formatura*. These kinds of resources and opportunities were the reason Janaína had come to Colégio Ceará for third year. The *colégio de bairro* she had attended in José Walter

would never have had enough students or resources to organize an event like this! Janaína was not alone in her excitement; the entire afternoon class had been buzzing about the *formatura* meeting since it had been announced.

Students, predominantly female, and their parents packed the room to hear event organisers discuss their plan for the *formatura*. Subtle (and overt) class-coded signs peppered the presentation. The event would be held in the northeast sector of the city at La Maison, Fortaleza's largest events venue where the city's most opulent wedding receptions took place. The organizer highlighted the elegance that the dress code would bring: girls would wear full-length gowns and boys would wear black suits and ties. Families were advised to arrive at 9pm to take full advantage of the night and avoid some of the problems of the area; here, the planner alluded to the chic buffet's location between two poor communities, which meant that armed assaults on the road leading up to La Maison were not uncommon. Each participant would have her own table where friends and family could celebrate the graduate together. A buffet of "unquestionable quality" would be laid on for attendees and their families. After the buffet, students would be "presented" as they walked a long red carpet. Participants would have their first dance, a waltz, as balloons rained down on them. Then, students and families could dance the night away until 3:30am. Students and their parents were invited to imagine a night of luxury they had never before experienced, in a location that would otherwise be inaccessible.

Yet, the façade slipped as the organizer mixed in subtle reminders of participants' assumed class standing. In telling parents when to arrive, the organizer asserted that they would not know the proper etiquette for the evening. In addition, she reasoned that most parents would not have given their daughters a proper 15-years birthday party so this was the time to make up for that shortfall at a discounted price. A 15-years birthday party was rumoured to cost R\$15,000 but this event would cost approximately R\$725²⁰ and that included the graduate's ticket and five invitees. (Additional tickets could be purchased for a fee.) As for the high price tag, the planner reassured parents that they could divide payments over eight months. The planner offered her final sell for the event:

²⁰ For the approximate real to pound conversion rate at the time, see Appendix I

If you take a holiday every year, don't go this year. Spend the time and money with your child celebrating. The dreams you have for your children, their dreams. Is it worth it? It is. These are emotions you will have for the rest of your life.

Parents were instructed to make sacrifices, stretch their budget, in order to chase this dream of luxury that they would be able to present to others for the rest of their lives.

The next day, Janaína's excitement about being at a school with a *formatura* had been tempered with the reality that she still could not afford this luxury. Her family had added up the costs for extra invitees plus expenses for photos, videography, formalwear rental, hair and make-up and they had determined that *formatura* could cost R\$2000 or more. Janaína said she was no longer interested. Overnight, she had rewritten that script for her new life: she would save the money and go to *formatura* when she graduated from university – something no one in her family had done yet.

Carla's Birthday

Carla laughed when I asked if she planned to attend the *festa da formatura*. "Woman, are you kidding? It's way too expensive. Besides, why would I want to hang out with a bunch of people that I don't even like?" Instead of *formatura*, Carla was making plans for her 18th birthday. Her parents, who lived a 6-hour drive away in the interior, would rent a house for her birthday weekend at one of the nearby beaches. Carla's friends would put in money for food, transport and incidentals and we would all stay together. As the day drew nearer, it became clear that Carla's birthday was simply too close to ENEM to spend a weekend away. Though most of Carla's friends had already left *ensino médio*, invitees from her class would never be allowed to attend. Besides, Carla was still dividing her days between school, her afterschool exam preparation course and practice exams. Leaving Fortaleza, going to a tourist area and having a holiday with friends may never have been a real possibility. Still, the possibility of the possibility added prestige to Carla's birthday celebration, even if it *acabou em pizza* ("ended in pizza", an expression that means plans that result in nothing.) Carla announced that the new plan was a night out at Dragão do Mar, the city's culture and arts centre.

Dragão do Mar was a popular hangout for local young people and tourists alike. Located between old commercial Centro and posh Meireles, the centre boasted a range of outdoor bars and cafes, a cinema, art galleries and a planetarium²¹. With sex tourism and the drug trade operating in the area, armed private security at café and bar entrances and military police stationed throughout sought to keep the appearance of safety. Unsure of what to expect at a birthday party for an 18 year old, Nicola and I prepared for another night out at Dragão. We had spent countless nights with older friends at Bixiga, one of Dragão's bars, attempting to carry out conversations over warbling cover bands and drinking *choppe de vinho* (a grape-flavoured beer-wine mash-up).

Upon arrival, we found Carla and friends had set up camp on a well-lit bench between the security-regulated taxi queue and the drinks carts where entrepreneurial unlicensed vendors sold cut-rate mixed drinks. Carla called me over to show the contents of her new cool box. Carla had spent the birthday money her father had given her on soda and vodka. Vodka was a special treat as it was more expensive than the locally produced rotgut *cachaça*. Carla had been drinking for years already but, now that she was 18, it was time to celebrate her first legal purchase. At home, her father would have barbecued whilst her mother prepared the foods that made me their family restaurant famous in her corner of the state. All of Carla's friends and family would have been invited to celebrate. Far away from her parents, Carla sought to reproduce that generosity with her friends.

I wondered if this was the pre-drinking phase of the evening as Carla had said that she wanted to go to her first 18+ club. As the night wore on though, it became clear that *this* – rather than the Guns N Roses cover band – was the main event. Ultimately, Carla abandoned the idea of the nightclub. Why pay bar prices and/or nightclub entrance fees when you could have just as much fun hanging out on a bench with friends? This way Carla could afford to host all of her friends; in turn, her friends with little money could afford to have a night out.

²¹ See Cavalcante & Freitas (2008) for an analysis of the ways in which Dragão do Mar's space is shared and segregated by various groups.

Hansen asserts that young people “are well aware of being-in-the-world and of what is out there, at the same time as they negotiate their everyday worlds through practices they craft from local resources” (5). Teenagers discovering a way to drink (and cheaply) is hardly revolutionary but I was struck by how Carla had managed to engineer a situation, “craft[ed] from local resources”, in which she and her friends could straddle a public/private divide to participate in the local nightlife (with the added benefit of security) whilst avoiding paying private prices. With her comments on *shoppings*, Carla had already expressed uneasiness in navigating “rich” class situations. In this way, she managed that dissonance on her terms. I could argue that Carla and her friends could afford to sit near but not participate in the activities at Dragão but it seemed that Carla made choices to have the celebration that she wanted. She could have treated a few people to drinks at one of the bars but she preferred an approach that allowed her to share with more friends.

Conclusions

Professor Victor’s students might not have possessed map orientation skills and/or recognised the explicit east/west divide as he presented them in class but, even without his lecture, students’ movements through the city produced knowledge about economics and society: limitations and possibilities. In the present, Fortaleza was segregated and difficult to traverse. At the end of the night, one would have to leave the *shopping* or La Maison, reversing the (physical and metaphorical) journey. Yet, movement through the city also produced knowledge about the kind of person that one could and should be in the future. As Chapter 2 shows, education offered a plan for realising that metaphorical (and perhaps physical) movement.

Chapter 2 Schools should be like Shopping Malls: Consumption, Distinction and Private Schooling

School has to be beautiful, colourful, agreeable, a plural space in which everyone feels good, if possible more equipped than a shopping mall. Principally because it is more than an outing, it is a true journey that sows enchantment through learning and the formation of people.²²

- Airton de Almeida Oliveira, President of the *Sindicato dos Estabelecimentos Particulares de Ensino do Ceará* (Sinepe-CE, Union of Private Schooling Establishments of Ceará)

Sinepe-CE President Oliveira's remarks on schooling were considered enlightening enough to be made into a banner to display alongside quotes by famous Brazilian writers and educators at a Private Schools conference in August 2011. Admittedly, Brazilian *shoppings* are important (and "well-equipped") spaces but how are we to understand creating persons through shopping mall-like schools? In Chapter 1, I described Fortaleza's inequalities and ways in which movements through the city produced knowledge about present limitations and possibilities, as well as ideas about the person that one could and should become. In this chapter, I provide an overview of schooling in Brazil and Fortaleza to explore how President Oliveira's confluence of education, consumption and personhood came to exist. Private schooling – especially private secondary schooling – allowed *batalhadores* to lump themselves in with those who "have" in Fortaleza whilst distinguishing themselves from those who do not. Private schooling offered students and their families an imagined short- and long-term trajectory of upward class mobility.

²² "Escola tem que ser bonita, colorida, agradável, um espaço plural em que todos se sintam bem, se possível mais aparelhada que um shopping. Principalmente porque é mais que um passeio, é uma verdadeira viagem que semeia encantamento pela aprendizagem e construção de pessoas."

***“Quem ama investe”*: private schooling as necessity**

Babilônia is a 2015 *telenovela* (soap opera) set between Rio de Janeiro’s posh beachside Leme and the Morro da Babilônia, a poor community on the hill that overlooks Leme (Kogut 2015). Paula is a plucky Babilônia resident who, against all odds, became a human rights lawyer. Luís Fernando is the middle-class cad who, ten years earlier, lied his way into Paula’s best friend’s bed, getting the friend pregnant whilst his wife was expecting their second child. Walking her friend’s daughter to public school, Paula runs into Luís Fernando, who is shuttling his other two children to their private school.

Paula: You’re really don’t have any shame, do you? ... Two children in a private school and Júlia [Luís Fernandes’s illegitimate daughter] in public school? Don’t you think that’s kind of unequal?

Luís Fernando: What a strange thing to hear from a person like you who came from below to be on top....

Paula: Yes, I studied in a public school. I’m very proud of this but we both know that the opportunities are not equal... And I also know that my brother and I received the same treatment.

Luís Fernando: My children also get the same treatment. Imagine! All of my love is divided equally between the three. The love is the same.

Paula: It’s only the money that’s different then.

Luís Fernando: That’s just the way. What’s important is the sentiment, the intention.

Paula: Investment, Luís Fernando. *Quem ama investe*. (A person who loves invests.)

This scene picks up on national discourses of class, education, social mobility and good parenting – unsurprising, giving that Brazil’s *telenovelas* are “a significant public space in which compelling images of the nation are negotiated” (Porto 2011: 61). Paula, a successful *batalhador*, accepts the inequalities resulting from parallel schooling systems. What she does *not* accept is that Luís Fernando’s children are growing up with different schooling opportunities. Luís Fernando’s “legitimate” children are solidly

middle class, being raised in an apartment and attending private school, whilst Júlia is poor: she shares a bedroom with her mother and attends public school. Paula suggests that if Luís Fernando really loved Júlia as much as he loves his other children, he would re-jig his middle-class resources to invest in Júlia and send her to private school. Ostensibly, private schooling would offset other economic shortfalls in the long run. Furthermore, Paula argues that parenthood is more than love and affection – it is financial investment (in the *right* resources) to help one’s child reach class aspirations.

What Paula does not acknowledge in this scene is that private schooling is often viewed as critical for keeping children out of trouble and away from the difficulties associated with poverty (Caldeira 2000). Private schooling also removes one from the precariousness of public services: public schools sometimes lack resources and strikes are common. In Brazil, private schooling is a distinction that (seemingly) protects children from the imagined social contaminants of public school: early pregnancy, violence, drugs, high dropout rates, etc. In the next section, I outline how class came to be so strongly linked with type of schooling.

History of *ensino básico* in Brazil & Fortaleza

Although Brazil’s 1824 Constitution established the right of every Brazilian citizen to free public education (Veiga 2008), with little demand and few public resources, Fortaleza relied largely on private, religious education throughout the 19th century (Pereira e Silva 2002). Under the first republic, public education expanded; however, in the 1910s, the local oligarch closed 90 Fortaleza public primary schools in order to found Ceará’s first law school (Andrade 2002). Remaining public schools often gave matriculation preference to wealthy parents connected to the local oligarch (Pinho 2002). Diverting public education resources towards elites has continued throughout Fortaleza’s history.

In the 1930s, *Escolanovistas* (the national New School Movement) lobbied the development-oriented government to provide a free quality education for all Brazilians in order to meet the demands for “modernity” (Plank 1996). Despite these efforts, the 1937 Constitution stipulated that the state role in education was supplementary; that is, offered only in instances when families

and the Catholic Church could/did not provide it. Some of Fortaleza's best-known private schools, including Colégio Ceará, opened during this era to meet expanding demands.

Throughout the 1950s, the Catholic Church campaigned for *liberdade de ensino* (freedom of school), arguing for

Christian education in sex-segregated and church-sponsored schools in order to fulfil the pastoral rights and responsibilities of the Church in a Catholic society. They expected the state to help the Church to fulfil its obligations, but otherwise not to interfere in the educational system (Plank 1996: 151).

Liberdade de ensino supporters argued that families (as opposed to the state) should have the right to determine the education of their children and thus public subsidies should be distributed to public and private educational institutions according to family choices. From 1950, public and private schools were expanded into poorer areas of Fortaleza as they were seen as “a necessity... to resolve the problems related to the behaviour and morals of [poor students]” (Cavalcante 2002: 192). Though schooling had technically been “mandatory” for twenty years in 1958, 43% of *fortalezenses* remained illiterate (Cavalcante 2002).

During the military dictatorship (1964-1985), mandatory attendance at primary school was extended from four to eight years (Plank 1996). Yet funding for basic public primary education actually *decreased* as the military government favoured expanding university and vocational secondary education programmes to accommodate the technical demands of economic growth. To help fund the school system, the government instituted the *salario-educação*, a 2.5% tax on salaries with generated revenues divided two-thirds to the state and one-third to the federal education authorities. A caveat built into *salario-educação* allowed employers to earmark funds for the private school of their choice. This era further funnelled Fortaleza middle-class and elite children into the private system. At the start of the military dictatorship, the *Liceu do Ceará*, a selective public secondary institution, stood as *the* reference for schools, churning out students who influenced the politics, economics, and culture of Ceará (Neto 2002). Yet, with the expansion of the school and a

de-politicisation of the school's teaching staff, the *Liceu* (and public schools in general) fell out of favour with the middle and upper classes. This exodus left public schools woefully underfunded and neglected.

At the same time, the private education industry boomed as secular, for-profit schools were created to cash in on public funds from *salario-educação*. Nationally, over half of *salario-educação* funds were shifted into private schools by the transition to democracy (Plank 1996). In 1987, Ceará boasted the second highest rate of funds transferred to private schools – more than all of the Centre-West, South, and North region states combined. The 1988 Constitution re-enshrined the right to education (and the state's responsibility for providing it); however, it was not until 1996 that funds from *salario-educação* were restricted to public education – and, even then, employers were allowed to continue the provision of tax moneys to private schools until 2003. As Brazil experienced economic crises throughout the 1990s, government-instituted tuition freezes ensured middle-class access to private schooling. Plank (1996) argues that these tactics lead to

the delegation of responsibility for the education of middle-class children to private school. Rather than provide public schools of acceptable quality, the government have adopted a number of policies to ensure that middle-class children may attend private schools (80).

Plank ultimately surmises that, “the Brazilian education system now persists in the division between high-cost, high-quality private schools for the children of the elite and middle class, and public schools (or low-cost, low-quality private schools) for everyone else” (70).

Following national curriculum changes and a push for expanded access between 2000-2005, public high school attendance has greatly increased while private high school attendance has remained constant (Zibas 2005). Furthermore, small cash transfer programmes like *bolsa-família* have encouraged parents to keep children in school. With 11.1% of high school students attending private schools, the state of Ceará is near the national average of 11.7% (IBGE 2011). However, approximately half of the state's private high schools and more than two-thirds of the state's private high school students are in Fortaleza. One reason for the discrepancy between the

state rate and the city rate of private schooling is that families living in the interior send their high-school aged children to live in Fortaleza so that they can attend a “good” private school that will prepare them for entrance into the state or federal university system; though these students make up a small minority in Fortaleza private high schools, this helps to explain why so many of Ceará’s private schools are located in Fortaleza. Furthermore, of the ten most populous Brazilian cities, Fortaleza has the greatest percentage of high school students attending private schools (IBGE 2011). (See Figure 2.1 for a comparison of the top ten most populated cities in Brazil.) With 137 private high schools and 24.9% of high school students in private schools, Fortaleza’s private schooling market is booming.

	Private high school students	Total high school students	% of private high school students
São Paulo (pop: 11,244,369)	78,670	462,777	17.0%
Rio de Janeiro (pop: 6,323,037)	51,485	263,500	19.5%
Salvador (pop: 2,676,606)	19,011	126,063	15.1%
Brasília (pop: 2,562,963)	25,142	104,949	24.0%
Fortaleza (pop: 2,447,409)	30,970	124,610	24.9%
Belo Horizonte (pop: 2,375,444)	21,892	107,826	20.3%
Manaus (pop: 1,802,525)	8,395	91,447	9.2%
Curitiba (pop: 1,746,896)	18,195	80,273	22.7%
Recife (pop: 1,536,934)	20,253	91,542	22.1%
Porto Alegre (pop: 1,409,939)	12,431	51,319	24.2%

Figure 2-1: Private High School Enrolment in the ten most populated Brazilian cities. Source: IBGE 2011

Private Schools as Businesses and Commodities

Private education accounts for a staggering 1.27% of all jobs – that’s 1.2 million workers – in the Brazilian economy (Augusto 2010). Different to the UK, private schools in Brazil function explicitly as businesses – many in

Fortaleza are family-owned and run. Accordingly, schools fail financially, closing their doors overnight. Larger schools with multiple locations across the city buy out smaller schools to expand their corner of the market. Feuds over the family business split private schooling empires and create new schools. Owners of the largest schools are amongst the city's elite and appear in the society pages of the newspaper. In Fortaleza, private schooling is big business.

Perhaps nothing could have demonstrated this better than the conference organised by Sinepe-CE that I attended as part of my fieldwork in August 2011. Held at one of Fortaleza's most expensive hotels on the Avenida Beira Mar in Meireles, the Fourth Annual Education Seminar opened with a lamentation of the country's dropping birth rate and its consequences for the private schooling market. Still, the speaker reassured attendees that the expansion of the middle classes would help to offset the low birth rate. After a session on marketing and brand management, talk turned to creating airtight parent contracts and the environment that schools should cultivate for contract-signing: the matriculation process should be a *festa* (party) with shirts, pens, and other marketing materials. The session speaker finished with, "A great 2012 for you," whilst rubbing his fingers together to stress that "great" meant making lots of money. The final session of the day presented a dizzying array of tax loopholes that the presenter reassured attendees were not *technically* fraud. With the majority of attendees hailing from smaller (and less expensive) schools, jostling for customers meant marketing to *batalhadores* and their children. Thus, a (branded) party environment at matriculation would signal that emerging middle-class families had arrived at new powers of consumption, whilst owners increased revenues and generated profits.

Choosing a School: Cultural Capital & Consumption

Though private education can be viewed as a means to acquiring cultural capital and developing the *correct* habitus (see Introduction), it can also be viewed as a commodity. Baudrillard (1998) argues that it is not commodities that are consumed; rather, it is the class-coded signs of commodities. In this sense, different types and qualities of education signify different levels of knowledge, power, and culture – or lack thereof. "Signs... distinguish you

either by affiliating you to your own group or by marking you off from your group by reference to a group of higher status" (Baudrillard 1998: 61). In the case of the *batalhadores*, consumption of private education marks the emerging middle class off from their neighbours and critically links the new middle class with other consumers of private education: the (established) middle class and elites.

The literature demonstrates a plethora of anxieties generated around school choice. White middle-class parents revel in the symbolic capital of their neighbourhood's "diversity", until the time comes to enrol children in low-income and/or ethnically diverse public schools in the US (Cuchiara 2013) and the Netherlands (Boterman 2013); then, parents contemplate the potential gains and losses involved in school choice. Similarly, "Choice Advisors" aim to coach working-class parents to make "better" (more middle class) school choices in England (Exley 2013). School choice demonstrates an entanglement of habitus, cultural and symbolic capital and consumption.

The cover story of the September 2011 edition of *Crescer*, a glossy magazine geared towards parents of nursery and early primary school-aged children, provides an insight into the perceived importance of school choice in Brazil:

The moment that you discover that you will be a mother, your life turns into a succession of choices... However, there exists one decision that you will have to make in which, perhaps, you have little information and that [decision] involves only the taste of the couple: the choice of a school. To make the right choice you will have to research a lot, go after all the possible data, speak with relatives and friends, and, above all, go to many schools (Rogerio 2011).

Thus women – the article does suggest that fathers should be included in the decision but it is clearly geared towards mothers – face a difficult task in finding the right school for their child. So what do parents base these decisions on? *Crescer* offers a list of considerations and provides real-life stories. Eliezer, systems analyst discusses her decision to move 4 year-old Poliana to a new school:

[We] chose a school close to home that includes high school, that way we will not have to move her again. We looked for a school that had a good base for the university entrance exam (Rogerio 2011).

Is Eliezer *really* looking for a school that will be a good base for *vestibular* when her daughter is only four? Cynically, one might ask: has school choice become an extended exercise in brand loyalty? Certainly, the Fortaleza marketing campaigns attempt to cultivate this image: A Colégio Ari de Sá advert features pictures of Sara, winner of numerous academic competitions held throughout the world and admitted to prestigious international universities, in school uniform at 2 years old and the present-day.

In addition, *Crescer* evokes the social capital (Bourdieu 1979) that comes with private schooling:

When one chooses a *colégio*, one is also choosing a community to which one will belong. Friends, friends' parents, even costs – trips, parties, presents – are going to be part of the family's life. It's a total package (Rogerio 2011).

Crescer confirms that choosing a school is also necessarily choosing the families that your family will need to keep up with socially and financially. While this article presents the imagined choices of an upper middle-class elite, *batalhador* families who choose private school face similar types of “distinguishing” choices. In the next section, I examine the Fortaleza private schools market, examining the “commodities” – including Colégio Ceará – within said market.

The Big 4

When I explained that I was researching private schooling, nearly everyone (regardless of age, gender or socioeconomic status) referenced the same four Fortaleza schools: Colégio Farias Brito, Colégio Ari de Sá, Colégio 7 de Setembro and Colégio Christus. (Hereafter, I refer to these schools collectively as the “Big 4”.) Big 4 schools served as references because of their history and longevity. Each of the Big 4 has roots that stretch back to the 1950s or earlier. These schools also stood as examples of Fortaleza private schooling because

of their size and scope: the Big 4 offered education from nursery to university and each colégio had multiple branches (for a total of 14 Big 4 high schools). With the majority of campuses concentrated in high income neighbourhoods and the monthly tuition for the third year of high school set at R\$850 or more, Big 4 schools were amongst the most expensive in the city. Thus, though they did not refer to it as such, *fortalezenses* recognised the cultural capital attached to attending a Big 4 school.

Marketing solidified the Big 4 as *the* private schools in Fortaleza, with considerable resources devoted to the cause: the city was covered in Big 4 billboards and flyers, newspaper and television adverts showed their familiar logos, Big 4 kiosks at shopping malls offered information, and Big 4 students wore t-shirts and carried branded textbooks. These schools routinely published photos and names of students admitted to highly subscribed courses and universities. Big 4 colégios declared their average ENEM scores and cited their position amongst state test score rankings. For example, a catchy 2011 thirty-second television advert for Colégio Farias Brito featured attractive high school-aged uniformed students singing:

*First in ENEM rankings of students,
First in ENEM rankings of schools,
We²³ are in FB, we are in UFC
First in ENEM
And first in UFC too*

The commercial intercut images of nursery-aged children on the “we are in FB” with clapping, smiley high school students on the “we are in UFC,” further illustrating the message of the commercial: if a child is enrolled in Colégio Farias Brito (preferably at a young age), that child will also be admitted to UFC, the prestigious public (and free) Federal University of Ceará. The Big 4 helped make schooling a marketable commodity that suggested long-term successes.

²³ Because there is only an implied pronoun, the lyric may be interpreted as he, she, you, and/or even the colloquial “we”. This ambiguity allows viewers to interpret the advertisement in a way that works for them.



Figure 2-2: Advertising for Colégio Ari de Sá that features students admitted to ITA and IME in 2010. Advertisements like this were featured on billboards throughout Fortaleza's richest neighbourhoods.

Additionally these ads, coupled with other recruitment materials, reinforced a hierarchy in higher education choices. A story on the Colégio Farias Brito webpage showed former students arriving at the Military Institute of Engineering (IME); it explained that, beyond being one of the best schools of engineering in the world, IME was also located in an “exclusive” part of Rio de Janeiro. A second story entitled “Our Heroes of ITA leave today” featured pictures of an airport send-off for FB families with students attending Brazil’s most selective university, the Institute of Aeronautical Technology. Students stood next to their families holding up the full-page newspaper ad that Colégio Farias Brito had taken out to announce that 49 of their students had been admitted to ITA and IME. Admissions to these highly selective institutions featured regularly in marketing campaigns, with billboards strategically placed throughout the richest neighbourhoods in the city. (See Figure 2.2 for an example.) (The local prestige linked to ITA and IME attendance led *fortalezenses* to be overrepresented – from 20% to 33% of an entering class – at these universities²⁴.) From Big 4 advertisements, a hierarchy of universities could be read with IME and ITA at the top, followed by UFC, then UECE (the State University of Ceará), Unifor (the private University of Fortaleza) and, finally, less prestigious private universities. As such, Big 4 advertisements suggested that private education was a commodity that promised prestige alongside long-term success.

²⁴ <https://dialogospoliticos.wordpress.com/2010/01/09/fortaleza-e-campea-de-aprovacoes-no-ita-e-ime/>

Advertisements extended beyond university admissions and test scores, focusing on classroom technologies like smart boards and tablets. The Big 4 supersaturated the advertising market such that their ads began to dialogue with one another: as Figures 2.3 and 2.4 demonstrate, when Colégio Ari de Sá ran a campaign to highlight their switch from books to tablets, Colégio Farias Brito hit back with an advert that announced, “Books and tablets. Use your head.” With such strong marketing, it is unsurprising that *fortalezenses* consistently cited Big 4 Colégios in discussing private schooling. Marketing had made these (often cost-prohibitive) schools *the* reference point for private schooling.

A 2003 paper entitled “Strategic Orientations for the Private School Sector of Fortaleza” urges the use of a variety of mechanisms including expanded curriculum and extracurricular activities, student-focused instructional methods, and intensive targeted marketing campaigns (Costa & Batista 2003). As a result of these efforts, each private school cultivated a sense of “us” that positioned them in opposition to students of other private schools (Almeida et al 2010). Non-Big 4 schools advertised too, developing their own senses of “us” – after all, not everyone had the money to attend a Big 4 colégio. Lesser-known schools churned out advertisements in the style of the Big 4. Though Big 4 colégios had the highest ENEM averages, Colégio Ouro boasted the highest essay average whilst Colégio Top advertised their first-place student in UFC Architecture. As a parent told me, “Every school claims to be first in something.”

Marketing established “brands” within the schooling market, whilst cultivating a taste for classroom technology and reinforcing a hierarchy of university prestige: the federal university over the state university, public university over private, etc. Marketing suggested a confluence of consumption, social mobility rhetoric, and “good” parenting practices. But what did parents choose with Colégio Ceará?



Figure 2-3: Colégio Ari de Sá advertises their switch from books to tablets.



Figure 2-4: Colégio Farias Brito mocks Colégio Ari de Sá's switch to tablets, showing that they will use tablets *and* books.

Choosing Colégio Ceará

Generations of the Costa family have run Colégio Ceará as a family business. In the past twenty years, Colégio Ceará has opened a second school and expanded their remit to offer schooling from nursery to university. Though the school was once Catholic, it is now non-denominational. Colégio Ceará is viewed as “second tier”; that is, not quite as good or sought after as the Big 4 schools but still a desirable and well-performing school.

Why do parents choose to send their children to Colégio Ceará? A combination of tradition and reputation attract parents. Older siblings, parents, and grandparents attended and thus Colégio Ceará is an obvious choice. For the majority of students with no historical ties to the school though, the appeal of Colégio Ceará is the distinction brought by attending a large franchise school. Families want a school profile similar to the Big 4 with multiple schools, a history of educating *fortalezenses*, and the (marketed) reputation to accompany the former. Mothers at Colégio Ceará's Open Day stressed amenities and price as their reasons for considering the school. Several mentioned researching Big 4 colégios and finding them cost-prohibitive. Colégio Ceará amenities and extracurricular activities approximated that of more expensive schools: Colégio Ceará had a good-sized campus with science lab, a computer lab with a smart board, a library with iPads, a writing lab, and a gymnasium housing various sports teams and a dance studio. These amenities were like those of condominiums: they were not often used but served to add status to the school and those who attended the school. These features distinguished Colégio Ceará as closer to expensive schools than neighbourhood private schools or public schools with few resources.

Colégio Ceará worked hard to cultivate and maintain its reputation. When I asked about the massive advertising campaigns common to the private school market, Vice Director Odirene explained, "Look, the new middle class is very *inseguro* (insecure or unsure)". Odirene explained that, worried about maintaining appearances, this fickle group of consumers not used to making these types of decisions drove local colégios to adopt faddish technologies in order to compete with one another. As soon as one well-known colégio advertised that they had adopted a certain technology, other schools needed to show that they had the same (or, preferably, better) technology in order to attract and/or keep their clients. Here, Odirene implied that Colégio Ceará parents had not yet cultivated appropriate brand loyalties. Yet, savvy to this customer base, Colégio Ceará mounted a strategic marketing campaign advertising on billboards and buses along common bus routes to the city's periphery; thus, a passenger stuck on the congested, hour-long commute to Prefeito José Walter might see Colégio Ceará advertised four or five times.

This marketing campaign paid off as parents from neighbourhoods throughout Fortaleza enrolled their children in Colégio Ceará.

Location was another critical component in choosing Colégio Ceará. Situated in Centro (as Chapter 1 describes, the historic centre of the city but now the extreme north) with branches of the Big 4 colégios, prominent *cursinhos* (cram schools) and a UFC campus nearby, Colégio Ceará offered the prestige²⁵ of leaving the provincial and peripheral. At lunchtime, Colégio Ceará students rubbed elbows with Big 4 students at local *self-service* restaurants that dotted the area and, after school, they hung out to see and be seen in the nearby shopping mall food court. The more “alternative” kids who preferred rock to *forró* frequented the nearby Galeria de Rock to buy imported CDs, Nirvana t-shirts and Beatles posters. Some students’ parents worked a short distance away in the market, selling handmade clothes to bulk buyers from the interior.

About a third of the third-year students travelled 45-90 minutes by bus from far-flung neighbourhoods like José Walter, Barra do Ceará, Lagoa Redonda, and Pedras whilst about half lived closer (20-40 minute bus ride) in places such as Montese, Castelão, and Henrique Jorge. Only a handful of students lived walking distance to Colégio Ceará. Thus, in choosing Colégio Ceará, many families choose to move from periphery to Fortaleza’s oldest economic centre.

Within Fortaleza’s private school market, Colégio Ceará offers literal and figurative movement for students and their families. Whilst young people navigate their daily journey from periphery to “centre” (and back), their families gained status as those with children in a “better” kind of school. That is, these families were recognised as investing appropriately in their children – that investment was instantly recognisable from their children’s school uniforms and branded textbooks. “Better” schools were (rightly or wrongly) associated with multiple franchises, stronger university entrance exam preparation programmes and the possibility for realising an *even better* life.

²⁵ While Colégio Ceará’s central location was a selling point for my friends and their families, others thought differently. A Big 4 colégio teacher clarified that she taught at the Aldeota franchise. “Not the one for poor people in Centro.”

(For an overview of what constitutes a better life, see Chapter 5's discussion of dreams.)

What Parents *Really* Choose: Inside Colégio Ceará

A few blocks from the area of Centro that sell children's party supplies, bolts of fabric, and coffins of all sizes sat Colégio Ceará. Surrounded by a high wall with billboards advertising the school, the campus occupied a full block with separate entrances for nursery to lower primary school and the upper primary, high school, *cursinho* and university students. A crush of motorbikes, cars, and private Volkswagen school buses congregated outside the upper school entrance before and after classes. An armed guard stood outside the school, ostensibly to prevent assaults and ensure the safety of parents and students²⁶. Students passed an attendant who ensured that they were wearing official uniform whilst swiping their school ID cards to go through the turnstiles.

Colégio Ceará's only green space was the neatly manicured 4-foot strip between its fortress-like walls and the pavement. Inside, the school stood three stories, with balconies that overlooked a covered central courtyard with common areas and canteen. A stairwell off the canteen led to classrooms, the library, the science lab, and other facilities. The curved tin roof provided shade and cover from the seasonal rains – though, during the heaviest rains, a cleaner futilely swept pools of water into gutters.

During breaks, this common area came alive. Hungry students stormed the canteen, pounding on the counter and shouting “*tia*” (“aunt”, a polite way to refer to an older woman) to get the attention of the canteen workers. A *pipoqueiro* (popcorn vender) sold salty snacks near the nearly defunct payphone. Frustrated by the long wait, a few students left the canteen queue and ordered ice cream from the kiosk instead. The break time snack selection was no match for that of the *praça de alimentação* but students liked the multiple options that Colégio Ceará provided. First-year high school boys engaged in a lively table tennis match. Students drug plastic chairs across the

²⁶ Unfortunately, armed guards at Fortaleza schools do not always work as intended: in recent years, several armed guards “protecting” schools have been shot for their guns.

cement floor. A group of friends sung “Parabéns” for a classmate’s birthday before doling out Guaraná soda into tiny plastic cups. A table of female administrative staff, easy to spot in their identical Colégio Ceará logo-ed suits, gossiped together over their break-time coffee. Students ignored the bell that signalled their return to class. Instead, they lingered, chatting a few more minutes until they were shooed away by canteen workers trying to tidy up. Students headed upstairs, jokingly blocking the classroom door to delay class a bit longer, before being herded into their respective classrooms by paraprofessional hall monitors. Moving from the common areas to first and second floor classrooms signalled a change in discipline and control.

Like most Brazilian schools, Colégio Ceará ran multiple sessions in a day to maximise space use and profits. Students could attend high school during the morning (7:20am – 12:00 noon) or afternoon (1:20pm – 6pm) session. With greater demand for morning classes, afternoon classes cost less. (For more discussion of this distinction, see Chapter 3.)

As three different groups (ranging from upper primary to university) used the same space each day, there was little to distinguish between the tiled classrooms. Each was equipped with white boards and overhead projectors. Windows were blacked out to fend off heat. Students sitting near air conditioning units brought hoodies to keep warm. (Air conditioning was touted as vital to learning in Fortaleza – most public schools do not have it.) Flyers announced no eating in class, an upcoming mock university entrance exam, and a fieldtrip for upper primary school students. Up to 50 desks were crammed into a classroom. At the start of the day, the desks started out in an orderly row but, by the time the first bell rang, students had dragged their desks around to be closer to their friends. With more than 40 pupils in a third-year *turma* (class, cohort of students), the classroom was a loud and easily distracting place. Teachers, rather than students, move between classes; thus, it often felt like teachers were intruding on students’ conversations and space when a savvy teacher entered the classroom and told students to put their desks back into rows and face the front.

Teachers

Colégio Ceará contracted a mix of full- and part-time teachers. Thus, many teachers split their time between multiple jobs. For example, Chemistry teacher Rafael taught one day (morning and afternoon session) at Colégio Ceará, two afternoons and an evening at a public school, and one day at a university 200km away. Professor Luziane spent four days teaching *redação* (writing) at both branches of Colégio Ceará, supplementing her income by teaching night classes once a week in a public school. Maths teacher Daniel taught at both branches of Colégio Ceará and both branches of comparable private Colégio Ouro. Between multiple teaching commitments and the school's automated attendance system, teachers had little time and/or reason to know student's names. So, while Colégio Ceará is marketed as a "better" educational option, many teachers were stretched by competing priorities and, as such, the pedagogical team *could not* distinguish a school like Colégio Ceará since the same educators worked in public and (other) private schools.

Teaching third year was a largely male profession at Colégio Ceará. Only two out of twenty-two teachers that taught the afternoon *turma* were female. Hence, although women accounted for half of all students, a heterosexual male "gaze" (Mulvey 1975) evolved in the classroom as the "you" that male teachers employed often referred to a male perspective: "You've just left school and you see a beautiful woman", "You and your girlfriend are having a fight", etc. Furthermore, male teachers characterized women as alternately desired, irrational, and/or seeking boyfriends for financial gain. The biology teacher used students in the classroom²⁷ to illustrate the genetics of blood type. "Sara says that Jorge is the father of her baby. She's O, he's A, and the baby is B. Do we need a judge? No! It's not his baby. Sara, you can try for another victim." Both male and female students enjoyed this suggestive method of teaching. *Machismo* permeated the classroom as teachers used these gender normative, stereotyped understandings of men and women to make lessons more interesting.

²⁷ This biology teacher knew students' names because he had taught students for three years, several times a week. Still, he only knew *some* students' names, not all.

Although the public sector recruits those with a teaching certificate, Colégio Ceará appeared to favour past university entrance exam performance over certification. Several teachers started engineering degrees but ended up teaching rather than finishing their degree – still, these teachers proved popular with students as they had done what students hoped to do: gain entry to a highly competitive course like engineering. Other professionals recruited to teach included a veterinarian, an architect and a journalist. Having reached these career goals, perhaps these professionals were meant to transfer some of their expertise/test performance abilities to their students. Given that the teaching profession was not held in high regard, perhaps Colégio Ceará recruited those who *had* succeeded²⁸, rather than those who always aimed to go into teaching.

Students

When asked to describe his students' backgrounds, Professor Clairton immediately responded, "Poor! They have nothing. They come from dangerous neighbourhoods. Class E." Realistically, Professor Clairton overstated students' economic situations as Class E designates those with a monthly combined household income ranging from R\$950 to R\$1400 (see Appendix I for conversion) and attending third year of Colégio Ceará cost approximately R\$450 per month. Though some students received scholarships and many received discounts, Colégio Ceará's price would have precluded most families in Class E from attending. While students' families strove to lump themselves in with those who attended "better" schools, teachers and administrators privately challenged that distinction whilst publicly proclaiming that students were just the same as Big 4 students.

Most students studied at a neighbourhood school before moving to Colégio Ceará for high school or third year. Some had parents who had attended university; others had parents who were only functionally literate. Most lived with two parents though not necessarily biological parents. One or two had travelled abroad but most had never left the state. Below, I formally introduce

²⁸ Even with this perceived success, most teachers lived in the same neighbourhoods and had similar socioeconomic backgrounds to their students.

some of these students who I will follow throughout the thesis. (The reader will recognise Carla, Ana and Juliana from Chapter 1.)

Carla

Carla was born in São Paulo. When she was still a baby, her family returned to Ceará to live a quieter life in the interior of the state. Her parents completed little schooling. Still, Carla's father felt it was important to provide the same kind of opportunities that Carla's brothers had had growing up in São Paulo so Carla moved to a little house a few blocks from Colégio Ceará to study (and live on her own) when she was 15 years old. Carla's older brothers also lived in Fortaleza. Her oldest brother, a public school teacher, had recommended Colégio Ceará. Carla professed an angst-y hatred for Fortaleza: the crime, the unbearable heat, the *fórró* music, the ugly people, etc. Carla frequently felt like an outsider. She hoped to pass the university entrance exam and move to São Paulo.

Maynara

Maynara also lived near Colégio Ceará, which she had attended since the start of primary school. Though her older brother moved to Colégio Farias Brito for high school, Maynara begged her parents to let her stay in Colégio Ceará. Maynara's parents were from the interior. During the week, her father worked in a city 150km away. Her mother was a *dona de casa* (housewife). Maynara explained that her parents were thrifty and recognised good investments. Perhaps this was why, though she received little pocket money, her parents were happy to buy her books. Maynara read widely and studied because she was genuinely interested. Her second-year ENEM scores merited a place on her preferred course, biology. Past performances did not reassure Maynara as she worried that she would disappoint her family and those at Colégio Ceará who had supported her. The school seemed to think that Maynara might have a chance at getting into medicine, which would mean that Maynara's accomplishments could be touted on billboards all over the city.

Ana

Ana lived with her mother and her 7 year-old half-brother in José Walter. Her mother was only nineteen years old when she fell pregnant with Ana; yet, with the help of Ana's grandparents, her mother finished university and qualified as an accountant. Money was tight in the family since Ana's mother had split up with her second husband. Still, Ana's mother recognised her daughter's interests in drawing and computers and had enrolled Ana in courses to develop these skills. Ana had taken a preparatory course to get into the prestigious (and free) public Colégio Militar but the competition was tough and she ended up at Colégio Ceará with many of the kids who had been in her prep course. Ana liked drawing and writing and hoped to channel these interests into studying Marketing at UFC.

Rebeca

Rebeca was one of the only girls in the honours *turma* who did not wear a uniform during the week that it was not mandatory. Instead, she wore jeans and modest floral blouses from her parents' Centro clothing stall. Rebeca's parents manufactured clothes in their home, selling them to bulk buyers from the interior. Rebeca used to live in the countryside but, with the on-going expansion of the city, new houses were rapidly being constructed in her neighbourhood. Now that her older sister could drive, the 1.5-hour bus ride to Colégio Ceará had turned into a 40-minute trip. Rebeca described the misery that her father endured growing up in the interior, hungry and abandoned by his father, before meeting her mother and starting his own family. Rebeca asked if I would translate some of her favourite English-language evangelical rock songs for her. She described the trip her family took to Europe and professed her great desire to study medicine. Rebeca worried that her education – she studied at a neighbourhood school before moving to high school at Colégio Ceará – would not be enough to get her into medicine. Many other kids had *always* studied at big, expensive schools so how could she compete?

Jorge

Jorge won a full scholarship to attend Colégio Ceará. Skinny and bespectacled, he may have seemed an unlikely candidate for bringing students in the honours *turma* together. Nonetheless, Jorge had served as class co-president since he began high school at Colégio Ceará. Jorge ran the class football betting pool and reported class concerns to Director Costa. Besides school, Jorge took English classes and was active in the Catholic Church. Jorge's father was a construction worker and his mother was a nursery teacher. His parents divorced and remarried when he was little and he lived with his mother, stepfather and two younger half-siblings in Barra do Ceará. Jorge told me that the family used to struggle but now they were prospering. Five years ago, they didn't have a car and they only had one television. Now they had a car, two televisions and cable TV. Different from most boys in the class, Jorge did *not* want to study engineering. Teachers at the school believed he might be able to get a much-coveted place in law but, if not, maybe he would be a history teacher or a priest.

Renan

Renan had just turned 17 but knew he looked younger. He was short and skinny with a tiny silver stud in his nose and hair that was perfectly swept across his forehead like the characters in his favourite British television programme, *Skins*. Renan lived in a house in Montese, a 25-minute bus ride from the school. His father ran the production end of the family business, a men's clothing store, whilst his mother managed the shop. Renan was the baby of the family. Since his older sister studied business administration at university and planned to take over the family business, Renan was free to study what he wanted: Biotechnology – if he could get in. When Renan's mother found that the Big 4 schools offered discounts for first year only, she enrolled Renan in Colégio Ceará, where she was guaranteed a discount throughout Renan's high school career. Many of Renan's childhood friends at his neighbourhood school accompanied him to the afternoon *turma* at Colégio Ceará.

Juliana

Juliana was loud, outgoing, and flirtatious. Even as one of the *novatos* (new students) in third year, Juliana immediately knew everyone. Juliana had moved to Fortaleza from a city in the interior of the neighbouring state as her *cearense* father wanted to be closer to his aging mother. Her father had always been self-employed: in the past, he ran a *self-service* restaurant and made and sold clothes. Now, he imported underwear from China and sold them on to bulk buyers in the interior. Until moving to Fortaleza, Juliana attended public school exclusively. Her parents enrolled her in Colégio Ceará when neighbours in their condominium explained that only children from the nearby *favela* attended the dangerous public school. Juliana knew that her public education had put her behind other students and that, more than likely, she would have to find a private university course. Still, Juliana did not worry about the future. She was enjoying living in a big city with so many options. There were no McDonald's where she had lived before!

Conclusions

Though I contend that this thesis is an ethnography of the private schooling of Fortaleza *batalhadores'* children, there were not uniform conditions amongst my friends; rather, what unified them was that they studied together at the so-called "second-tier" Colégio Ceará. Studying in a private school was a fundamental part of their class identities as the students I met thought about education as a way to consolidate class status and/or achieve social mobility.

Once comfortably inside a shopping mall, *fortalezenses* relaxed and forgot about the violence and inequality outside. But what did this have to do with private schooling? Perhaps this sheds light on why a school "has to be... a plural space in which everyone feels good, if possible more equipped than a shopping mall". Like shopping malls, private schools offered a variety of amenities that conferred class status; and, like shopping malls, private schools were equipped with guards to (literally and figuratively) keep undesirable people out. For *batalhadores*, private schools, like shopping malls, conveyed a real and imagined shift from threatened to safe, from periphery to centre, from poor to middle class.

Chapter 3 Third Year: the *luta* of the *vestibulando*

After continued interruptions during the final week of the second year of high school in November 2011, the frustrated Physics teacher stopped his board work, faced the fifty students, and issued his fiercest warning yet:

Pay attention! I know this is boring. I know! But do you want to go to UFC? Do you know how many people took ENEM last year? Five million! Do you know how many spaces there are in the federal universities? 50,000!²⁹ Only 1% can go to federal university. If you're going to get in, you need to pay attention during third year. This isn't a joke! It's R\$600 per month to pay for a private *cursinho* (cram school) if you don't pass next year. Do you want to do that? No? Then pay attention to this boring stuff!

During the remaining twenty minutes, students seemed to concentrate – or, at least, stayed quiet. Teachers persistently invoked this refrain as the second year of high school came to a close.

Teachers at Colégio Ceará characterised the third year of high school as the time that students would need to *lutar* (to fight, struggle, compete) in order to beat difficult odds and pass vestibular, the university entrance exam. Similar narratives about the demands of university entrance exams have been found elsewhere: in China, exam preparation was described as “war” (Kipnis 2001: 483) while in Japan students navigated “hell” (Okano 1983: 4). These metaphors implied enemies, prolonged suffering and the sense that few would succeed.

A few days before third year started Larícia, the honours *turma* co-president, posted to Facebook:

Monday the *luta* begins. The holidays passed too quickly... Sleep and social life: what will I be without you? I long to be an engineer! Last phase to start the first battle! Monday, let's go!

²⁹ Numbers that the teacher gave that day were somewhat inaccurate. In fact, approximately 4.6 million took ENEM in 2010 and there were over 85,000 spaces available through SISU (*Sistema de Seleção Unificada*, the Unified Selection System). Still, this amounts to 1.8%.

Larícia marked third year as different to previous years and implied a transition: she would leave behind adolescence and life without responsibilities to take up her “first battle”. Larícia’s primary responsibility during third year would be studying as she hoped to transform hard work and sacrifice into an exam result that would allow her to enter her desired course at university.

Dalsgaard et al (2008) found that Recife youth had similar ideas about “proper” transitions to adulthood. “[E]ducation, work and economic independence” figured heavily in young people’s understandings of becoming adult (59). Low-income youth viewed caring and providing for their own families as responsibilities that would signal adulthood whilst middle-class youth focused on a “generic cultural script” that viewed education as key to adulthood (50). “Entering university is often a milestone in the transition between adolescence and youth, as university education (unlike compulsory schooling) is perceived as involving a commitment to an individual self-chosen future” (58). Focused on the future, middle-class youth “expected to study in private schools, pass the vestibular, go to university, have their first work experience as trainees while studying, find a good job, and then marry, move away from home, and have children” (68). Low-income and middle-class young people in Recife struggled to meet these ideals of “proper” transition; yet, youth often questioned themselves rather than expectations *or* the mechanisms that made expectations unrealistic.

Many students’ parents had *not* followed this idealised middle-class trajectory. Nevertheless, *batalhador* parents encouraged their children to study so that they can have “a gentler future with better results” (Maciel 2010: 110). Colégio Ceará reinforced that “script” of university as the only viable pathway to adulthood and an “individual self-chosen future”. Throughout Brazil, vestibular has been widely characterised as a rite of passage (Barroso & Barreto 1976; Rodrigues & Pelisoli 2008). Accordingly, Colégio Ceará teachers and administrators differentiated third-year students from other students, often referring to third-year students as *vestibulandos* (literally “vestibular-ing”, those engaged in preparing for vestibular) rather than *alunos* (students, pupils). In this and other ways, third year was something different, not only because it was when students would conclude high school but more

so because students would be tested literally and figuratively. Similarly, Okano describes the Japanese university entrance exam as a “rite of passage” since “it requires self-discipline, patience, endurance and self-sacrifice, the dispositions which are considered necessary for ‘successful’ adult life” (1992: 10).

In this chapter I ask: what “dispositions” did Colégio Ceará students develop (or fail to develop) during their *lutas*? I provide a history of vestibular before examining how staff and students characterised third-year as a *luta* that could be won or lost. Students would battle a variety of opponents (self, system, and others) in this rite of passage that promised to transform (emerging middle-class) youth into (middle-class) adults, starting by changing *vestibulandos* into *universitários* (university students). I examine the skills Colégio Ceará students mastered in preparing for vestibular and reflect on what this says about the “dispositions... necessary for ‘successful’ adult life”.

History of the *Luta*: Access to Higher Education

Almeida (2006) demonstrates that, from 1824 to 2003, “access to higher education in Brazil was mostly linked to questions of privilege and not necessarily to the verification of merit and individual capacity” (75)³⁰. In this section, I trace the history of vestibular and access to higher education with the aim of contextualising the *luta* that Colégio Ceará’s *vestibulandos* faced.

Evolution of the traditional vestibular

In 1911, the government created the first vestibular for law and medicine faculties (Mattos 2012) in order to curb on-going fraud and corruption in the admissions process (Almeida 2006). At that time, only those (male) students who attended a handful of elite colégios were eligible to participate in vestibular. The 1960s brought policy reform that promised greater access, as those who graduated any type of high school were allowed to take vestibular and enter university. However, a surplus of qualified students prompted universities to increase the difficulty of their entrance exams to avoid

³⁰ For a more exhaustive overview of the policies that have governed access to higher education, see Almeida (2006).

overcrowding. The format of vestibular shifted from written to multiple-choice (Almeida 2006) as it became:

an instrument for discarding candidates rather than for selecting them; increasing the degree of difficulty of the tests, turning them incompatible with that which, in fact, was taught in high school. With a sense of opportunism, the well-known '*cursinhos*' began and flourished because of that distance between what was taught to the student at the secondary and university level. (Netto 1986: 43 as cited in Mattos 2012, my translation)

Creating a more demanding test that more or less necessitated (paid-for) *cursinhos* ensured that, regardless of the policy that made more people eligible, university spaces were still concentrated amongst elites.

In 1970, a national commission on vestibular developed a new system whereby test-takers were ranked in decreasing order; thus, a student might pass and be *classificável* (classifiable) but the student must be *classificado* (classified, within the top-ranked students) in order to enter his/her desired course (Carvalho et al 2014). This new system allowed public universities to deal with the growing surplus of qualified test-takers. Popular and difficult-to-enter courses like engineering, medicine, and law remained small whilst private universities and newly established humanities courses at public universities absorbed children of the burgeoning middle classes. From the mid-1970s, most state and federal universities were administering their own two-phase vestibular processes. The first phase was a general knowledge test, designed to eliminate less qualified candidates. Those who passed went on to compete in a second round with tests specific to the candidate's chosen course and an essay component. Changes to vestibular were meant to shore up the meritocracy of the test and defend against fraud and corruption and /but, at every stage, the system selected for elites and the upper middle classes. Non-elites, particularly those unable to afford top private schools or *cursinhos*, were channelled into lesser socially valued public university courses and /or private universities.

In the past twenty years, government policies have attempted to address the link between socio-economic inequalities and access to higher education. The

PT government prioritised expanding access to higher education (Instituto Lula 2014). Under Presidents Lula and Dilma, 18 new federal universities were created and services at existing federal universities were expanded to 173 new campuses. Some public universities began to adopt quota systems, reserving spaces on the basis of identity (Afro-Brazilians and indigenous), income, and public school attendance. (The state and federal universities in Ceará resisted these quotas until they were made federal law in 2012³¹.) In addition, the process for creating private university-level courses was liberalized, generating increased opportunities to access (private) higher education. (Though, liberalizing the market did not guarantee *quality* higher education.) Scholarship and loan programmes like Prouni (*Projeto Universidade Para Todos*, Project University for Everyone) and FIES (*Fundo de Financiamento Estudantil*, Student Finance Fund) helped low-income students access these private universities. As a result of these policies, the number of students in higher education more than doubled between 2002 (3.5 million) and 2012 (7.04 million).

Still these policies did not reduce inequality in accessing the free public universities in Ceará. In 2010, when the students I followed at Colégio Ceará began high school and the year that UFC held its final traditional two-phase vestibular, UFC admitted just 307 public school students to a class of over 5500 (Diário do Nordeste 2010; APEOC 2011). Although 90% of students in Ceará attended public high school, public students made up only 5.5% of those admitted to UFC. This history of vestibular demonstrates the continued struggle to access higher education (especially public and free) for those who are not amongst the upper classes. While private schooling was the supposed first step in the middle-class “script”, it was by no means a guarantee that one would gain entry to university, public or otherwise.

ENEM & SISU: Widening access to public higher education

ENEM has been hailed as the test that will finally “democratize” public university education in Brazil. Originally conceived as a tool to nationally

³¹ Quotas that allocate up to 50% of spaces for all federal universities were signed into law in 2012. In the 2013 admissions process, UFC designated 12.5% of available spaces to low-income students and Afro-Brazilians. I discuss classroom discourses about this policy in Chapter 4.

rank high schools in 1998 (inevitably, private institutions came out on top with the exception of federally funded, highly selective public schools), ENEM was overhauled in 2009 and offered as admissions criteria in place of the traditional vestibular for many public federal and state universities (Guia Especial do ENEM 2010). Several elements related to ENEM helped to democratize entrance to higher education.

First, ENEM reduced the costs involved in registering for vestibular. For 2010 academic year entry, the UECE and UFC entrance exams cost R\$85 and R\$100 respectively. With the monthly minimum wage set at R\$465³² these prices limited access and, although universities issued fee exemptions, this was not without another bureaucratic process. A former public school student studying at UFC described leaving her house at 3am to arrive at UFC at 4am so that she could be at the front of the queue for a fee exemption. Hours later, she found herself having to lie about her family's household goods as, while her family's income met the requirements, she worried that having a second-hand washing machine or a refrigerator might disqualify her. ENEM's price of R\$35 (and the fact that public school students were exempted from paying) reduced barriers to accessing the university entrance exam.

Second, a number of other administrative and logistical changes made the entrance exam more accessible. Under the traditional two-phase vestibular for UFC and UECE, the first phase was held on a weekend in November at locations throughout Fortaleza. Test-takers passing the first phase took the second phase over two days in December, with results announced in January. A student taking more than one vestibular managed simultaneous administrative processes at considerable expense. (An important component of private schooling in third year was, of course, that students were continually reminded about upcoming deadlines and walked through the bureaucratic steps necessary to participate.) On the other hand, ENEM was administered over a single November weekend in schools throughout the country, meaning that most would not have to travel far to take the test.

³² Here, I provide the 2009 minimum salary as test-takers paid for the 2010 test in October 2009.

Third, ENEM changed how *vestibulandos* applied for their courses. Traditionally, test-takers chose a course when they signed up for vestibular. As such, they were locked into a course decision up to four or five months before taking the exam. Many who had applied for highly subscribed courses were knocked out after the first phase and were made to wait another six months or a year before they could apply to university again. Those registering for ENEM did not have to lodge a course and/or university preference. Rather, they could use their scores, released in late December, to apply online in January to a variety of public state and federal university places via the Ministry of Education's *Sistema de Seleção Unificada* (SISU, System of Unified Selection). An additional benefit was that SISU allowed test-takers to move away from the old model of university-specific preparation. *Vestibulandos* prepared for a single exam, constructed under the direction of the Ministry of Education, which would give them access to courses across the country. With 16,735 places at 35 public higher education institutions in its first year, this revamped ENEM promised greater opportunities and mobility for Brazilian students. For the 2013 process, SISU offered 171,756 places on 4,731 courses at 115 universities and higher education institutions throughout Brazil (Moreno & Guilherme 2014).

Did these changes “democratize” Brazilian higher education? ENEM results showed distinct regional and private school biases; still, when UFC adopted ENEM and SISU, the percentage of public school students jumped from 5.5% in 2010 to 23.7% in 2011 without applying any admissions quotas (Rocha 2013).

Local Opinions on ENEM

Over and over, I heard from academics and teachers that ENEM would revolutionize Brazilian education, that classroom instruction would no longer be teaching to the test with the focus on memorization. In place of this, ENEM tested five “basic competencies” including language command, comprehension of phenomena/processes, problem solving, construction of arguments, and ability to elaborate positions (Guia Especial do ENEM 2010; INEP 2012). With basic knowledge of a subject, students could employ critical

thinking skills to find a correct answer. As one Colégio Ceará teacher explained to his students,

ENEM privileges the students who read, think critically, and who have the skills to work quickly. ENEM does not allow you to study less. It asks you to think critically, be flexible, and apply what you know.

Educators argued that this pedagogical change would revolutionise teaching methods. Perhaps ENEM would even do away with *cursinhos* as schools would finally teach students how to think for themselves.

Students gave similar readings of the test: the problem of ENEM was not the content but time. Students struggled to maintain the focus necessary to tackle long reading passages and complicated problem sets over 4.5 hours on day one and 5.5 hours on day two. Asked whether ENEM was difficult, Maynara responded that ENEM was about endurance rather than difficulty. It was not the content that made ENEM challenging: if you could get through the test, then you passed. Teachers and students used the verb “*treinar*” (to train, practice, rehearse) in relation to this kind of ENEM preparation. (The other common use of *treinar* referred to honing physical form at the gym.) Under this discourse, non-elite *vestibulandos* who fully committed themselves to the hard work necessary to train for ENEM would be able to build up the skills necessary to pass.

That said, ENEM was not without critiques *and* on-going problems. Parents, academics, and taxi drivers alike warned that ENEM was producing less qualified and able students. In the old vestibular system, candidates needed to prove their abilities in subjects related to their proposed coursework. Thus, candidates for medicine would take biology and chemistry subject tests. With the more generalist ENEM, students were no longer learning enough and were thus struggling and falling behind at university. What was the point in rejigging admissions if universities would have to offer remedial classes? It is unclear whether or not using ENEM as admissions criteria meant selecting “less capable” students or if this was a veiled discourse to defend the class boundaries previously erected under the old vestibular system.

Furthermore, problems had plagued ENEM since its revamp. The Ministry of Education rescheduled the 2009 test after it was discovered that the test had been stolen. In 2010, data of those registered for the test were leaked online and 21,000 defective test booklets were encountered on the test day. In 2011, one of Fortaleza's Big 4 private schools gave test questions to its students via a practice exam, causing protracted legal battles and the annulment of the leaked questions nationwide. As they prepared for ENEM in 2012, Colégio Ceará students wondered whether the state would be able to carry out such an operation without problems.

Historically, *batalhadores* had been shut out of higher education, particularly state- and federally-funded universities. Attending Colégio Ceará offered the possibility for following that middle-class script for the "proper" transition to (a consolidated middle-class) adulthood. ENEM appeared to be eroding privilege in access to higher education. Perhaps ENEM could make vestibular fairer, a *luta* that Colégio Ceará *vestibulandos* stood a chance of winning? Still, students could not rely on memorization; they would need to work hard and practice (*treinar*) in order to win their *lutas*.

The prevalence of *preguiça*

Pensamento social brasileiro has continually examined the particularities of Brazilianness and its correspondence (or lack thereof) with modernity. Ability and inability to work hard play into these narratives about being Brazilian (Ianni 2002; Ortiz 2001) and/or *nordestino* (Albuquerque 2014). Ianni (2002) argues that *preguiça* was brought into the national imaginary with the abolition of slavery as there became:

the pressing and urgent challenge of redefining work, giving it dignity, considering it an indispensable, dignified activity with which one expresses the dignity of the individual and society, resulting in wealth and prosperity (Ianni 2002: 183, my translation).

As such, an influx of European immigrants (largely concentrated in Brazil's South), brought in to phase out slavery, provided a hard-working foil against which much of the rest of the population was cast as *preguiçoso* (lazy) and backwards in the national imaginary.

I was surprised to find similar theories that linked Brazilianness to *preguiça* circulating in the classroom. While students were meant to be copying notes on medieval Portuguese poetry, bubbly Luciano engaged me in a rapid-fire interview. Why had I left Scotland? Was I forced to leave? (Here, he sought to clarify if I might be some kind of outsider who did not belong to and/or could not fit within British society.) Why would I *choose* to come to Fortaleza? What was the weather like in Scotland? What was the weather like in the US? Was it true that people were not as lazy there? I asked Luciano for clarification. Why did Luciano think that Brazilians were “lazier” than other people? Luciano explained that he had heard that Brazilians were lazy because of the hot climate so he assumed that those who lived in the North, where it was colder, worked harder. Several months later in Geography class, Professor Victor provided a similar analysis in his discussion of why colonisation had led to such different outcomes for the US and Brazil. “If Brazil had been colonized by the English, Brazilians would still be just as lazy.” There was no disputing that Brazilians were lazy; there was only wondering *why* this had happened.

“Civilização da Preguiça³³” (Civilization of Laziness), presented during Reading Comprehension class, posited that the post-slavery attempt to redefine work had failed. While Anglo-Saxons and Germans developed an understanding that “work is an instrument of riches and realizations, and... an index of God’s blessing”, Brazilians had never acquired a taste for work. The reading continued:

If we were to calculate the number of people that, from North to South of the country, occupy our beaches, we would ascertain the deficit of productive and valid manual labour. Dead weight (which should be the restricted minority) overloads those that work... The development of the country demands a radical change in our understandings around work. Beginning in primary school this should be addressed because contempt for work is a Brazilian norm.... [There must be] a total

³³ “Civilização da Preguiça” was part of a handout that included excerpts from authors ranging from Adam Smith, Graciliano Ramos, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, and Chico Buarque. At a full page, it was one of the longest readings. This reading contained no citation. A Brazilian colleague suggested that this passage might be the work of a Colégio Ceará teacher.

revision of mentality, from primary school to higher education, from the house to the workshop, from the office to the factory, at the end of which the Brazilian acquires the notion that Brazil will only achieve leaving this stage of underdevelopment when work... is considered essential to our own human welfare and to the progress of Brazilian civilization.

Professor Danilson provided no critique but smiled and laughed as he read aloud the passage and asked students to answer the related questions. An implicit cultural determinism in the passage suggested that Brazilian laziness was a hangover from “bad” colonists devoid of the Protestant work ethic. Brazilians – from the poorest to the richest – were characterized as backwards beach-going layabouts who impeded the country’s progress and development. “The Brazilian” was too individualistic to consider collaborating (through hard work) on improving the country. Still, all of this could be fixed with an overhaul in how Brazilians related to work.

Maya Mayblin (2010) finds strong links between work and personhood in a rural agricultural community in the Northeast:

[P]eople who consciously present themselves as, or are observed by others to be, hard working sufferers come to be known and labelled as *trabalhadores*. [*Trabalhador* may denote] an especially hard worker—someone whose capacity to labour and suffer on behalf of their family is popularly perceived as being beyond the call of duty. Such persons... are regarded as pre-eminently moral persons and are accorded a special status (27).

Mayblin’s informants did not reap wealth and prosperity; nor did they appear to be attempting to bring on the “progress of Brazilian civilization.” Yet, hard work (and suffering) defined them as special.

The *luta* of third year fits within these understandings of hard work. Cross-culturally, laziness is a common charge for students who do not perform well in school (Willis 1977; Woronov 2011). Yet, in Colégio Ceará, *preguiça* was discussed more as “cultural” norm than exception. This laziness was understood as another potential barrier that students would face in their *lutas*.

By repeating stereotypes of Brazilians as lazy, a separate “special” category was constructed for those who *chose* to engage in hard work. Students usually described their families as fitting into this category. Parents – especially mothers – worked long hours. They struggled, suffered, and sacrificed themselves. This separate “special” category also applied to those who channelled their efforts into the hard work of preparing for vestibular. Eschewing laziness to engage in the *luta* implied the possibility of avoiding other forms of labour and suffering in which parents and grandparents had been engaged. Moreover, these individual *lutas* promised to collectively drive Brazil “forward”.

Preparing parents for the *luta*

Parents’ Night served as a time for Colégio Ceará staff to orient and prepare parents for third year. Parents (mostly mothers) with younger children in tow listened to presentations from Colégio Ceará staff but said very little throughout the hour and a half meeting.

After introductions, Head of Third Year Luane asked parents to look around and note the low attendance at the event. With over 350 students in third year, there were approximately 45 parents in the audience. Luane emphasised that *these* few parents (as opposed to those who had not attended) had already taken the first step in helping their child to pass ENEM. Attendance only confirmed the views that Luane had expressed privately about Colégio Ceará parents during our first meeting. Luane confided that most parents were overworked and unable to commit to and/or uninterested in their child’s academics. Parents lived difficult lives, working long hours every day and commuting long distances such that parents “only come to school to complain when their child fails but then it is too late.” Luane took this as a disservice to a child’s education. She lamented the lack of parental involvement as there was only so much that could be done at school.

Attendance also seemed to corroborate what School Psychologist Ana Cláudia had explained about the differences between parents with students in morning versus afternoon classes. Though Parents’ Night was held after afternoon classes had finished, there were still proportionally fewer parents of

afternoon students in attendance. Did afternoon parents somehow care less? Ana Cláudia had explained that, even if students had always studied during the afternoon session, *all* students should be in morning classes during third year. Demand for morning and afternoon classes was different and thus, even though teachers and didactic materials were the same, the more popular morning classes were more expensive than afternoon classes. Ana Cláudia reasoned that those who stayed in afternoon classes would end up sleeping late, rushing to school, staying up all night, and failing to establish a good study routine. Parents who put children in afternoon classes did not know better or they struggled to pay the fees for morning classes – or perhaps a combination of both. Because of this distinction in fees, staff characterised afternoon parents as overworked, financially overburdened, and/or needing guidance.

After Luane's welcome, Director Costa told the history of Colégio Ceará, including its founding by his grandfather and its current incarnation as nursery to university education. He explained that Colégio Ceará's goal was that every student be "*formado*". *Formado* implied two meanings: the first translation, "shaped", refers to the social and cognitive development that the school would provide whilst the second meaning, "graduated" or "trained", suggested the school's intermediary role in creating university graduates. Director Costa told parents that Colégio Ceará strived to create citizens who understood their rights and responsibilities and who would better the human condition.

After a rundown of Colégio Ceará's exam preparation-oriented classes and resources, School Psychologist Ana Cláudia offered third-year specific advice for parents. Third year demanded good nutrition so parents must ensure that students ate regular, healthy meals. A study schedule and a well-lit workspace were also characterized as critical. Parents should *not* encourage students to deviate from their study schedule by planning family outings during study time. Younger children must be kept from disturbing the student's studies. Parents and families could help to stimulate critical thinking by following current events in newspapers and magazines and then discussing those current events alongside the weekly essay topic. Ana Cláudia's advice stressed the discipline that parents would have to exercise

over themselves and their families in order for students to succeed. In essence, Ana Cláudia summarised, “the entire family will be taking ENEM this year.”

Next, Ana Cláudia addressed potential distractions. Third year was not the time for students to take on a new computer or language class. Four hours of exercise a week was sufficient to help students focus but any more might take away from schoolwork. This was a far cry from the non-third-year meetings wherein parents were encouraged to sign students up for chess, ballet, futsal, judo, and basketball. Romantic relationships were also classified as distractions. Students could “*namorar*” (“court”, have a boyfriend/girlfriend) in eleven months—after they had secured a place at university. Parents would need to screen their children’s lives for potential distractions and try to keep them to a minimum.

Finally, Ana Cláudia urged parents to help their children consider a variety of options in the coming year. In private, Director Costa and School Psychologist Ana Cláudia had disparaged parents’ tendencies to push for unrealistic, high prestige courses like medicine, law, and engineering. Most students simply were not up to the task. Colégio Ceará had one or two students gain admission to law or medicine each year. Engineering was more accessible but still very competitive. Thus, Ana Cláudia tried to temper parents’ expectations, framing this as if *parents* would be helping children to choose realistically. She explained that, in addition to UFC, students should consider less prestigious UECE, which had great courses and was still a public university. Because Colégio Ceará traded on parents’ hopes that their children would follow that middle-class script, there was a fine line to navigate in order to satisfy parents.

Parents’ Night focused on vestibular preparation, leaving no room for other trajectories. Third year was characterised as different to any other schooling up to this point in a child’s life. It would require more parental involvement and (student *and* parent) discipline. Colégio Ceará demonstrated the resources it would provide (an overwhelming schedule of extra classes and some career guidance) whilst counselling parents on what the family must do to help a child succeed. Parents were told to be involved: cook meals, discuss

current events, provide a good study environment, etc. Underpinning Parents' Night was the sense that students' shortcomings or failures could not simply be pinned on teachers, the school, or even the educational system; families must be committed and provide the right conditions for their children to engage in this *luta*.

Preparing students for the *luta*

As the opening of this chapter suggests, teachers warned younger students about the importance and difficulty of third year. During the first few weeks of third year, teachers continued to bombard students with these types of messages to signal that this year really was different.

Professor Luziane, many students' favourite teacher, greeted students participating in the five-day pre-course with, "Good morning, third year! The year that you will pass *vestibular* has arrived!" The auditorium erupted in cheers. "In 2012, you'll leave school for university and become adults. It's very important not to lose focus. You are here to prepare for vestibular. I will be available for you as will the writing lab. We will pass vestibular in 2012!" Professor Luziane theatrically drew out the final sentence to the loudest cheers yet. Luziane framed third year as a long-anticipated rite of passage wherein attaining a place at university meant reaching adulthood. She positioned herself and the rest of the Colégio Ceará staff as eager-to-help elders accompanying students' journeys.

Later that day, Maths teacher Wanderlei greeted students with, "Third year, eh? Next year, you'll be in university!" Students cheered again but, as the lesson dragged on with Wanderlei working out difficult problems that he called *matemágica* (mathemagics), most students started socialising rather than paying attention. With twenty minutes left to go, several started packing their bags and another couple got up to leave. Wanderlei stopped the students, told them to sit down, and addressed the entire class, "You are not going to win the fight like this! This is a not a joke." Wanderlei started out trying to empower students but switched tactics as he saw that students were not committing themselves appropriately.

Similarly, during the first week of regular classes, the often-cranky Professor Gláucia told her restless and rowdy afternoon students, “If you play, you’ll be a student again in the *cursinho* in 2013. Those students of 2011 who dedicated themselves are in private and public universities. Those who didn’t take it seriously? You’ll see them next week when the *cursinho* starts. I hope that you have this consciousness.... Continue joking and end up studying again in 2013.” Finishing or not finishing high school was never the threat. Rather, teachers warned about the embarrassment of having to keep studying for vestibular – in essence, failing the rite of passage into adulthood. In a school where further education was the only option discussed (and, yet, most families lived other options outside the school), the *cursinho* symbolized a sort of expensive limbo where half-people languished.

During the pre-course and the first two weeks of class, Colégio Ceará staff alternated between the metaphorical carrot and stick in their methods of impressing the importance of third year. These tactics are not remarkable – in fact, most readers will recognise them from their own schooling. More interesting are the ways in which staff constructed vestibular as a rite of passage critical to adulthood. Joking, playing, and (to a certain extent) antagonising teachers would land students in limbo whilst those with dedication, focus, and cooperation would win the fight and pass into university/adulthood.

Uniforms for *pre-universitários*

Another element that suggested rite of passage was the third-year uniform. Other high school students were required to wear the uniform jeans and polo shirt along with black shoes. At R\$60, the uniform jeans were pricey and ill fitting for most adolescents. *Vestibulandos*, on the other hand, were allowed to choose their own blue jeans and trainers. In addition, the special third-year polo shirt was emblazoned with “*Pre-Universitário*” (Pre-University Student). The third-year uniform signified that students were not just *vestibulandos*; in fact, they were already Pre-University Students.

Raby (2005) suggests that in school dress codes:

a docile, productive citizenry is... envisioned, with the Others who fail to self-govern (or to display prescribed self-respect) disciplined... Such a shaping of the lives of adolescents is justified on the grounds that they are in the process of becoming citizens and therefore need the guidance of rules (84).

With the relaxing of the uniform rules in third year, the school constructed students as *pre-universitários*, closer to adulthood. Furthermore, moving away from uniforms approximated the trajectories that most students hoped to attain since uniforms are worn by those engaged in less-esteemed careers (military, service providers, secretarial staff, maids, etc.). The third-year uniform placed students in between younger students with more restricted dress codes and university students who had no uniform.

Knowing your enemies: Who/what are students fighting?

An additional element in preparing students for the *luta* was exploring who and/or what they would be fighting during third year. Students knew that they would be fighting a university entrance exam system that privileged elites – it remained unclear how ENEM would affect that. Discourses about laziness and hard work suggested that the student's biggest enemy would be oneself (see Chapter 4). Within the system though, students would be competing with others for spaces in their desired course and university.

Third year coordinator Luane brought information about this competition into classrooms. Students received a flyer (see Figure 3.1) detailing the *concorrência* (competition), the number of applicants vying for each space at UECE, which demonstrated that there were 9.34 students vying for every available space. Still, some courses like Veterinary Medicine (28.23) and Nutrition (33.03) were even more highly disputed while courses like Philosophy (2.64) and French (1.45) would be easier to enter. SISU, ENEM-based admissions, made determining *concorrência* for each space at UFC difficult. As such, a list of the 2011 pass marks (see Figure 3.2 for a list excerpt) was posted in each classroom so that students could see what score might theoretically be needed in 2012. Unfortunately this list did not inspire hope in all students. The 2011 nationwide average was 494.6 on a 1000-point scale. Colégio Ceará's 2012 average student score was higher than the

national at approximately 550. Still, as Figure 3.2 demonstrates, Colégio Ceará's average score would not have yielded an admission to any course in the first round and, in fact, that score would only serve for admission to a handful of less prestigious courses on campuses outside Fortaleza during the waiting list period. These *concorrência* shows triggered laughter and anxiety amongst Colégio Ceará students. Jorge and his friends joked about moving to Cariri to study Philosophy since surely one would only have to choose answers randomly to attain 373, the waiting list pass mark. Carla had considered Nutrition at UECE but, after seeing the *concorrência*, she decided that she should choose a different course – how could she beat 32 other people for a space? Juliana, the *novato* who had always attended public school before third year at Colégio Ceará, knew that she had little hope of entering a public university. These scores confirmed what she knew and let her focus on choosing a course at a private university.

Interestingly, students rarely voiced worries about one another as competition. About a quarter of the honours students declared their interest in medicine at the start of the year. Yet, teachers and students rarely acknowledged that these ten students would be competing against one another. Rather, each student was engaged in an individual competition against the system, himself, and anonymous others who threatened to set the pass mark higher. As this next section will show though, the difficulty also lay in navigating the organisation and pacing of third year.

UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL DO CEARÁ		COMISSÃO EXECUTIVA DO VESTIBULAR		28/05/2012	PAG: 1
VESTIBULAR 2012.2		CONCORRENCIA			
CIDADE		CURSO	VAGAS	INSCRITOS	CONCORRÊNCIA
FORTALEZA	1	5-1-1 GEOGRAFIA/BACH - DIURNO	30	231	7,70
FORTALEZA	2	5-2-3 GEOGRAFIA/LIC.PLENA - NOTURNO	30	194	6,47
FORTALEZA	3	14-1-1 CIEN.DA COMPUT./BACH - DIURNO	40	587	14,68
FORTALEZA	4	19-2-2 FISICA BACHARELADO - DIURNO	20	124	6,20
FORTALEZA	5	19-1-2 FISICA/LIC.PLENA - TARDE	30	75	2,50
FORTALEZA	6	19-1-3 FISICA/LIC.PLENA - NOTURNO	30	102	3,40
FORTALEZA	7	20-1-2 MATEMATICA/LIC.PLENA - TARDE	40	115	2,88
FORTALEZA	8	20-1-3 MATEMATICA/LIC.PLENA - NOTURNO	40	126	3,15
FORTALEZA	9	21-1-2 QUIMICA/LIC.PLENA - TARDE	30	166	5,53
FORTALEZA	10	21-1-3 QUIMICA/LIC.PLENA - NOTURNO	30	158	5,27
FORTALEZA	11	3-1-1 ENFERMAGEM/BACH - DIURNO	40	981	24,53
FORTALEZA	12	11-1-1 NUTRICAO/BACHARELADO - DIURNO	30	991	33,03
FORTALEZA	13	18-1-2 CIENCIAS BIOLOGICAS/LIC.PLENA - TARDE	30	403	13,43
FORTALEZA	14	23-1-1 EDUCACAO FISICA/L.PLENA - DIURNO	35	433	12,37
FORTALEZA	15	12-1-1 PEDAGOGIA/LIC.PLENA - DIURNO	40	217	5,43
FORTALEZA	16	12-1-3 PEDAGOGIA/LIC.PLENA - NOTURNO	40	210	5,25
FORTALEZA	17	9-1-1 MEDICINA VETER./BACH - DIURNO	30	847	28,23
FORTALEZA	18	17-2-1 CIENCIAS SOCIAIS LICENCIATURA - DIURNO	45	199	4,42
FORTALEZA	19	4-1-1 FILOSOFIA BACHARELADO - DIURNO	25	66	2,64
FORTALEZA	20	4-1-3 FILOSOFIA BACHARELADO - NOTURNO	25	60	2,40
FORTALEZA	21	4-2-1 FILOSOFIA LICENCIATURA PLENA - DIURNO	25	70	2,80
FORTALEZA	22	4-2-3 FILOSOFIA LICENCIATURA PLENA - NOTURNO	25	73	2,92
FORTALEZA	23	6-1-3 HISTORIA/LIC.PLENA - NOTURNO	40	424	10,60
FORTALEZA	24	26-1-1 LETRAS PORT./LITER./LIC.PLENA - DIURNO	35	138	3,94
FORTALEZA	25	26-1-3 LETRAS PORT./LITER./LIC.PLENA - NOTURNO	35	162	4,63
FORTALEZA	26	26-2-1 LETRAS/INGLES/LIC.PLENA - DIURNO	20	101	5,05
FORTALEZA	27	26-3-3 LETRAS/FRANCES/LIC.PLENA - NOTURNO	20	29	1,45
FORTALEZA	28	26-4-3 LETRAS/ESPANHOL/LIC.PLENA - NOTURNO	20	78	3,90
FORTALEZA	29	26-6-1 LETRAS/PORTUGUES/BACHARELADO - DIURNO	20	81	4,05
FORTALEZA	30	26-7-3 LETRAS/INGLES/BACHARELADO - NOTURNO	20	99	4,95
FORTALEZA	31	1-1-1 ADMINISTRACAO/BACH. - DIURNO	40	758	18,95
FORTALEZA	32	1-1-3 ADMINISTRACAO/BACH. - NOTURNO	40	636	15,90
FORTALEZA	33	13-1-1 SERVICO SOCIAL/BACH. - DIURNO	40	659	16,48
FORTALEZA	34	13-1-3 SERVICO SOCIAL/BACH. - NOTURNO	40	521	13,03
FORTALEZA	35	16-1-3 CIENCIAS CONTABEIS/BACH. - NOTURNO	50	654	13,08
FORTALEZA	36	7-2-1 MUSICA/PIANO/BACHARELADO - DIURNO	1	2	2,00
FORTALEZA	37	7-5-1 MUSICA/FLAUTA TRANSVERSA/BACH - DIURNO	1	1	1,00
FORTALEZA	38	10-5-1 MUSICA BACH EM COMPOSICAO - DIURNO	1	3	3,00
FORTALEZA	39	10-2-1 MUSICA/LIC.PLENA - DIURNO	25	42	1,68
SUBTOTAL.....			1.158	10.816	9,34

Figure 3-1: Competition for spaces by course at UECE for vestibular 2012.2 , the exam for August 2012 entry. The table lists course title, number of available spaces, number of applicants vying for those spaces and the *concorrência* (competition) provided by applicants per available space. Source: UECE

Fortaleza	Direito (Diurno)	50	753,7	747,3
Fortaleza	Direito (Noturno)	50	751,2	738,8
Fortaleza	Economia Doméstica	40	640,6	601,5
Fortaleza	Educação Física (Licenciatura)	50	664,4	611,0
Fortaleza	Enfermagem	40	710,2	658,4
Fortaleza	Engenharia Civil	120	732,6	681,5
Cariri	Engenharia Civil	50	711,6	644,5
Sobral	Engenharia da Computação	50	671,5	578,0
Fortaleza	Engenharia de Alimentos	50	675,3	624,4
Fortaleza	Engenharia de Energias e Meio Ambiente	120	706,6	673,8
Cariri	Engenharia de Materiais	50	655,6	580,2
Fortaleza	Engenharia de Pesca	50	666,5	616,6
Fortaleza	Engenharia de Produção Mecânica	60	706,0	688,2
Quixadá	Engenharia de Software	50	647,6	527,9
Fortaleza	Engenharia de Teleinformática (Diurno)	60	688,8	648,5
Fortaleza	Engenharia de Teleinformática (Noturno)	50	685,3	627,5
Fortaleza	Engenharia Elétrica	100	706,2	673,5
Sobral	Engenharia Elétrica	50	682,7	611,6
Fortaleza	Engenharia Mecânica	60	719,1	680,8
Fortaleza	Engenharia Metalúrgica	60	688,5	663,0
Fortaleza	Engenharia Química	70	716,7	674,8
Fortaleza	Estatística	60	648,4	588,4
Fortaleza	Farmácia	50	704,2	677,0
Fortaleza	Filosofia (Bacharelado)	10	675,5	556,8
Cariri	Filosofia (Bacharelado)	20	629,5	373,0
Cariri	Filosofia (Licenciatura)	30	622,1	447,5
Fortaleza	Filosofia (Licenciatura)	40	649,0	595,4
Fortaleza	Finanças	50	663,5	633,4
Sobral	Finanças	50	655,5	579,0
Fortaleza	Física (Bacharelado)	40	672,8	584,3
Fortaleza	Física (Licenciatura)	50	650,1	604,3

Figure 3-2: Selections from the UFC courses and associated ENEM pass marks for January 2012 entry. Columns list UFC location, course, number of spaces available, first round pass mark and final cutoff score for those admitted from the waiting list. Source: <http://www.sisu.ufc.br/notas-de-corte>

(Dis)Organisation & Pacing: Outline of the *luta*

Given the set-up that third year had received and my own understandings of studying and schooling, I expected that students would be slotted into a comprehensive, detailed study plan. The reality was somewhat different when the academic year started at the end of January.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7.20-8.10	Biology	Biology	Maths	Literature	Physics
8.10-9.00	Maths	History	Chemistry	Physics	Chemistry
9.00-9.50	Physics	Portuguese	Biology	Chemistry	English or Spanish
9.50-10.20	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10.20-11.10	Maths	Geography	Portuguese	Biology	History
11.10-12.00	Maths	Geography	Chemistry	Writing	History
12.00-12.50	Physics	Maths	Chemistry	Biology	Maths

Figure 3-3: Honours *Turma* Class Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
13.20-14.10	History	Biology	Geography	Physics	History
14.10-15.00	Biology	Geography	Portuguese	History	Chemistry
15.00-15.50	Physics	Maths	Literature	Biology	Chemistry
15.50-16.20	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
16.20-17.10	Chemistry	Portuguese	Biology	Maths	Maths
17.10-18.00	Biology	Writing	Maths	Physics	Chemistry
18.00-18.50	Physics				English or Spanish

Figure 3-4: Afternoon *Turma* Class Schedule

The School Week

At Colégio Ceará (as in other Brazilian public and private schools), the day was split into morning and afternoon sessions. The honours *turma* met during the morning session from 7:20am – 12:50pm, five days a week. The afternoon *turma* ran from 1:20pm – 6pm three days a week, and from 1:20pm – 6.50pm two days a week. Classes lasted 50 minutes: honours students had 30 per week and the afternoon *turma* had 27. Each session had a half-hour break between the third and fourth classes. While *turmas* stayed in the same room for a one-size-fits-all curriculum, teachers moved between classes. With the

weekly schedule set to accommodate teachers working at multiple schools and a curriculum heavy on maths and sciences, days of the week were stacked unevenly. Thus, honours students dreaded Mondays, as the schedule comprised three Maths, two Physics, and one Biology classes. Figures 3.3 and 3.4 show the weekly class schedules of the honours and afternoon *turmas* respectively.

In spite of the set schedules, classes were sometimes swapped, shifted, or cancelled due to teacher absence. A swap was executed last minute with *any* free teacher drafted to teach class. That is, Chemistry became Portuguese and the regular Chemistry class might never be made up. When one of the Physics teachers missed a month of classes after a motorcycle accident, classes were shifted forward and students were sent home an hour early. Afternoon students did not make up these classes. However, in an attempt to keep *honours* students on track, the school offered voluntary, after-school Physics classes, usually announced on the morning of the day that the make-up class was to be held. In this way, the schedule was not as predictable as Figures 3.3 and 3.4 suggest.

The schedule I have described includes only the basic required classes. A number of other elements were added throughout the year. After the Carnaval holidays, Colégio Ceará added three hours of Current Events and Logic classes on Thursdays and 4 hours of ENEM problem-solving classes on Saturday and (less frequently) Sunday mornings. Thursday classes ran predictably every week while Saturday and Sunday classes ran most weekends but were not announced until the Friday before. Practice ENEMs alternated with exams on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, increasing in frequency after the July holidays. From September to early November, Colégio Ceará offered a timed practice essay on Wednesdays. In addition, Colégio Ceará urged students to bring essays to the Writing Lab to receive one-on-one help – the Writing Lab opened mid-March and ran somewhat erratic hours, depending on teacher availability. Some students added extra courses (for an additional fee) on Thursday nights taught by Colégio Ceará history and maths teachers. When students were not attending class, they were told to spend “days off” studying at home. The schedule for third year was difficult to follow *and* overwhelming.

Keeping to this timetable, on Thursdays, an honours student might be in regular classes from 7:20am to 12:50pm, break for lunch, in Current events and Logic from 2:30pm to 5:30pm, and then extra Maths and History classes from 6pm to 8pm. Then again, if class was cancelled perhaps that student might be done with school by noon. An afternoon *turma* student could be in regular classes until nearly 7pm on Friday and then be back in school again at 8am on Saturday. Given that most students lived elsewhere in the city, extended bus journeys bookended these long days.

On a Wednesday two months before ENEM, I asked Carla why Maynara had not come to school that day. Carla told me, “Laziness, you know. She’s feeling lazy³⁴.” Though I understood that “lazy” was not a perfect translation for *preguiça*, I still wondered how Maynara could be characterised as *preguiçosa* since she was one of the most hardworking, internally motivated students I had met. Moments later, it clicked that practice exams and extra classes had linked weekends into weeks such that sixteen year-old Maynara had not had a day off from the *luta* in more than two and a half weeks. As such, I had to rethink my understanding of *preguiça*. Laziness was not a permanent characteristic but a temporary state. Unable to maintain her stamina indefinitely, Maynara indulged her *preguiça* for the day, much like Carla had in Chapter 1. Perhaps this *preguiça* arose from the same combination of thoughts and feelings as Carla’s *preguiça* had: sometimes it was too difficult and potentially dangerous to fully engage.

The state legally obliged students to attend 75% of the regular classes in order to pass the year³⁵ (LDB 1996). Though the school had these official posted hours, students were expected to choose their own paths and strategies in managing the quantity and quality of resources available to them. What I perceived as a frustrating and disorganised process, most students accepted as part of giving themselves over to vestibular preparations and the *luta*. Very few students participated in extracurricular activities so, theoretically, time and timing was not an issue. Many students ignored extra classes entirely. (Poor attendance – 15 out of a possible 85 – characterised extra classes for afternoon students.) Others attended every extra class offered.

³⁴ “*Preguiça, sabe. Ela tem preguiça.*”

³⁵ At least, 3-4 students in each *turma* attended less than 75% but still passed.

Classes

Though students dreaded the idea of having to attend a *cursinho*, in its own way, third year at Colégio Ceará *was* a cram school: it offered almost no new material but rather provided a review of the first two years of high school coupled with batteries of practice multiple-choice questions. Colégio-generated *apostilas*³⁶, 600-page tomes that collected short content summaries and practice exam questions for all subjects, replaced traditional textbooks. Students were issued a new *apostila* at the beginning of each term. By the end of the year, they had accumulated four regular *apostilas* and several smaller *apostilas* for philosophy, art history, and sociology, exam contents that were not covered in regular classes.

Each teacher was assigned content – their section of the *apostila* – which must be covered in order to prepare students for vestibular. Trusted teachers who had worked at Colégio Ceará for a number of years prepared content for subsections of the *apostila*. Some taught content they had prepared whilst others covered the material that was assigned to them. A teacher’s subsection was their purported specialty. Realistically, the majority of teachers simply taught the topics they were assigned in the *apostila*. Under this system, three different history teachers taught three different history classes per week. That is, students might be studying the French Revolution, the Brazilian colonial administration, and Ancient Egypt in the same week. This method across the subjects meant that 22 different teachers taught 27 classes to the afternoon *turma* each week. Students – and I – struggled to remember lessons (and teachers associated with the lessons) from week-to-week.

With so many movements in and out of the classroom, there was little time for students to connect with individual teachers. With attendance generated by a swipe-card entry system, teachers had been taken out of the equation. Professor Victor warned students during his first class:

The digital dehumanizes. Multiple-choice tests are corrected by computers and grades are put online for your mother without the

³⁶ Creating *apostilas* that can be sold to smaller private schools as part of a “teaching system” was seen as a good business plan. The most prestigious Fortaleza colégios packaged and sold their materials nationwide. The owners of Colégio Ceará were looking to improve their *apostilas* and expand into this market.

teacher in the process. At times, I'll run into you and you'll say 'Hi Professor!' and I have no idea who you are.

While Professor Luziane³⁷ might have told students that, "We will pass vestibular in 2012", the reality was that most teachers did not know many students' names.

The Portuguese expression for attending class is *assistindo à aula*, which translates as "watching class" in the same way that someone might watch a film or television. Given that the honours *turma* had nearly 50 students and the afternoon *turma* had 40, "watching class" served as a good description for students' interactions with teachers and material in the classroom: teachers presented lessons with minimal student interaction (see Chapter 6). There was never any group work that might have distracted the focus from the teacher.

Class formats varied. Several teachers spent half of the 50-minute class copying notes onto the board. Then, they ran through their notes over 10-15 minutes, solving an equation or adding a date as they went along. Finally, the class might turn to the practice exam questions during remaining class time. Several math teachers skipped lessons entirely and focused on teaching by solving practice questions.

About half of the teachers employed a call and response method in giving their lessons. For example, the Chemistry teacher pointed to a drawing of a molecule, asking, "What kind of bond is this? It is a dou..." Students recognized the teacher's inflection and pause as their cue to participate and vocalize. They responded in chorus "—ble bond". Particularly adept students were able to carry on conversations *whilst* participating in call and response. Though the method kept students from losing interest, it was unclear whether students would be able to reproduce knowledge without the help of the teacher's prompt.

A few teachers gave engaging lectures, using humour, sexual innuendo and situations familiar to students' lives in order to hold their attention.

³⁷ As *redação* (essay writing) teacher who also worked in Writing Lab, Professor Luziane corrected student essays and thus grew to know students' names and ideas far better than most staff at Colégio Ceará.

Describing an overcrowded *topic* with bad brakes, the Physics teacher lingered over relating how bodies would be rubbing together in order to highlight friction and the laws of motion. Maynara explained that teachers used these tactics to keep third year exciting. Otherwise, students were liable to lose interest. She suggested that this level of teacher-student interaction showed that teachers knew that students were older and more mature. Teachers who deployed these techniques were well liked; students laughed and paid attention while “watching” these classes.

Conversations between students made hearing the teacher difficult; most teachers were male and equipped with booming voices, loud enough to trump classroom noise. Others employed their own methods: a young teacher adapted a way of incorporating a *psiu* (shh) sound into every fifth or sixth word as he worked problems, several teachers banged the metal eraser on the dry erase board. A rhythm of socialising, copying notes, paying attention (or not), and doing it all over again developed.

Behaviour and attention spans varied widely between the honours and afternoon *turmas*. Students in the afternoon *turma* yelled out jokes at/about the teacher, scraped their desks across the floor in order to better talk to one another, and generally resisted paying attention and being shushed during lessons. Several entrepreneurial girls in the class brought items to sell and thus underwear, jewellery, chocolates, and money circulated whilst the teacher’s back was turned. The afternoon group’s “bad” behaviour prompted several failed seating charts; thus, the students who *wanted* to sit at the front and pay attention were sent to the back and others simply made friends with their new neighbours. The honours *turma* paid attention during most lessons, talking during lulls. Still, honours students seemed to agree that several teachers’ classes (usually with the least interesting teaching styles) did not merit paying attention. In both classes, students slept, read unrelated books and magazines, texted under their desks and did work for other classes. *Namorados* (boyfriend/girlfriend pairs) seemed in their own world, ignoring other students and pushing their desks together in order to better hold hands and caress one another. Teachers left these quieter students alone, as they were not causing disturbances in the classroom.

The difficulties of third year extended beyond the hard work of mastering test content. *Vestibulandos* endured cursory reviews of material they had studied previously, presented in formats that were often less than riveting. Though focus and attention were meant to be directed solely to the teacher, distractions in the classroom made it difficult to concentrate. Alternately, these distractions broke up the tedium of these intense bouts of focus and concentration. Some students were resolute throughout the seeming chaos of the classroom; they learned to block out noise and concentrate on the teacher or they banded together with others to get noisy students to quiet down. Others developed coping skills that included fading into the background and getting on with other tasks. Students had to discover their individual techniques for studying, or not studying.

Coursework & *simulados*

For third year, marks for each term were based on a single homework assignment composed of vestibular-style questions and a series of vestibular-style tests. The content of the homework and tests did not always match what had been taught and, therefore, it seemed difficult to know what or how to study. As such, students conferred on answers for their homework assignments before turning them in. *Vestibulandos* in both classes also bragged about the ingenious methods of *pescando* (“fishing” for answers, cheating) during exams that they had devised. Students discretely passed notes and even tapped out makeshift Morse code to share answers. Exam invigilators seemed oblivious. Maynara and Carla figured that half of the honours *turma* would never have passed the first two years of high school without this kind of classroom cooperation.

Optional *simulados* (ENEM exam simulations) were different to mandatory marked exams. These practice tests approximated exam conditions to help students build the endurance necessary for sitting 10 hours of exams over a weekend. Students *chose* to take part in these as part of their individual preparation. Cheating would have been foolish since these were designed to help determine how one would perform on ENEM, areas where one might need to improve, etc. Colégio Ceará posted *simulado* results ranked from best to worst in the corridor outside the third-year office. (Marked exam results

were not posted like this.) Thus, students could determine how their scores fit within the *concorrência* of other third-year students.

Students' approaches to coursework versus *simulados* mirrored the importance that teachers and parents placed on vestibular. Homework and exams were a formality of third year; the real test would be ENEM. As Professor Victor had warned at the start of the year, teachers had been disconnected from students' performances with the introduction of computerized marking. Hence, there was little feedback given on how students could improve. *Vestibulandos* were expected to judge their own performances and adapt accordingly.

Realities of the luta

So how did third year play out for individual students? What are the strategies they adopted? I look at the ways in which Carla, Renan and Maynara approached third year and preparing for vestibular.

Carla

Carla's approach to the *luta* was physically and emotionally demanding as she endured long hours sitting in classrooms, far from her parents who lived in the interior. Carla studied with the honours *turma* at Colégio Ceará in the mornings. When class finished around 1pm, she ate lunch at a *self-service*, went to the gym, showered and then headed to Colégio Farias Brito for vestibular *cursinho* from 6-10pm. She was up the next morning at 6:45 to be at Colégio Ceará for 7:20am. Sometimes, Carla would skip the gym to attend afternoon classes at Colégio Ceará; other times, she spent an afternoon working on an essay at the Writing Lab. Her *cursinho* offered extra classes and *simulados* at the weekend so she had to choose whether to attend these at Colégio Ceará or Colégio Farias Brito.

This gruelling schedule left Carla with little time for reviewing content. Carla admitted that she did not know when she would read the 9 required texts³⁸ for the São Paulo vestibular that she planned to take after ENEM. She did

³⁸ ENEM did not have a required reading list but some university vestibular processes provided lists of Brazilian literary classics that students were expected to read.

almost no homework or studying outside of class; however, Carla explained that this was OK because she learned best from watching classes. The more classes she saw, the better. Carla's tactic focused on quantity rather than quality. Both schools seemed to suggest that extra classes, tests, and resources would help so Carla had made herself flexible to these long hours and compliant to an unpredictable schedule. If attendance and long hours were any measure of the *luta*, Carla was committed and working hard. Still, she was not being rewarded. Midway through the year, she showed me the stack of *apostilas* and *simulados* she had acquired. Her *simulado* scores were not showing the progress she had hoped but surely all these resources were bound to pay off.

Carla recognised the sacrifices that she and her family were making: her parents worked hard to pay for her schooling and living costs in Fortaleza and she suffered being far away from them. Carla confided that she felt lonely living by herself but her busy schedule kept her occupied and stopped her from feeling too sad. Though, sometimes, living away from her parents and the pressures of third year made her feel so *desanimada* (down, dispirited) that she would stay home and watch television on her own or, better yet, she would skip her *cursinho* to spend the evening with Maynara's family.

Renan

Renan had attended afternoon classes at Colégio Ceará since the beginning of high school. He paid an additional R\$70 to attend extra maths and history classes at Colégio Ceará on Thursday evenings after his regular classes finished. Students in these extra classes seemed more committed to studying. Teachers worked vestibular-style problem sets with minimal interruptions. Renan struggled to pay attention in regular classes – how boring to watch the same lectures that he had already seen! Though classes could be dull, Renan liked that he could see his group of friends who lived scattered across the city. He frequently chatted to Eva and others around him during classes but kept his conversations quiet enough as not to annoy the teacher.

Renan worked the problem sets at the back of each section of the *apostila* and practiced his essay writing. In addition, he was trying to concentrate on building other skills for vestibular: his reading speed and stamina. Professor

Luziane had stressed the importance of reading in preparation for vestibular, “Every book that you read will increase your ability to interpret passages. You will improve your vocabulary and your logic skills. Read newspapers, magazines, and books. Read!” Yet, *Veja*, the most widely read weekly newsmagazine, cost R\$10 and novels (even young adult fiction) ran between R\$25 and R\$50. At these prices, reading was an expensive habit³⁹. Thankfully the Colégio Ceará library stocked magazines and newspapers alongside popular novels. Renan showed me the book he had checked out from the library to “train” his reading ability: *Formaturas Infernais (Prom Nights from Hell)*, translated short stories by popular US teen authors. Likewise, Renan’s friend Eva was reading the Percy Jackson young adult series. These books, Eva pointed out, had an added benefit since the reader learned about ancient Greece. Reading appeared to be one of the easier tactics that the school and wider society advocated in preparing for vestibular.

Renan’s third-year tactic appeared to be simply getting through third year and vestibular preparation without causing too many problems in class or his life. He could not wait for third year to be over so that he would have his life back. His parents had taken the school’s advice to heart and left him at home while they spent the July holidays in São Paulo. Renan was disappointed and annoyed to have missed out on this trip. Truthfully, he had studied very little while they were gone anyway.

Maynara

Maynara had decided to have a blowout holiday with plenty of beach, *shoppings*, and fun before third year started so that she would be ready to focus and devote herself completely. Unfortunately, her friends had been out of town so she had spent the break at home by herself. She calculated that this disappointment and sadness had meant that she never *quite* studied as much as she had planned during third year. The worry that she was not doing enough manifested itself in stomach troubles: Maynara lost four kilos while preparing for vestibular.

³⁹ Beleza (2012) argues that books in Brazil are material goods imbued with symbolic value related to class and patterns of consumption.

Colégio Ceará awarded Maynara a full scholarship (though her family could pay) as she had always been one of the school's brightest pupils and the school did not want to lose Maynara to another colégio. While Maynara judged her performance to be underwhelming, Colégio Ceará thought otherwise and paid for her and Jorge to take private Chemistry lessons to help boost their ENEM scores. Disregarding the school's advice about extracurricular classes, Maynara continued taking bi-weekly English lessons. Furthermore, she evaluated and chose the extra Colégio Ceará classes that she would attend: Current Events class was helpful but Reading Comprehension was not worth the investment as she could spend that hour working practice questions or reviewing study materials in the library. Extra Sunday classes were fun since the lessons were veritable stand-up comedy. On the other hand, Saturday morning ENEM problem-solving sessions were dull so Maynara borrowed the question sets from a friend and worked them on her own. She also photocopied Carla's *cursinho apostilas* to compare what Colégio Farias Brito and Colégio Ceará were teaching. Maynara did not always pay attention during class: sometimes she text messaged her boyfriend or read a textbook that she had checked out from Colégio Ceará's library.

Maynara had taken ENEM and the UECE vestibular the previous year and her performance had merited spaces in biology at both UFC and UECE. She used these and other experiences to make assessments of the materials she needed to study and worked accordingly.

Conclusions

First and foremost, Colégio Ceará students were meant to dedicate themselves to hard work in the present in order to reap rewards in the future. (See Chapter 5 for more about how dreams helped students to accomplish this.) Bombarded with classes, study options, and materials, students like Carla, Renan and Maynara had to filter this information in order to decide on an individual approach to third year and their studying practices during this literal and figurative test. School was no longer a cooperative endeavour, where classmates (against the rules) helped one another on tests; during third year, school was about preparing the individual. Some students' intentions to

study never quite came to fruition. Others succumbed to *preguiça* – though this does not necessarily mean that they did not pass.

What dispositions did the *luta* cultivate? “Successful” students approached the *luta* with flexibility, commitment, and determination to get through hundreds of hours of classes, extra classes, and practice tests – or, as the frustrated Physics teacher put it, they “paid attention to this boring stuff”. These dispositions are similar to those that characterise the *batalhadores*: “this worker is capable of great personal, physical and psychological sacrifices; adaptable to the arbitrary impositions of businesses that demand... flexibility” (Visser 2010: 70). Students like Renan learned to avoid drawing teachers’ attention. Staying quiet – though often sleeping, reading or doing work for other classes – meant there would be no problems with the authority in the classroom. This behaviour did not imply respect for the authority; students were simply compliant. As the intensity of the *luta* waxed and waned throughout the year, many students crafted their first stories of hard work and dedication – different to those of their *batalhador* parents. In the next chapter, I show how teachers and students cultivated and employed “self-esteem” to get through the *luta*.

Chapter 4 “We are supposed to be confident”: Self-esteem for the *Luta*

Five weeks before third-year students were set to take ENEM, Biology teacher Ismael enthusiastically asked the honours *turma*, “Who is ready?” To Ismael’s chagrin, only four of the class’s fifty students raised their hands. The remaining students, many of them exhausted after months of six- and seven-day weeks filled with extra classes and practice exams, shifted uncomfortably or stared at the ground. Professor Ismael scolded, “Then you must not be studying enough.” News that the school’s top cohort had “given up” travelled quickly. By the end of the week, class co-presidents Jorge and Larícia had asked for five minutes of English class so that they could address the problem of plummeting motivation. As usual, Larícia spoke for the pair, “This isn’t a regular class that is not motivated. This is the honours class. I know that you are tired but we have to keep studying. We cannot let the honours name down!”

After Larícia finished, English teacher Pedro wrote “*maratona*” (marathon) on the board, telling students,

I recognize this phenomenon. With one month left to go before the exam, people do this. You must remember that all the years of studying will be reflected now. You’re tired. I don’t accept that! Now it’s the final sprint to the finish line in the marathon that has been this year of vestibular preparation. No one said this was easy. You’re competing against many people. It’s not the time for you to stop. Your parents have made the investment. They have paid your private school fees for your entire life and they don’t get the prize? Your parents will have to pay for *faculdade particular* (private university) too?

Forty minutes into this lecture, I noticed Pedro consult his watch. He appeared to be calculating the time he would need to fill so as to avoid giving the week’s English lesson. Many students had stopped paying attention: Jorge scanned the Sports section of the newspaper, Mariela read from her *Atualidades* (current events) study guide, and Ana slept facedown in her notebook. Pedro continued, “You have two choices: you continue with the

necessary *força* (force, strength) or not? What was *my* motivation? One day I would tell the story of my success in my own classroom – and here I am! If you want to motivate yourself, think about what you want in your future.”

Mercifully, the bell rang, announcing a half-hour break before the final three classes of the day. As my bleary-eyed classmates and I gathered to chat, the ever-astute Maynara commented, “I bet that was good for your research.” I smirked, confirming Maynara’s suspicions and registered my lingering confusion, “Of course, you are anxious and you are not going to say that you feel prepared. There’s always more that you *could* study.” Maynara laughed at my inability to comprehend and explained carefully, “Michele, even if we *think* that we are not ready, that’s not what we are *supposed* to say. We are supposed to be confident. They want us to be confident.”

Maynara’s assessment allowed me to make sense of the motivational asides (planned and impromptu sermon-like lectures, YouTube videos, Facebook messages and films) with which students had been bombarded throughout the year. Teachers *and* students wove motivational work into their daily interactions as a sort of prerequisite for ENEM (and beyond). So much time was devoted to developing self-esteem that, at times, academic coursework suffered. This crisis of confidence that the honours class experienced, wherein students failed to exude the self-esteem that private schooling was meant to instil, illustrated the co-curricular imperative of developing self-esteem. In this chapter, I explore the concept of self-esteem and analyse the role that the development of self-esteem played in the classroom at Colégio Ceará.

Self-esteem

The concept of self-esteem originated in the late nineteenth century, gaining popular use in the United States and spreading elsewhere over the past forty years (Ward 1996). In the 1980s, self-help books and TV talk shows stressed the importance of self-esteem, as it had become “a real tool for changing one’s life” (Ward 1996: 12–13). Meanwhile, low (or lack of) self-esteem became the predictor for a plethora of maladies (Goode 2002). The California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Social Responsibility led the field as social scientists investigated the correlation between self-esteem and social

problems such as “‘chronic welfare dependence’, alcoholism and drug abuse, crime and violence, academic failure, teenage pregnancy and child abuse” (Cruikshank 1993: 331); the Task Force described self-esteem as a “social vaccine” that would counter “most personal and social ills plaguing our state and nation” (California Task Force 1990a as cited in Cruikshank 1993: 329). Though the Task Force ultimately failed to find evidence that linked low self-esteem to the incidence of “social problems”, self-esteem still became an “intrinsic and universal part of human experience” (Ward 1996: 2), a force that could be measured (Rosenberg 1965) and by which successes and failures could be predicted.

Cast in this light, self-esteem becomes a social and political necessity (Cruikshank 1993), as low (or lack of) self-esteem is liable to sabotage one’s future *and* create societal problems. Good or high self-esteem, on the other hand, allows an individual to value him- or herself enough to reach goals and function non-pathologically. Cruikshank argues that self-esteem is a

practical and productive technology available for the production of certain kinds of selves... [I]t is a specialized knowledge of how to esteem our selves, to estimate, calculate, measure, evaluate, discipline, and to judge our selves... (1993: 329).

Thus, it is not only parents and teachers who can help improve children’s self-esteem; NGOs, social work and a variety of other social programmes can use these technologies in order to cultivate that force within adolescents and adults. In one such programme, US working-class participants reported higher self-esteem after taking part in a microenterprise training scheme; still, they blamed themselves – rather than a dearth of resources – when their business ideas failed to develop (Goldstein 2001). Goldstein contends that the US discourse on self-esteem “represents a particularly powerful expression of... individualism in which... success or failure becomes wholly equated with an individual’s possession or lack of self-esteem” (Goldstein 2001: 237).

It hereby seems pertinent to bring in Ward’s observation on self-esteem:

it is possible to conclude that some people do have self-esteem. However, having self-esteem, like having a soul, attention deficit

disorder, karma, or tuberculosis, is only possible within the confines of a particular associational network (1996: 17).

Thus, the proliferation and concept(s) of self-esteem are very much linked to the networks or particular social contexts within which it was and *is* being created. The version of self-esteem I describe above grew up alongside neoliberalism, when Margaret Thatcher famously proclaiming, “[T]here is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families... No government can do anything except through people... It’s our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbour” (Margaret Thatcher Foundation 2015). Self-esteem is a technology refined during a neoliberal era that purports to help people look after themselves and their neighbours.

By the early 2000s, studies suggested that raising self-esteem was not the magic bullet for solving social problems (Baumeister et al 2003; Goode 2002): self-esteem could be linked to “pleasant feelings” but *not* initiative or performance (Baumeister et al 2003: 1). Still, the literature on and practices of self-esteem (and its bedfellow empowerment) had already been adopted elsewhere. UNICEF’s *The State of the World’s Children 2003* connected self-esteem with democracy, agency and participation. The report cited self-esteem raising activities such as sport for girls and photography for African refugees in London. Perhaps most emblematic of this particular associational network of self-esteem was the description of a programme for Pakistani girls that “enables many of them to set up mini-schools for uneducated girls, thereby not only enhancing their own self-esteem and sometimes generating a small income but also extending empowerment further into the community” (UNICEF 2003: 35). The technology of self-esteem promised to help marginalized individuals to achieve independence and take personal responsibility. As such, self-esteem became embedded within international grant applications and outcomes.

Autoestima in Brazil

Brazilian Educational Psychologists have defined *autoestima* (self-esteem) as “the judgment or evaluation that we make of ourselves, i.e., the idea that we have about our value and our competences, and also an affective and decisive

process for psychological, social, and intellectual development” (Barboza et al 2009: 59). Where does low self-esteem come from? Figure 4.1, from a website geared towards Brazilian mothers, explains that, “[c]arência and lack of esteem go hand in hand.” *Carência* can be translated as shortage, poverty, failure or even famine; therefore, self-esteem is posited to be proportional to available resources, perhaps material *and* emotional. Recent research in Brazil has also examined the relationship of self-esteem with other potential causes (and/or effects) including literacy (Traversini 2009; Barbosa 2015), violence (Moreira 2013; Marriel et al 2006), HIV-status (Castrighini et al 2013; Seidl & Machado 2008), and breast implants after mastectomy (Gomes & Silva 2013; Furlan et al 2013). As elsewhere, *autoestima* has gained widespread currency.



Figure 4-1: This graphic reads "Carência and lack of esteem go hand in hand." *Carência* can be translated as shortage, poverty, failure or even famine. Thus, these two "lacks" are interrelated. Source: familia.com.br

What does this imagined (low or high) self-esteem do? *Autoestima* (self-esteem) has been described as “a type of mental immune system... [A person] with high self-esteem recovers faster from a failure, accepts challenges and persists more” (Barboza et al 2009: 59). On the other hand, low self-esteem has been characterised as “a grave illness, which promotes selfishness and tends to create dependence” (Mosquera & Stobäus 2006: 85). Because self-esteem can be cultivated and strengthened in order to judge the self more favourably and, in turn, generate ability to succeed; remedying low *autoestima* has been key “in a range of therapeutic techniques *and* social movements” (my emphasis, Edmonds 2010: 76). Therapeutic techniques range from

psychoanalysis to beauty regimes and plastic surgery whilst disparate groups including Catholic and Pentecostal churches (Mariz 1994), LGBT NGOs (Tavares & Isayama 2014) and the Black Women's Movement (Caldwell 2006) tailor programmes towards the goal of raising self-esteem⁴⁰.

Self-esteem has also been important in Brazilian education. Franco (2009) summarizes three iterations of self-esteem that have been pedagogically deployed. The first set out that teachers' "positive reinforcement produces positive self-esteem, even in precarious teaching and learning situations" (Franco 2009: 328). Thus, positive self-esteem should carry students to success in whatever they set their minds to. The second focused on the purpose of schooling in a capitalist system, largely disregarding the psychological components as there was little agency afforded to individual students. In this view, self-esteem was the sole providence of those with power. Franco argues that the contemporary view of self-esteem encompasses both historical processes and psychosocial development. "We know, now better than ever, that self-esteem cannot be produced, manufactured or changed as certain idealist pedagogies preach. It depends, in great part, on one's life conditions and, in this sense, on a quality school" (Franco 2009: 331). But how does Colégio Ceará's network of students and teachers define and understand self-esteem and, following on, how do teachers pedagogically deploy this understanding in their interactions with students?

Being Brazilian, having bad self-esteem

When I asked about the great emphasis placed on self-esteem in the classroom, Professor Clairton – the same Clairton who, in Chapter 2, referred to his students as *pobres* – replied, "You know about our history in Brazil, right?" Drawing on *pensamento social brasileiro*, Clairton then explained that the stock of Portuguese, African, and Indigenous peoples, coupled with Portuguese colonization methods, had provided Brazilians with a difficult (and lazy) start. He took his argument a step further,

⁴⁰ Social scientists studying these therapeutic techniques and social movements tend to present self-esteem as a universal concept. Research presented here suggests that social scientists should take care in using "self-esteem". The local meaning (and the ways in which that local meaning connects to other discourses) should be clarified.

Look at the immigrants that Brazil attracted! Those Italians and the Germans that everyone always praises – they were the worst of their countries, pariahs sent away because they could not fit into their own cultures. They gave nothing to Brazil! We started out with nothing and where do you go from there? And the Northeast, with its history of drought, misery, and famine – it’s worse! How could any *nordestino* have good self-esteem? How could a *nordestino* believe in himself with a past like that?

Clairton’s role as a teacher included helping students to overcome self-esteem shortcomings brought on by the circumstances of *vestibulandos’* births as Brazilians and, worse yet, *nordestinos*. Clairton’s understanding of self-esteem followed educators’ understandings of self-esteem: Mosquera and Stobäus (2006) argue that one begins acquiring self-esteem at birth and that self-esteem changes throughout life according to one’s situation. Clairton theorised that national self-esteem began with the poor conditions of the birth of the nation. That already low self-esteem plummeted as pariahs, famine and misery plagued Brazil throughout its history. Under the conditions of a “gravely ill” national psyche, students would not have high enough self-esteem to believe in themselves or their potential for accomplishments. But because self-esteem is a social phenomenon and, thus, linked to relationships with others (Franco 2009), Clairton and other teachers could affect change by cocooning students away from this national self-esteem and developing positive individual self-esteems instead.

History teacher Valdênia made a similar assertion, telling me that, although she did not agree with US politics, she admired the unabashed US nationalism. She clarified, “We are not very nationalistic. We, Brazilians, have terrible self-esteem.” Puzzled by this problem of national self-esteem, I queried the topic with non-Colégio Ceará *fortalezense* friends. Neither Clairton’s historical causes nor Valdênia’s pride in the nation came up; still, the discussion affirmed that, “Brazilians really do have terrible self-esteem.”

How did the low self-esteem of Brazil and Brazilians become common knowledge? The *Associação Brasileira de Anunciantes* (ABA, Brazilian Association of Advertisers) launched a 2004 marketing campaign aimed at

“rescuing Brazilian self-esteem levels” with the slogan “I am Brazilian and I never give up⁴¹” (Associação Brasileira de Anunciantes 2004). The ABA used several studies to justify the movement, including a study by Sebrae (an organization that helps small businesses) that highlighted Brazil’s weaknesses, the most important of which was “the lack of self-esteem, the valorisation only of that which comes from outside”. The campaign contended that it would:

initiate the pro self-esteem movement in our population[... T]he first step in this effort is to make conscious, awaken and encourage the sense of pride and satisfaction in people in respect to their own achievements and potentials, as well as to highlight the effect of their attitudes and actions for their individual self-realization and for the future of Brazil (Associação Brasileira de Anunciantes 2004).

President Lula attended the campaign launch alongside leaders of the Brazilian press who pledged free airtime and space for the campaign in regional and national media. After all, the technology of self-esteem offered the promise of increased motivation, achievement and better futures.

Interestingly, though, Barroso and Barreto (1976) found *no correlation* between students’ self-esteem and their vestibular performances. That is, self-esteem did not correlate with students’ marks in school, nor did it correspond to whether or not students passed vestibular. Admittedly surprised about the lack of correlation, Barroso and Barreto published their paper as to “avoid others eventually repeating futile steps” (1976: 49). Thirty-five years later, most Colégio Ceará teachers followed the message of the self-esteem movement: it was their job to help students feel better about themselves so that ultimately students would see that, with hard work, a student *could* study and get into (a public) university. Hence, on the first day of class, Logic teacher André made a point to explain to me before he started the class (wherein he would spend the majority of the 1.5 hours showing “inspiring” YouTube videos) that a large component of his work was getting students to believe that they could succeed. “They do not believe that they can do maths, especially the girls, but I will make them believe that they can.” Teachers’

⁴¹ “*Eu sou brasileiro e não desisto nunca.*”

discourse of developing self-esteem posited that academic ability comprises a two-pronged skill set: the information *and* the self-esteem required to complete the task. Thus, cultivating good self-esteem was an important part of teaching and learning.

When I told Renan that I thought self-esteem would be important in my research, he replied, “I imagine how difficult it would be to write about self-esteem in the classroom because, look, the majority [of students] have low self-esteem.” He trailed off, laughing at this pronouncement that had mirrored that of his teachers. When pressed for a definition of self-esteem, his discourse deviated slightly:

Low self-esteem in the classroom is the consequence of the lack of dynamic classes. Didn't you see how classes were always the same? We copy from the board or the teacher puts on a film⁴² for us to sleep... But also kids think, ‘Mathematics is boring’, ‘You have to memorize history and it gives me a headache.’ These things scare anyone who is starting.

Renan could not describe self-esteem explicitly but, following the tenets of the “pro self-esteem movement”, he could pinpoint its visible causes and effects in the classroom. Renan cited a lack of teacher-student engagement in classroom practices. Teachers might have been teaching (or not) but they (and their methods) failed to *dar força*. The phrase “*dar força*” means “to strengthen or empower”, the literal translation is “to give strength or force”. The action of “giving” (and its implied receiving) is critical here. Teachers’ disengaged and dull classroom practices failed to give students pride and satisfaction in studying. They failed to give students the strength necessary to overcome the boredom of mathematics. Instead, classroom practices reinforced students’ already low self-esteem. With good teaching practices, students might be able to overcome their commonly held beliefs about the difficulties of schooling. High self-esteem was being sufficiently motivated—in this case, quite literally

⁴² In fact, several teachers in the afternoon class did put on films in place of teaching. For example, a physics teachers put on a video about the Hubble space telescope while History teachers used films like *300* and *Troy* in place of lectures on ancient Greece and Rome.

by good teachers with “dynamic” classes who “gave strength” to students. As such, Renan also believed that academic ability required self-esteem.

Emotions, Affect & Self-Esteem in the Classroom

As a *gringa* semi-illiterate in Brazilian emotion, I puzzled over affective work in the classroom and beyond. After six months in the field, I attempted to find a Portuguese word that would roughly translate to “cheesy”. I wanted to be able to describe and discuss the experiences in which emotion appeared contrived and/or insincere. The blank stares I received revealed that my cynical take on emotion had hit a cultural impasse. Eventually, my Colégio friends translated my “cheesy” as *água-com-acúcar*⁴³ (water with sugar). Yet, *água-com-acúcar* denotes overly emotional, feel good. There was not the same kind of question of sincerity in *água-com-acúcar*. Here, I had to confront my own biases of “overly emotional” as manipulative and/or insincere as my Colégio colleagues did *not* experience emotion this way. It appeared that people could be false but emotion was not questioned in the same way.

Emotion in the classroom seemed to stand in as shorthand for teacher-student connection. While teachers could not possibly know all of their students’ names, they *could* offer emotion in their pedagogical toolkit (alongside lascivious jokes, local references and general banter) to help establish classroom rapport and maintain students’ attention. Some teachers did not pay enough attention to emotion and affect in the classroom: Renan’s description of classroom self-esteem overlaps with Watkins’ (2010) findings on affect and cognition in the US classroom. Watkins posits that students’ emotions experienced in the classroom can be “accumulate[ed] as *bodily* memory” (2010: 279). Hence, affect, “the biological component of emotion” (279) can be stored (and recalled) in the body to “act as a force promoting interest, which over time may accumulate as cognitive capacity providing its own stimulus for learning” (278). Renan described how affect, that bodily

⁴³ Brazilian colleagues have since provided alternate translations for “cheesy” like *brega* and *cafona*. Still, these words mean “tacky” and are used to describe “bad” taste. This could suggest classed approaches to emotions. I cannot draw conclusions based solely on what could be my linguistic shortcomings. Still further research could reveal whether emotional work was not simply classwork but also class work?

emotion, experienced in the classroom did the opposite: affect accumulated such that history gave headaches and studying was scary.

Professor André told me, “I will make them believe that they can.” How did he and other teachers propose to do this? Although Colégio Ceará teachers did not employ concepts like affect as bodily memory and force, teachers implored *vestibulandos* to believe in themselves through a barrage of affective work that was meant to bolster students’ self-esteem and *dar força* to their studies.

Consideração: Family and Social Ties

As the beginning of this chapter suggests, teachers engaged in affective work around family and other social ties to help motivate students. One could simply label this guilt but literature on *consideração* (consideration) suggests more. Pina-Cabral and Silva (2013) demonstrate that *consideração* ties people together.

Essentially, what is being communicated when people record the *consideração* of others toward them – and, of course, when they themselves plan their lives in order to consider others – is that the relationship between them has been updated, it has been validated... In short, *consideração* is an emotional investment that validates relations: relations between people are launched by natural factors... but they only make sense insofar as they are updated in affection. (Pina-Cabral & Silva 2013: 25–26).

The parent-child relationship is continually updated and reiterated by small actions of *consideração*. Ideally, a child should show *consideração* to the family that has helped them to attend private school. A good show of that *consideração* would be studying and, ultimately, achieving a “good” life. Teachers told students that parents (and other kin) had believed (and invested) in their children; therefore, children should translate this emotional and financial investment into self-esteem and high performance.

Professor Pedro filled his English lessons with affective work on family and *consideração*. His painful account of his mother’s death and the importance of

appreciating your mother had students hanging on his every word and ended with two girls in tears. Pedro had invoked *consideração* to help motivate students since his first lecture when he told students:

You have been studying for 13 years. The biggest investment your parents have made is you! None of you has to pass vestibular but you must do your best.... Do you remember your first day of school? I do. You were holding on to your mother's hand and leg. You suffered the biggest loss in your life that day: your mother left you at school. You brought home a drawing and your mother was so proud. Everything started with that drawing and now you're preparing for the job market.

Pedro constructed narratives of *consideração* wherein mothers sacrificed themselves for children. The *consideração* that a mother showed in giving a child life could never be repaid – in fact, “repaying” would sully the relationship (Pina-Cabral & Silva 2013). Pedro called on that lifelong obligation that children had to their mothers. The emotion invoked by Pedro's retelling grabbed students' attention and, Pedro hoped, urged them to transform that affect into higher self-esteem and action.

Similarly, during week two of classes, School Psychologist Ana Cláudia started a vestibular overview session by telling students that they were about to see a video that would be even more relevant to students' lives now that they were in third year. The video comprised the poem, “*Torcida por você*”⁴⁴, read over Vitamin C's pop anthem, “Graduation (Friends Forever)”. Between the poem, the montage of adorable babies and cute but awkward adolescents and Vitamin C's sampling of Pachelbel's Canon, the class (and I) could not help but be emotionally drawn into the video. The video began with the image of a woman cradling her pregnant belly as the narrator said:

Even before you were born, there was already someone cheering for
you,

There were people who cheered for you to be a boy,

⁴⁴ The video attributes the text to Carlos Drummond de Andrade, one of Brazil's best-loved poets, but further research reveals that Liliana Barabino wrote the piece as “*pensamentos motivadores*” (motivating thoughts) whilst working in a Brazilian advertising agency.

Others cheered for you to be a girl...
They cheered for you to be born perfect,
From there, they continued cheering,
They cheered for your first smile, for your first word, for your first
step,
Your first day of school was the greatest cheer...
It was when you began to cheer for your own future,
You cheered to be a doctor, musician, lawyer,
Unsure what to choose, you cheered to be a nuclear physicist or
footballer
Your parents cheered for this phase to pass quickly
On the day of vestibular, a great cheer formed,
Parents, grandparents, neighbours, boy / girlfriends and all the saints
cheered for you

The poem's cheers outlined a long list of emotional investments that "cheerers" had made in the viewer. Accompanying the snippet about vestibular was a video of a growing crowd gathered on a couch and spilling onto the floor, screaming and cheering as if they were watching a football game. Students were invited to consider the people who had emotionally invested in them. The positive affect associated with this realisation could perhaps *dar força*. As Ana Claudia turned the lights on, students remained quiet, obviously moved by the video. Ana Claudia led with that emotion. "The 3rd and 4th of November [dates of ENEM] need to be written in your diary *and* your hearts," she told the students.

Torcida por você portrayed a beautiful, mostly white, decidedly upper-class existence. The video removed students from the realities of daily life in Fortaleza; teenage angst was the most difficult problem depicted. Still, students needed little encouragement to identify with the life stages represented. The video reinforced that *vestibular* was difficult but it was the next step in life that would ultimately lead to happiness. Ana Cláudia's presentation suggested that students should feel buoyed by the cheers of their loved ones and that they should return the favour to those cheering by passing vestibular and embarking on the path to happiness.

Student Responses to the Affective Work of Consideração

Although students did not reference Pedro's invocation of family ties or the *Torcida por você* video in our conversations, they did tell stories that involved their drive to succeed as motivated by connections to family and friends. Isabela, an honours student with a partial scholarship who wanted to study law, told me that her mother worked two jobs and did all the household chores so that Isabela could fully focus on studying. Isabela recognized her mother's sacrifice and was determined to do well.

Similarly, Jorge told me that he wanted to get into UFC for the ladies at his church who always asked about his studies and his aunties who lived near the school and fed him lunch every day while he was studying. Jorge told me, "They believe in me so I have to believe in me! I want to pay them back." Jorge sought to reinforce social ties by bestowing feelings of pride that would come in seeing him get a place on a UFC course with high *concorrência*.

Alice's parents did not put pressure on her to get into a certain course or university. Neither of her parents had finished high school. Alice saw how hard her parents worked every day in the snack bar they owned so that she and her brother could attend private school. Alice wanted to be able to help her parents, now and in the future. Alice had started buying and reselling jewellery to her peers at school to make her own pocket money. She prospered selling these items and that meant that her mother could use some of the money previously spent on Alice for herself. After a stint as president of the high school service club, Alice longed to study social work at UECE. Last year, she had been one of the talkers in the class. This year she was focused on studying.

Some students struggled as their families and friends failed to "cheer" in the way that students were told that they were meant to be cheering. After one of Professor Pedro's *consideração*-oriented lectures, Rebeca admitted that she did not have an ideal relationship with her parents. She told of her transformation from problem child to evangelical and her parents' lingering doubts. During first year, she had attended afternoon classes and fallen in with a bad crowd. She went to parties, drank, *ficou* (hooked up, kissed) with boys and grew more sad by the day. The next year, Rebeca transferred to the honours *turma*

and focused on studying and participating at her parents' evangelical church. Rebeca felt her parents still did not believe that she had changed. She worked hard to prove them wrong but she worried that ultimately she would end up proving them right⁴⁵. She tried to study after school every day but Rebeca admitted that she had given up studying at the weekends. She knew she would never get into her dream course, medicine, if she did not start studying more.

Ana showed me pictures of herself as a baby, when her parents were young and still together. Now her father lived in Natal with his new family while she lived with her mother and her younger half-brother. Although she was always expected to phone her father on his birthday, he rarely remembered to phone on hers. Furthermore, her grandmother and aunts teased Ana during Sunday lunches, speculating about her chances to get into university since she never seemed to study. Fuming, Ana sat through these criticisms without saying a word. Ana struggled to find the appropriate motivation: why should she should study when her own family had decided that she was lazy.

For Isabela, Alice, and Jorge, invoking *consideração* triggered the desired response: all three had positive relationships that they sought to validate by performing well. In this case, affective work in the classroom activated self-esteem and motivation. However, Rebeca and Ana described a lack (or perceived lack) of *consideração* from kin that made self-esteem (and thus motivation) difficult during their *lutas*. In this instance, the school's tactics may have inadvertently underlined this deficiency. Still, teachers had other motivational techniques to call on in these circumstances.

Testimony: I overcame so you can too!

A related tactic for motivating students was presenting against-the-odds narratives of triumph. Teachers told their stories to reassure students that, if teachers could overcome, so could students. Most of Professor Vladimir's physics lessons followed a distinct pattern: he filled the board with beautifully spaced physics problems for the first 20 minutes while students

⁴⁵ Perhaps Rebeca's parents *did* believe in her but her previous experiences caused her to have these doubts. Regardless, I wish to report this as Rebeca related her experiences to me.

talked, he solved those physics problems and answered students' questions over the next 20 minutes, and he spent the final 10 minutes preaching a mini-sermon that was meant to inspire and motivate students. Vladimir's voice and the pacing of his stories reflected his other job: evangelical pastor. During his first lesson, Professor Vladimir told students that he was going to tell them the *história do sofrimento da minha vida* (story of my life's suffering):

I left my family in the interior in 1986 to come to Fortaleza and study. I went to a public technical school in the morning but my father paid for a private school in the afternoon. So I went to public school in the morning and then went to another five hours of school in the afternoon to prepare for vestibular. When I returned home from class, I spent another four hours each night studying. People told me, "You are poor! You can't do it! You are poor!"

Students laughed at the voices that Professor Vladimir put on to caricature his naysayers. Vladimir continued, elaborating on how he had overcome others' prejudices against him and continued studying. The crescendo of the story had Vladimir finding his name ranked number four for entry into engineering. Vladimir's parents could barely believe his accomplishment: a poor boy from the interior had worked hard and triumphed. Vladimir related that he was telling this story because students' parents would have that kind of *alegria* (happiness) when *they* passed vestibular this year.

Vladimir's lessons followed a sort-of evangelical testimony format. Bielo states that evangelicals "rely heavily on this narrative genre to establish their critical posture toward belief" (2012: 265). Though Vladimir's weekly lessons had religious elements, the emphasis was squarely on belief and faith in oneself. The class witnessed conversion narratives wherein poor boys from the interior were transformed into men who passed vestibular. Vladimir's narratives captivated students; *vestibulandos* were less interested in his physics lessons.

Logic teacher André, the teacher who told me he would *make* students believe, engaged in similar practices. He told students, "You have to think, 'There are 50 spaces in medicine? No, there are 49 because one is for me!'" To bolster students' self-esteem and perhaps, as Renan suggested, make the class

more dynamic, André played several YouTube videos. In the first, Nick Vujicic, an Australian man born without arms or legs recounted his struggles to find meaning in his disability, eventually overcoming after giving his life to God. Now Nick worked as a motivational speaker, spreading the message that his audiences could triumph over anything too! The teacher told students, “If you’re negative, nothing is certain. It’s your dream, you can do it!” I noticed Isabela wipe away a tear. The class clapped enthusiastically. André’s YouTube video of the triumphant underdog had stirred students’ emotions.

Professor André’s second video recounted the story of Ernani who preferred to sit alone whilst eating lunch at work. Popular colleague Mauro decided to play a trick on Ernani. He brought fish for all of his colleagues but filled Ernani’s packet with bones and viscera. Mauro’s joke backfired when Ernani revealed that he was ecstatic to be accepted as part of the group even though he often sat on his own because he was so exhausted from taking care of his five children and his sick wife. Mauro’s colleagues gave their fish to Ernani and, the following week when Ernani’s wife died, his co-workers pledged to support Ernani’s children. The video concluded with:

Carlinhos, the youngest, turned into an important doctor. Fernanda, Paula, and Luisa started their own successful business... The oldest, Ernani Junior, become an engineer. Today, he’s the director of the same business where Ernani and his colleagues were working.

What was the message that students were supposed to take away from this particular video? Ernani overcame his narrative of suffering, his *luta*, with humility to gain a network of non-familial supporters and ensure the success of his family. The careers of Ernani’s children seemed particularly important: doctor, engineer, businessperson. These were the careers my friends were set on achieving. Still, the story seemed contrived, patently false, to me. I asked Rosane if she thought the story was true. She laughed at my strange question and told me that it probably was not. “But why would they tell that story?” Rosane replied, “I think we probably want to believe that it *could* be true.”

Neither of the videos that André presented as part of his self-esteem building project held true to life in Fortaleza. That day’s *logic* lesson made for training in “extraordinary” belief – exercising that muscle that makes it possible to

“believe”. And what must students work on believing? What does it mean that Ernani Junior takes over the firm where Ernani was once mocked? Certainly, the story says that, with hard work and support, anything is possible. Life circumstances can be transformed and poverty and/or disability can be overcome with diligence and belief in a higher power – and that higher power could be one’s self. In employing these techniques, teachers attempted to, as Professor André said, “make them believe that they can do it.”

Comparing for self-esteem

Teachers and other staff were quick to compare Colégio Ceará to the bigger, prestigious franchise schools. In private, teachers and staff admitted that students at Colégio Ceará were not the same as those who attended the Big 4. According to staff, Colégio Ceará students were poorer and had fewer resources than those at the Big 4. Staff said that Colégio Ceará parents took little interest in their children’s academic careers: they worked long hours and had no time to go to school to address problems. In the classroom, however, staff used the Big 4 to boost self-esteem. In a third-year assembly, Professor Luane reported to students that Colégio Ceará was amongst the best colégios in Fortaleza. Students cheered as Luane listed Colégio Ceará alongside the Big 4. Likewise, Professor Daniel spoke to the afternoon class about his experiences teaching at Colégio Christus. “Someone said that the Christus students are better than you. But are they? I wouldn’t trade my Colégio Ceará students for anything. There’s no one better than you. You have good teachers. You will do the test and you will pass.” Here, Luane and Daniel bolstered students’ self-esteem by placing them alongside (richer and, presumably, better self-esteemed) students paying steep fees at the Big 4.

Students drew their own comparisons in daily conversations. Mariela told me that she worried that she would not be as prepared as her friends who had gone to a Big 4 school for third year. “Colégio Farias Brito already had three *simulados* but we have only had one this year. I took the test for a scholarship [at Colégio Farias Brito] but they only offered me a 50% scholarship and that was not enough.” Though teachers had reassured them that all students were

the same, Colégio Ceará students expressed anxieties that the students at more expensive schools had better resources.

Colégio advertisements provided further fuel for these comparisons. A group of students gathered around Larícia as she studied a full-page Colégio Ari de Sá advertisement in the newspaper. (See Figure 4.2 for a similar ad.) The ad announced that 66 of the 160 spots in UFC Medicine had gone to Colégio Ari de Sá pupils. Pictures of the top 11 scorers – all Colégio Ari de Sá students – were included. The girls joked about the first placed boy’s long hair while Jorge pointed out that attractiveness increased as students’ places decreased. “Maybe it’s better to be number 8?” Jorge said with a smile. Underlying this careful examination of the advertisement was nervousness about *concorrência*. The pie chart included in the advert showed that Colégio Ari de Sá students occupied 41.2% of all the UFC Medicine spaces. Not one of the students discussed the fact that they would be competing for those leftover spaces that Colégio Ari de Sá (and the rest of the Big 4) did *not* capture. Influenced by these worries, students made and distributed copies of *apostilas* and *simulados* used by the Big 4 – as if Big 4 resources might be enough to add a few points to their scores.

On the other hand, students continually employed the trope of public schools as dangerous and chaotic places that had little to do with learning. Although Juliana had always attended public school before moving to Fortaleza a year earlier, she told me that I would be shocked to see a Fortaleza public school. “The girls wear really short skirts and everyone takes drugs.” Lucas’s mother taught public school and thus she had told Lucas that he did not belong there. “The girls get pregnant really young and there’s violence. They threaten the teachers!” Colégio Ceará students continually articulated that *they* were students who were interested in learning while public school students simply went to school for the free lunch and to fulfil *Bolsa Família* requirements⁴⁶. Public school was *not* an environment for learning.

⁴⁶ This discourse is not new and/or unique to Fortaleza. Plank (1996) reported that public school students were said to attend exclusively for the free lunches.

MEDICINA 2012.1

1º LUGAR EM CINCO UNIVERSIDADES FEDERAIS.

Amapá
Victor Rocha Cabral de Lacerda (Universidade Federal do Amapá – UNIFAP)

Ceará
Ilgner Justa Frota (Universidade Federal do Ceará – UFC-Fortaleza)

Rio Grande do Norte
Alex Carvalho Monteiro (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte – UFRN)

Paraíba
João Victor Rodrigues Marçal (Universidade Federal de Campina Grande - Campus Cajazeiras - UFCG)

Acre
Ingrid de Almeida Costa (Universidade Federal do Acre - UFAC)

Os 5 alunos estudam no Colégio Ari de Sá Cavalcante, em Fortaleza/CE.

Dos 160 aprovados em Medicina na UFC, 66 são alunos do Ari de Sá:

1. Ana B. A. C. de Oliveira	12. Daniela A. A. Pereira	23. Iara D. F. Varella	34. Karen L. Cunha	45. Luciano M. Costa	56. Sávio E. dos S. Moura
2. Ana L. G. Moreira	13. Dulce A. Tereoto	24. Ighor M. de Carvalho	35. Karine S. Sena	46. Luiza de A. de Carvalho	57. Sylvia C. P. Martins
3. Ananda N. Loolá	14. Erica S. F. Simões	25. Ilgner Justa Frota	36. Karine S. da Silva	47. Luziane S. Silva	58. Talles L. A. Cavalcante
4. Anastácia M. Pinto	15. Fernanda Queiroz Soares	26. Ingrid de Almeida Costa	37. Krislê B. Diniz	48. Maria J. V. Sales	59. Thayanne B. de Lima
5. André V. Vieira Maciel	16. Fco. Afânio Pereira Neto	27. Isabella M. da Ponte	38. Larissa M. de Albuquerque	49. Matheson P. Oliveira	60. Thyago André O. Mendes
6. Anna Beatriz P. Cordeiro	17. Gabriel H. C. Nogueira	28. Isiana G. Brito	39. Leonardo da Silva Moreira	50. Nathalia R. P. de Sousa	61. Tágio F. dos S. Miranda
7. Anner M. A. Batista	18. Gabriel Pheixoto	29. Italo S. C. Oliveira	40. Letícia M. Pontes	51. Paulo Italo M. Silva	62. Tágio T. Tóes Pheixoto
8. Bárbara L. T. Figueiredo	19. Gabriela C. L. Dantas	30. João Emmanuel A. Fortaleza	41. Letícia R. Mendes	52. Pedro G. Moreira	63. Victor C. V. de O. Barros
9. Bianca L. Cunha	20. Gabriela Lima Peixoto	31. João Victor R. Marçal	42. Lívia Ma. B. Lima	53. Priscila F. de Lima e Souza	64. Victor R. C. de Lacerda
10. Brenna Ferreira dos Santos	21. Hemando C. Vasconcelos	32. José E. F. Barreto Júnior	43. Lucas L. Mendes	54. River de A. B. Coelho	65. William C. S. Lima
11. Camilla P. L. de Almeida	22. Ian F. Castro	33. José L. M. Bezerra	44. Lucas R. G. de Sousa	55. Samuel dos R. Freire	66. Yuri Neyson Ferreira Brito

41,2%
dos aprovados de todo o Brasil

Todas as outras escolas juntas do Brasil.

58,8%
dos aprovados

Colégio Ari de Sá Cavalcante
Educação em primeiro lugar.

Concorrem para a UFC alunos de todo o Brasil.

O COLÉGIO ARI DE SÁ, HÁ 7 ANOS CONSECUTIVOS, É A ESCOLA QUE MAIS APROVA NO VESTIBULAR DE MEDICINA DA UFC.

Figure 4-2: An advertisement for Colégio Ari de Sá showing that five students placed first at federal universities and that Colégio Ari de Sá students occupied 66 of 160 spaces in UFC medicine.

Disturbing Comparisons: Quotas

These comparisons by students and teachers established a hierarchy of *concorrência* between schools. Students from the Big 4 would be difficult to beat but public school students would be less competition. A few teachers

attempted to disrupt this hierarchy by reminding students that the Big 4 poached the best students from public *and* private schools so these distinctions were not so clear; still, it *was* clear that Big 4 students – regardless of their background – would be difficult to beat. These constant comparisons helped fuel students’ anger over the new race-based and public school quotas for Brazil’s federal universities. The quotas required that, by 2015, 50% of spaces at federal universities be reserved for black, indigenous and public school students. These quotas would remain in place for 10 years – ostensibly, this would help the Brazilian education system to right itself. UFC had never instituted quotas but would allocate 12.5% of spaces on every course to *quotistas* (the top students fulfilling quota criteria) in the upcoming year. These quotas threatened to disturb the hierarchies that students had established in their comparisons.

Contrary to many of his colleagues, Professor Victor did *not* fill his lessons with bids to raise students’ self-esteem. When Victor presented a Current Events lesson on the subject, he admonished students for selfishly opposing the changes and went on to critique the view that all private schools were better than public schools. “MEC shuts down private universities that aren’t good but they don’t have the same power with private schools!” Many students, Victor claimed, had inflated grades and should not be passing but did so when their parents (who were, after all, paying) complained. Victor mocked Colégio Ceará students who posted their vestibular passes at private universities on Facebook. “Wow, *Faculdade Pague Menos*⁴⁷! Your family must be so proud.” According to Victor, these students had given up by accepting places at paid-for, private universities and technical colleges with little academic merit. Several students weighed in, suggesting that quotas would diminish the quality of the federal university system. The conversation heated up with Victor barking:

Have you seen the parking lot at the medical school? It’s filled with R\$100,000 *carrões*. How many of you in Colégio Ceará are already passing without quotas? None! In Law? No! The problem isn’t the

⁴⁷ *Pague Menos* (Pay Less) is a pharmacy that does *not* have a private degree-granting university. Rather, this was a biting criticism of some of the universities that students are proud to be attending. It was a bit like saying Boots University.

quotas – it's the students who don't study. When did a Colégio Ceará student pass in medicine at UFC? When?! Every year, Director Costa pressures us to make it happen but it doesn't.

The mood in the room had turned heavy and solemn. Professor Victor had again (see chapter 1) lumped together Colégio Ceará students with public school students and other non-elites. This comparison incited outrage about societal inequalities but provided no individual happy endings for students.

That day, Professor Victor laid out hard truths for a room full of wannabe doctors, lawyers, and engineers. Students were told that they were no better than public school students and that, historically, both Colégio Ceará and public school students had been shut out of the most prestigious courses – those courses that, it is widely imagined, offered social mobility. According to Victor, only rich people accessed these courses; however, quotas would help to rectify this situation. (This implied that the richest and the poorest would populate courses like Medicine and Law.) Colégio Ceará students must understand that they might need to suffer but the sacrifice that these students made would benefit the whole of society.

Nonetheless, Professor Victor *also* argued that if Colégio Ceará students studied harder and did not expect to be handed good grades (because their parents had paid), they might gain access to their dream courses – quotas could not stand in the way. Thus, even Victor peppered his realism with the promises that students who work hard enough *would* overcome. (In this sense, it was also *not* Victor's or the rest of the teaching team's fault that Colégio Ceará students were not admitted to Medicine or Law.) Quotas threatened to disturb the established private and public comparisons but "belief" in hard work remained.

Self-esteem and Motivation Born Again

With three weeks to ENEM – perhaps inspired by students' "giving up" – the school psychologist arranged for a special lecture to be delivered by another psychologist. The speaker started by asking students, "How do you usually confront your adversary? Many of you live far away. You get up early, you dress and go to the bus terminal every morning. So how are you confronting

ENEM? Is it a challenge or fear?" The speaker employed a *luta* discourse in which students' adversary was ENEM. The bus terminal invoked class identity (see Chapter 1), positioning the listener as the underdog hero travelling across the city in the narrative. Next, the speaker presented "motivational" images like Figure 4.3 that showed *vestibulandos* as different to "normal people." The special suffering of the *vestibulando* (who missed out on fun now) would transform him or her into a rich and successful person whilst the life trajectory of the "normal person" (who participated in fun now) would be less promising. Race and class markers abounded in the "after" pictures, reminding students of the transformations at stake in this commitment to hard work. The narrative read that the underdog, stuck on the bus or in the library, would triumph. Students' socioeconomic status was acknowledged whilst pointing to their special role as *vestibulandos* and the potential for transformation into a better (at least financially) future. The speaker asked, "Is ENEM fair? No! You must stay and study when friends are out partying. You must think of yourself. You must *win* at ENEM, not pass!" Students cheered at this pronouncement.

Next, the speaker presented scenes from the US evangelical film⁴⁸, *Facing the Giants*. In the first scene, a high school football coach overhears parents and staff planning to replace him following his team's mediocre performance. Defeated, he goes home to his wife and wonders how he can continue. During the next clip, the coach – recommitted to God and his coaching – urges one member of the football team to crawl fifty yards across the football field whilst blindfolded and carrying another teammate. The reinvested (and born again) coach pounds the grass in front of the player and shouts, "Don't give up. Keep going! Give all your heart!" I surveyed the auditorium and saw that students were engrossed in the film – far more than they had been in films that teachers showed as part of their lessons. Minutes earlier, Karen had been flirtatiously pinching and poking Ana but she was now fixated on the film, blinking away tears. Turning the film off, the speaker told students, "The

⁴⁸ *Facing the Giants* is a 2006 US straight-to-DVD film made by Sherwood Baptist Church. The film portrays the struggles of an underdog football team whose coach develops a new coaching strategy that involves praising God. By the end of the film, the team wins the state championship and the coach's impotence problems disappear. Several of my Brazilian friends were already familiar with this film as it had been shown in afterschool programmes, church, etc.

honours class is here today, right?" Students answered yes. "But Brock [the football player who carried his teammate] wasn't special. You don't need to be special!" The psychologist's passionate speech outlined that what *would* make a student "special" was belief in oneself and the hard work that would result from that belief.



Figure 4-3: Image that demonstrates the life paths of a *concurseiro* (someone participating in a *concurso* like ENEM) and a "normal person" now and in the future. While the *concurseiro* suffers studying at the weekends, his studies will pay off when he is rich. The "normal person's" life trajectory is less promising.

My classmates relished the presentation. They returned to the classroom excited, repeating jokes the speaker had told. Carla recounted the funny bits of the lecture to Maynara, who had been "too lazy" to attend and had hid in the library reading instead. Ana, who seemed to sleep through at least a third of classes, said that she had enjoyed the lecture. It was what all the students needed to relax and refocus on studying with ENEM so soon.

This event mirrored much of what teachers had been preaching throughout the year. The speaker mentioned that students live in the periphery of the city, thereby acknowledging their current socioeconomic status and, by association, self-esteem challenges. The emotion and drama of the film drew in students whilst reminding them that they did not need to be “special”, that they only needed to avoid distractions and work hard. The difference between this event and the daily affirmations doled out by teachers was that the speaker was billed as an “expert” and the event deviated from the normal routine of the curriculum. Students went to be entertained, happy to have escaped that routine. Perhaps students returned to the classroom sufficiently esteemed, born again (at least momentarily) to their commitment to studying? Strange to me, though, was the speaker’s truism, given during the advice section, that “a pessimist complains about the winds, an optimist hopes that the winds will change, and the realist adjusts his sails.” Here he urged students to be realists but what had this session been if not some sort of über-optimism rally?

Students’ Self-Esteem Work

Early in the school year, students in the honours class brainstormed designs for a class t-shirt to be worn as an alternative uniform during weekend and afterschool classes. The final t-shirt design included a blur of equations with “*Que bruxaria é isso?*” (What witchcraft is this?). On the back of the t-shirt was the UFC coat of arms with UFC 2013 written next to it. In appropriating these UFC symbols, students attempted to demonstrate their claim to a place at the prestigious, sought-after federal university. Another class adapted the “Keep calm and carry on” slogan for their class t-shirt: “Keep studying and see your name on the list”. These popular class t-shirts provided a way to distinguish between *turmas* whilst demonstrating affiliation with Colégio Ceará and proclaiming the student’s intentions to succeed. But were these t-shirts all bluster? Had students succeeded in believing that they would overcome and secure a place at UFC?

When I questioned Maynara about her ducking out of the motivational speech a few weeks before ENEM, she explained that she preferred to skip the event, as she knew it would be another psychologist with the same message.

Although Maynara did not explicitly state it, I got the sense that Maynara did not have the energy to feign self-esteem, optimism, and motivation. Furthermore, Maynara preferred to devote her attentions to studying rather than self-esteem making.

Most other students, though, had learned to publicly proclaim that, with hard work and belief in oneself, anything was possible. They repeatedly assured one another during class and on social media that *vai dar tudo certo* (it will go well). Students learned the importance of projecting confidence. Doubts were aired one-on-one or in small groups away from the classroom. I learned to offer similar assurances to my classmates. I tried to push aside thoughts that students might *not* be studying enough, that *that* particular student would *never* be admitted to Medicine this year. I worried that my *vai dar tudo certo* was not quite emotional or heartfelt enough to function the way that it should, to *dar força* to my classmates. Still, I found myself trying even while worrying that it *was not* going to go well and that some of my colleagues ought to choose more realistic goals and/or study more. While we publicly performed these pronouncements, worries abounded underneath.

Conclusions

Teachers and students saw self-esteem as critical to success in vestibular and beyond. In this particular associational network, self-esteem related to confidence, motivation and one's ability to persist in the face of great challenge. Self-esteem was not a discrete (or discreet) individualist project: it was relational and involved affective work wherein one should publicly perform self-esteem as well as give and receive *força*. Without self-esteem one would not be able to persevere during third year or other future *lutas*. Underlying this self-esteem knowledge was the argument that belief in one's self would transform an individual.

Souza cites "an extraordinary belief in themselves and their work" as a defining characteristic of *batalhadores* of the emerging middle class (2010: 50). Like their *batalhador* parents, students learned to proclaim that, with belief and hard work, anything was possible. Goldstein argues that self-esteem carries with it "an essential faith in the market as the proper and level playing

field for economic success" (2001: 237). Thus, in a way, self-esteem implied confidence in the market and in one's self. Self-esteem offered the feeling of being more in control, particularly appealing in precarious situations. It also shifted responsibility for failures: low self-esteem, created in concert with others, is to blame rather than some other inherent individual quality.

Chapter 5 Dreams for the Future

Bruna and her twin sister, Mariane, were not much alike. Mariane was shy and preferred quiet activities like reading and drawing. Bruna was outgoing and had played football and volleyball until she had to quit to focus on vestibular. Both girls had been part of the honours *turma* at Colégio Ceará since the start of high school. The twins lived with their mother, grandmother, aunt and uncle, young cousin and their beloved Shih Tzu in Aldeota. The girls' living situation did not match their chic postcode: the family was cramped into a small house and survived on the aunt and uncle's salaries and the grandmother's pension. The twins' mother could not work, as she was full-time caretaker of their ailing grandmother. The girls' father was not in their lives.

Bruna described the difficulty of twins. Her family had to buy two of everything: two sets of school uniforms, two backpacks, two notebooks, etc. On top of that, there were bigger expenses like school fees, braces, holidays and the *festa de formatura*. Having experienced these difficulties, Bruna was adamant about wanting only *one* child who she could afford to give everything. Bruna thought 28 sounded like the perfect age to have that one child. By then, she would have a good job, she would have been married for a few years and she and her husband would have their own home.

Bruna's hopes for the future hinged on studying medicine, her *sonho* (dream) since she was little. Because Bruna watched *House* and *Grey's Anatomy* religiously, she felt she had a small understanding of what doctors do. Her aunt, a nurse, said that doctors earned more money and were better respected than nurses but nurses did all the work. Bruna was happy to work hard but she wanted to be well paid and respected. Her dream of studying medicine was so important that Bruna was willing to go to *any* university, even if it meant being far away from her family.

Mariane thought that she wanted to study law. That way, she could become a lawyer or she could do a *concurso* (a test-based competition) for a lucrative public sector job. Unfortunately, Mariane's love affair with law came to an end when she saw a law textbook in the library. Realising how much of the

course (and her life) would be dreadfully boring reading, Mariane knew that she needed to find another option. Mariane struggled to re-write her *sonho*. Bruna had already picked medicine and Mariane was squeamish at the sight of blood. What other career choice could offer that kind of employability and remuneration? Ultimately, Mariane's uncle convinced her that architecture would be a good match for her skills since she liked maths and drawing.

Bruna and Mariane dreamt of careers that suited their talents and matched their individual personalities. They sought careers that would afford them security, prestige and the ability to engage in appropriate consumption practices. Colégio Ceará students commonly used *sonho* to describe their future careers, families and leisure activities. In this sense, the *sonho* was a package that included the lifestyle they hoped to live as well as the people with whom they hoped to share that lifestyle. Bruna's desire to be a doctor was wrapped up in her dream of the good life: owning her own home, bought with resources from a stable, well paying job; getting married before having a child who she could provide for comfortably; and achieving all of this at an age that was neither too young nor too old.

Recognising the prevalence and importance of these types of dreams, Colégio Ceará ran an advertising campaign playing on students' (and parents') hopes for the future. Print and billboard advertisements for Colégio Ceará read, "If you believe in your dream, come to Colégio Ceará. With quality education, all dreams are possible." Next to the text, a girl in profile looked skyward, smiling in a sort of ecstasy. *Céu* is the Portuguese word for both heaven and sky; thus, this blissful gaze up and the use of "believe" and "dream" suggested a higher power of education. (An advertisement for a nearby church could easily have read, "If you believe in your dream, come to church. With God, all dreams are possible.") Education could *transform* the individual.

Chapter 4 demonstrated the role of self-esteem in the classroom. High self-esteem helped a student to believe in herself; thus, she could construct and believe in her *sonho*, turning that dream into a *projeto de vida* (life project) towards which she could work. According to this discourse, *sonhos* could (or should) sustain students during the *luta* of studying for vestibular. In this

chapter, I explore students' dreams: the kinds of dreams that students constructed; the ways in which Colégio Ceará, families and friends helped students to shape those dreams; as well as the ways in which students' dreams shifted. I argue that *sonhos* were viewed as magical targets, power-imbued imagined futures that helped students to navigate a difficult present.

Time Work: Projects, Dreams & the Future

Linear notions of time suggest individual biographic paths with a past behind and the future ahead (Flaherty 2014; Leccardi 2005; Leão et al 2011). This modern understanding of time implies that an individual's work in the present will influence or even produce a particular future amongst an infinite number of possible futures (Flaherty 20014; Leão et al 2011). For young people, the future appears to be so much longer than the past that came before (Flaherty 2014). Yet, imagining that future is critical to youth – and the progression to “adulthood” – as:

the present is not only a bridge between the past and the future, but the dimension that “prepares” the future (Leccardi 2005: 35).

Leão et al argue that, in planning for the future, one attempts to exercise control over uncertainty in “a modern equivalent of magical practices” (2011: 1073).

What are these “magical practices” that allow that sense of control over the future? Drawing on Schutz and Dumont, Gilberto Velho (2008) describes the “individual project” whose development allows an individual to assign meaning to her past, present and future actions. Velho emphasizes the roles that family, social class, and emotion play in developing one's individual project from within a variety of possibilities. Leccardi (2005) traces the shifts in thinking about time and the individual that allowed for “life projects” to emerge under modernity; emphasizing that, especially for youth, the life project is bound up with identity. “[T]he future is the space to build a life project and, at the same time, to define oneself” (Leccardi 2005: 36).

These projects are part of what Flaherty (2014) might label “time work”; that is, the refusal to “passively accept fact as victims of our temporal

circumstances” (176). Flaherty argues that we use time work to “modify or customize various aspects of our temporal experience and resist external sources of time constraint or structure” (176). Time work, both behavioural and cognitive, is not always visible to others: it involves imagining a future different to the present as well as planning and acting on that imagined future. Flaherty highlights the complexities and demands of time work: exercising “temporal agency” to project oneself through the present towards an imagined future requires confidence, discipline and perseverance.

In emphasizing self-esteem, confidence and diligence during the *luta*, Colégio Ceará seemed to be setting students up to engage in time work and practice temporal agency. At Colégio Ceará, teachers and other pedagogical team members often referred to a student’s *projeto de vida* (life project) as motivation for engaging in the *luta*. In using this terminology, perhaps teachers intended to distinguish this driving force as different to the more ephemeral *sonho*. Leccardi (2005) contends that dream, rather than life project, might better characterize the uncertainties and instabilities wrought by neoliberalism. Tellingly, Colégio Ceará students adopted the more abstract dream in describing ideas about the future.

Dreams of (and for) the Good Life

In her ethnography of the *paulistano* middle class, O’Dougherty (2002) demonstrates links between the middle class, dreams and consumption such that the Brazilian “media definition of the middle class includes a level of practice (shopping) and an existential one (dreams, paradise)” (40). In 1990s São Paulo, middle-class consumption dreams included trips to Disney World, elaborate 15-years birthday parties and the acquisition of expensive imported goods. Through consumption practices (and consumption dreams), middle class Brazilians demonstrated their participation in and connection to “modernity”.

Twenty years later, former President Lula acknowledged similar dreams of “modernity” that the emerging middle class had. Asked to reflect upon the legacies of PT government, former President Lula responded:

In these ten years, we reclaimed our personal pride... [and] self-esteem. We conquered things that before seemed impossible... We have discovered who we are for ourselves. We are no longer treated like second-class citizens. We have the right to travel by airplane, to go to a shopping mall and buy things that everybody always wanted to buy. (Sader 2013: 12).

Lula linked self-esteem with economic successes and expanded access to consumer goods and services. Causality is unclear – did people gain self-esteem because of access to the market or did gaining access to the market bestow self-esteem? Regardless, Lula posits that Brazil and (a large section of) its people are closer to “modernity” and middle class-ness, following an economic boom/process of self-discovery.

Colégio Ceará students frequently used the expression “*É meu sonho!*” (“It’s my dream!”) to refer to a range of desires for the future. Similar to findings of Leão et al (2011), nearly all Colégio Ceará students talked about dreams for a good career partly so that they could help parents. They dreamed of upgrading the family home or earning enough money so that a parent could stop working. Students’ dreams for starting their own families echoed Bruna’s. *Vestibulandos* wanted to delay childrearing until they had completed university, established a career and acquired appropriate financial resources to marry and set up home. Only Rafaela told me that she would focus on marriage after she finished high school. When I registered surprise – she had proclaimed her dream to be a dermatologist four months early – Rafaela revealed that she had been inspired to focus on marriage after attending a church conference.

More immediate dreams included luxury and imported (highly taxed, expensive) consumer goods. Edson told me that owning Hugo Boss cologne was his dream while Heloísa said that she dreamt of owning a touch screen mobile phone. Trips to Europe, particularly London and Paris, were also dreams that students described. Students dreamt of a future where they would attend concerts, nightclubs and restaurants. They longed to move through Fortaleza by car rather than bus. Students’ dreams connected them to

local, national and global reference points while demonstrating the kinds of people they longed to be.

Renan's Cultured Dreams

Perhaps in opposition to the knockoffs of popular men's brands that his family made and sold, Renan declared his style to be more rock than surf. He loved the Beatles and, in fact, loved everything decorated with the Union Jack. He dreamt of visiting London, a city he reckoned was the world's cultural centre. He lamented Fortaleza's peripheral position in the world: the best foreign bands played in São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, *if* they made it to Brazil. Still, Brazil's economic upturn (coinciding with the EU and US downturn) could change that. Jennifer Lopez had played a show at the newly constructed R\$450 million Convention Centre and rumour had it that artists like Beyoncé and Paul McCartney would appear when reforms of Fortaleza's World Cup stadium were completed. In the meantime, Renan settled for covers of his favourite bands.

Through his consumption dreams, Renan sought to establish proximity and distance. His rock style differentiated him from those that his family catered to with their shop. At the same time, he imagined that it aligned him with international youth culture *and* places that were centre rather than periphery. (Renan was surprised to find out that teens in the US and the UK did not love the Beatles as much as he and many other Brazilian teens did.) Choosing London as his dream destination meant that he understood that real "culture" came from Europe. The US was a passé dream for those who suffered a lack of imagination and morals⁴⁹. As Renan's friend Eva told me, "The only reason to visit the US is shopping: Tommy Hilfiger, Aéropostale, Victoria's Secret. That's it!" Renan's consumption dreams for the future helped to carve out his identity in the present. Nevertheless, Renan still needed to find a way to bring these dreams closer.

⁴⁹ As Mariela and Sara said, the US served primarily as "*o grande vilão*" (the great villain) in school lessons.

Ana's Branded Dreams

I learned of Ana's dreams through afternoons spent together at the *shopping*. She pointed out how the coolest, most stylish girls-who-like-girls worked at the Chilli Beans sunglasses kiosk. Ana dreamt that she might study Marketing. Part of this dream was that she would land a job promoting Chilli Beans. Another of Ana's dreams was being able to buy books whenever she wanted. At the bookstore, she highlighted the cost of the novels in the *Game of Thrones* series. She had received the first book for her birthday but, at between R\$40 and R\$60 each, the rest of the series was cost prohibitive. Similarly, Ana thought eating at multinational chains like McDonald's and Subway was far more desirable than paying by the kilo at a *self-service* restaurant. At approximately R\$20, the cost of a McDonald's meal matched the minimum rate for a day's work (R\$20.73) set by the Brazilian Federal Government in 2012 (see Appendix I). When I revealed the equivalent McDonald's meal to minimum salary ratio in the US, Ana looked shocked. "That's my dream! Why don't Americans eat there every day?"

Ana's dreams, like Renan's, established an imagined good life whilst defining Ana as a certain kind of person. While Ana did not hide that she liked girls, she found it easier to avoid the subject with most of the honours *turma*. Outside of school, Ana's friends and family were largely accepting of her sexuality. Ana determined that working at a *shopping* kiosk was not a desirable job but being associated with and promoting a company that traded on the coolness of its gay employees would be an excellent career that would allow her to be the "real Ana". Through her alliances with certain brands (Chilli Beans, *Game of Thrones* books, McDonald's) and practices (reading international literature, eating fast food) Ana sought to construct that "real Ana". In the present (where she was short on cash) Ana hoped that a future career in Marketing would transform these dreams into reality.

The Power of Dreams

Students' *sonhos* were emotionally charged. Bruna choked up explaining the imperative for her to get into medicine. Ana cupped her face, as if to channel or contain her feelings, each time that she told me of her dreams. Smiles

spread across students' faces as they recalled and related their hopes for the future. These emotions seemed to be contagious: I felt the excitement and worry that my friends projected. In these discussions, I could shed my *gringa* sensibilities and allow myself to connect and mirror the feelings that students presented. Perhaps in those moments we co-constructed the imagined future through affect and affection in the present (Dalsgaard 2014).

Frustrated with so much talk about dreams but little studying, my partner told her students at a private language school that they needed to study, rather than dream, in order to accomplish their goals. To illustrate her point, she told a medical student in the class, "You got there because you studied a lot – you worked hard – *not* just because it was your dream." The student sat quietly throughout the remainder of the class and, afterwards, confronted Nicola, "Please don't say that again, teacher. It happened because it was my dream." There was obviously more power in dreaming than Nicola (or I) had previously understood. Perhaps this young woman thought of her dream as Nigel Rapport characterises life-projects:

The very possession of a life-project, the conception, intention and practice of seeing one's life in terms of a certain directionality, velocity, and destination, serving as a sense of self-control, the possession being instrumental in one's continuing capability to be responsible for interpretations made, relations entered into and actions taken (2003: 6).

Causality could be attributed to the strongest and best cultivated of dreams, as time work yielded directionality and velocity. If self-esteem afforded a spark for a student's *lutas*, the *sonho* (supposedly) offered a target.

Cultivating *sonhos* at Colégio Ceará

Advertisements for Colégio Ceará suggested that students could bring their dreams and be transformed. Yet, as the next section shows, Colégio Ceará did not play the passive role in students' dreams that the tagline suggested. Colégio Ceará delineated the field of acceptable careers, orienting students on how to choose, and, in doing so, attempted to stimulate time work and generate powerful *sonhos*.

When and How to Begin Work

Classroom discourses underscored understandings about when and how students should begin to work. Current Events and Writing classes highlighted child labour as one of Brazil's on-going social problems. (Learning about Brazil's social problems was critical as these were often fodder for vestibular multiple-choice questions and essays; for more on this, see Chapter 7.) Brazil's minimum age for work was 16 with exceptions for apprenticeships and working under the supervision of family from 14. Cash transfer programmes like *bolsa-família* encouraged parents to keep their children in formal education and out of the workplace. Still, 2010 census data revealed more than one million children, aged 10–14, in work (Folha de São Paulo 2011). In Ceará, the percentage of children working (7%) was slightly higher than the national average (6%). With statistics like these, child labour was viewed as a “social problem” that needed to be solved.

Teachers described the practices of child labour. Young children selling sweets at traffic lights or the beach were common in Fortaleza. Agricultural child labour was less familiar so teachers showed pictures of tiny children carrying heavy loads or operating dangerous equipment. They taught students to understand these situations as gross human rights violations. Professor Luziane showed short YouTube videos to help make students aware of Brazil's child labour epidemic *and* to offer statistics and other information that student might use to articulate arguments in an exam. These lessons contended that, rather than working, children should be playing. “Let them be children. Let them play,” said one video, as if the greatest factor in child labour was parents wanting children to grow up too fast.

Few would argue *for* child labour; however, perhaps more polemic was the supposition forwarded by these lessons that children should not be helping at home with their family businesses either. Many of my friends' parents ran small businesses out of their homes. Teachers informed students that parents who engaged their children in helping with this kind of work were breaking the law. To challenge that assumption in class would have been tantamount to admitting that one had bad, selfish parents who were stealing their children's future.

Through further discussion I realized that the ideas about child labour extended further than I had originally thought: when I explained that I had a job at 16, my Colégio Ceará friends were shocked. How could my parents have let me have a job? There was little differentiating my afterschool job from selling sweets at a traffic light at the age of 7. Had my parents not worried about my studies? For these students, studying was their job. Other work would (or should) be eschewed by families. A sixteen year old with a job was child labour. On the other hand, it was understood that students who attended *public* high school would work before or after school. Ultimately that work would be their downfall as public school students would not spend enough time studying to perform well on ENEM and/or they would end up dropping out under the lure of the paltry sums of money they earned.

Curiously, students did not describe sales work happening in the classroom as labour, child or otherwise. Alice scoured Centro shops for the coolest, inexpensive jewellery and then brought these pieces to school to resell to her peers. Alice's IOU system allowed classmates to take jewellery first and pay when they were able. Similarly, Juliana sold underwear from her family's store and Laís bought chocolates a few blocks from Colégio Ceará and resold them at a 100% mark-up for R\$1. Though students had been cautioned against the ills of children selling sweets, those operating in the informal market inside Colégio Ceará were not viewed as workers but entrepreneurs offering goods and services that classmates desired⁵⁰. This kind of (non)work was acceptable for several reasons: money generated was pocket money (as opposed to money used for survival), vendors were thought to be in control of themselves and their practices, and sales took place away from the streets.

Students thought that they should begin what they described as work *after* finishing high school. Ideally, students would land an internship or part-time job related to their university course. A few students conceded that they might take service jobs (like working in a shop) whilst studying but this was the exception rather than default. Discussions of child labour served to shuttle students down the path that parents had paid for: preparation for university and university only. Students learnt that their neighbours who worked

⁵⁰ See O'Dougherty (2002) for a similar reading wherein goods "conferred honor back on the" middle-class *paulistanos* who sold them.

during schooling had the wrong idea. Amongst the human rights discourse that said that 6 year olds should not be selling sweets at the beach instead of going to school, my friends read that *appropriate* work was that which served to prepare students for careers that required university degrees. There already existed a *trabalhador–bandido* (worker–bandit) or *trabalhador–marginal* (worker–marginal) dichotomy whereby the working poor “distinguish[ed] themselves from criminals in the eyes of the state and broader society” (Millar 2014: 41). Many students’ parents identified as *trabalhadores* in this context. These ideas about how and when to work enacted further distinctions, gradations amongst types of workers.

Choosing A Career

Mattos (2012) reports that *vestibulandos* in Niterói saw choosing their university course as both demonstrating their individual identity and choosing a group to which they might belong for their rest of their lives. How do students make this choice? According to Rodrigues and Pelisoli (2008), young people in Brazil begin to narrow their career choices between 14 and 18 years old, relying “on personal and environmental factors, economic contingencies, and consciousness of pre-professional activities, preferences, interests and values” (Rodrigues & Pelisoli 2008: 172). Mattos (2012) outlined similar factors that influenced *vestibulandos*’ choices. First, students looked for a course that would match their personal characteristics yet express their individuality. *Vestibulandos* told stories of how they had always dreamed of a certain career and how that career related to their personal characteristics. Second, students surveyed the job market to see what prospects their imagined careers might have. Third, related to the job market was financial compensation. Interestingly, public school students talked about this factor explicitly while private school students talked about pay as part of how a career would allow them to express their individuality with a certain kind of lifestyle. Fourth, students reflected on the social status that potential careers provided. Finally, *vestibulandos* calculated the odds that they would be admitted to a particular course. If competition was too great, they might discard a career option.

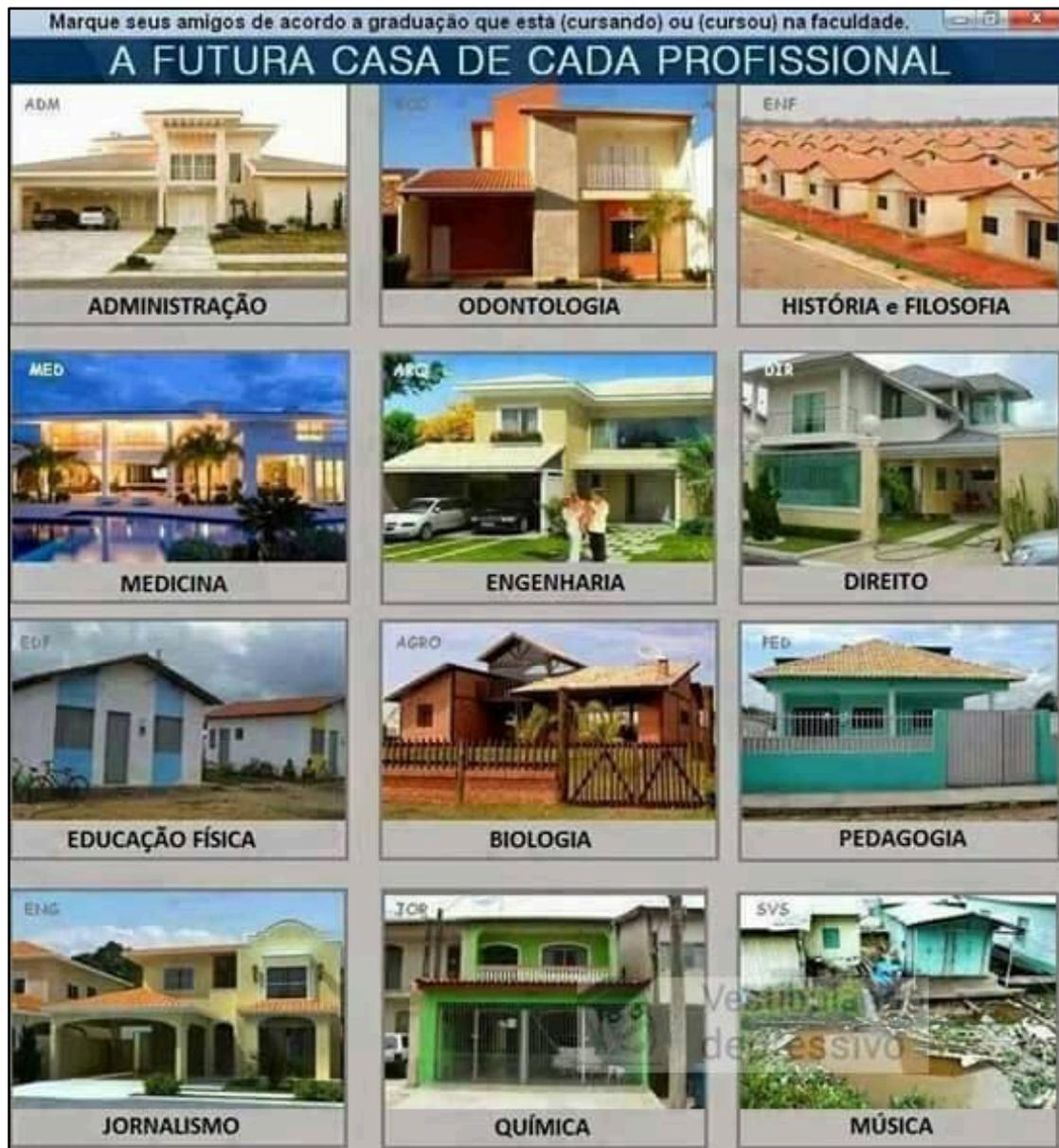


Figure 5-1: This Internet meme forecasts which future house awaits each profession. Those who study medicine will live a life of luxury while those who study music will live in a shack. Source: Vestibular depresso

Colégio Ceará students used similar criteria to make their career choices. A hierarchy of desired career choices emerged through discussions with students. Bruna was one of many who professed a lifelong dream of being a doctor. Girls especially proclaimed this dream because of their desire to help others and their love for children. When I asked Sara if she could perhaps channel that love of children into teaching, she told me that teaching was not a good profession. Teachers earned little money or respect. Following the national trend medicine, law and engineering were the courses most often

desired by students while teaching was the most-often cited “nightmare” course. This kind of common knowledge was embedded in Internet memes like Figure 5.1, which imagines the future houses of those who study different university subjects. Those who study medicine would live a life of unrivaled luxury. Similarly, those Law (*direito*) or applied science and technology careers like Dentistry (*odontologia*) and Engineering (*engenharia*) would prosper. Teaching (*pedagogia*) would beget a humble future but choosing History, Philosophy and Music will lead to nightmare-ish futures in government-subsidised housing or, worse yet, a falling down shack. While these kinds of ideas circulated in (and out of) the classroom, Colégio Ceará sought to provide students with the rest of the information (explanation of the career, job market, etc.) that they knew students would use to make their choices. As such, the school provided in-house career-related activities designed to help students explore their options and create career dreams that might propel them through vestibular.

Feira das Profissões at Colégio Ceará

At the Friday night activity, Director Costa welcomed students to the start of Colégio Ceará’s *Feira das Profissões* (Careers Fair). He told students, “This is one of the most difficult decisions. It will very much determine your life so we will try to make this choice more secure and easy.” Director Costa reinforced the idea that choosing a university course was a lifelong decision: both in that university course would affect life trajectory and that one would forever be tied to that university course. Director Costa had studied Architecture so perhaps knew that this was not quite true but it *was* the popular discourse that students (and parents) wanted reinforced. Career choice *had* to be important and there needed to be a way to make the choice more secure in order for dreams to work. This set the tone for the weekend’s activities.

“Youth and the choice of profession: challenges and possibilities”

I asked my friends what they anticipated the content of the evening’s presentation to be and Edson suggested that it would almost certainly be a psychologist *and* that it would be boring. I wondered why students would attend this out-of-hours activity if they believed that it would be dull. Still,

with music pumping and students greeting one another, the event seemed another opportunity to socialize outside of the classroom.

Following Director Costa's welcome and a pitch for Faculdade Ceará wherein students were offered a discounted rate for continuing their postsecondary studies with the Colégio Ceará brand⁵¹, guest psychologist Fabiana gave a talk entitled "Youth and the choice of profession: challenges and possibilities" (*Jovem e a escolha profissional: desafios e possibilidades*). She started with, "Who here has not yet decided what they want to do?" About half of the three hundred students in the room raised their hands. She emphasized the importance of the choice that students would be making – this choice was the not the same as choices they had made in the past. She reminded students of silly clothing fads that had come and gone. Career choice needed to stand the test of time more than her teenaged choice of rhinestone belt had. "To choose, I must know myself." Fabiana implored students to look past youthful whimsy to uncover their authentic selves. She listed a handful of role playing activities that students could try in order to better get to know that "real me".

Next, Fabiana presented the factors that also might influence students' choices: family, friends, perceived status, market, preconceptions and dreams from childhood. Fabiana asked students to imagine their families getting together for a *churrasco* (barbeque). "What courses would be valorised by your family? Imagine your parents telling your grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins that you were studying dance or history." Students laughed knowingly. Fabiana reiterated the status connected to professions and explained the logic of that status: high *concorrência* equated to high status. Steering back towards her initial observations that linked identity and career choice, Fabiana told students:

Many people want to do what gives them money. If you do that, you must know that that is your motive. When you enter the course and classes are boring, remember that you are doing this for money, for the quality of life: travel, having a nice house and a good car. Maybe every

⁵¹ None of the Colégio Ceará students that I knew professed an interest in Faculdade Ceará.

year you will go to three foreign countries. For me though, *autoconhecimento* (knowledge of oneself) is quality of life!

Fabiana allowed room for those students whose career choice might be a means to a good life bound up with consumer goods. With enough *força*, the “real me” could be subjugated in career choice. That “real me” might manifest itself in other dreams: family, security, class identity tied to consumer goods, etc. Still, Fabiana advocated the spoils that *autoconhecimento* would yield over surrendering to money. Having already run 25 minutes over her allotted hour, Fabiana began to wrap up her lecture by encouraging students to use the next day’s career fair activities to find out more about each potential career choice. “Choosing a profession is like marriage. You can’t marry someone you don’t know!” Fabiana ended with a final snippet of advice. “Have courage!” Many students’ attention had been waning but, at this final pronouncement, they clapped and cheered Fabiana.

Largely, Fabiana’s lecture reinforced what students already knew. Career choice was critical as it would be a lifelong relationship, like a marriage. Students should know the “real me” in order to properly wed themselves to a career. Fabiana’s lecture veered back and forth. Students’ career choice should be based on the “real me”; however, students should be wary of letting the “real me” be dance or history. Courses with little possibility for making money (and/or accruing cultural capital as is the case of a profession that allows one to travel to three new countries a year) would not be valorised. Students should take family and friends’ opinions into consideration when making career choices but, ultimately, students’ imagined futures should be based on their own identities. Fabiana’s lecture constructed the choice of university course as the first step in a life project – rather than the more abstract dream – that students should be taking.

What messages had students taken away from this event? The next day, Renan told me that, truthfully, he had been sitting in the back and had not paid much attention. (Perhaps it was only the anthropologist furiously scribbling notes...) Still, most of Fabiana’s message was information that students already knew to be “true”; the lecture served as refresher. By simply attending (but not necessarily paying attention), students seemed to feel that

they were working towards a profession—or, at least they could tell their parents that they were. These kinds of events served as foundation for the “magical practices” that students would engage in with their time work.

Getting to Know the Professions

The next morning, career panels took place in the school’s classrooms. I chose the panel with “new courses” – that is, courses like Gastronomy, Biotechnology, Physiotherapy and Tourism Studies that were new to local universities or university studies in general. Almost no students from the honours class were in my room. Honours students seemed more comfortable with established careers that they could already imagine. For them, the “real me” resided in the security, prestige and salaries that law, medicine and engineering afforded. Non-honours students like Renan and Juliana were more open to imagining that one of these new career choices might be the right one for them.

The panel started with a representative from UFC’s Gastronomy course who told students that the course would combine culinary chemistry, biochemistry, and microbiology of nutrition with practical skills and experiences in the kitchen. In referencing its scientific bases, gastronomy became a bit more prestigious and modern than “cooking”, a skill which most middle-class people had proclaimed total ignorance of until recently (Goldstein 2013). Gastronomy would valorise *cearense* cooking but students would also learn Chinese, European, and American cooking too. Students’ questions for the speaker revolved around the job market. How would students find a job after finishing? How much would graduates earn? The speaker assured students that gastronomy was a booming business in the rest of Brazil. Chefs from São Paulo did not make their way to Fortaleza so this allowed for local expansion of the market *by* locals. Though UFC’s gastronomy course was just beginning, it offered the potential for success.

Next, the representative from UFC’s Biotechnology course told students, “At the end of this process, many of you will be our students *se Deus quiser* (God willing)! You will be working not for the national market but the world!” He explained that Biotechnology was comprised of biology, chemistry, and engineering. Students would acquire scientific knowledge and apply it to

agriculture, the environment, and medicine. Brazil's tremendous biodiversity was waiting to be turned into service and products. The speaker ended with "Brazil is one of the three countries with the greatest potential for growth in biotechnology in the world!" Biotechnology used science to harness nature and turn it into goods that would be inserted into global markets. That market insertion would secure a better future for Brazil and its biotechnologists.

Third, a practicing physiotherapist came to talk about his career. As an established university course offered at a variety of public and private universities, this choice seemed rather less exciting. In fact, the physiotherapist seemed to issue cautions against the course. He warned students that the degree was not easy and physiotherapists earned low salaries on completion. He offered advice on how to make a career in physiotherapy more successful. Physiotherapists working in private institutions, catering to the aesthetics market, could earn R\$110 per hour. Furthermore, the speaker highlighted opportunities to work abroad as the field was more valorised in the US and Canada. The lifestyle that physiotherapy afforded was not, strictly speaking, dream material *but* there were ways of reimagining the career that could make it more (socially and economically) lucrative.

A representative from a private *faculdade* tourism studies course gave the final presentation of the morning. She started the presentation with, "Who likes to travel?" All of the students raised their hands. She continued:

That's why tourism is growing. We all want to travel! Look at the investment in tourism. This is a tourism country! Before you needed *muito dinheiro, tempo, vontade para viajar. Andar por avião foi para ricos!* (lots of money, time, and the will to travel. Going by plane was for rich people!) Now it's easy. There's more than flying. There are cruises and the industry has grown by six times! Everyone needs to breath. There's a necessity to stop and be happy and that's where tourism comes in.

The Tourism Studies representation emphasised the role that tourism played in the local and national economies. Tourism accounted for 11% of the state's economy and, with the World Cup and the Olympics, the coming years

would offer more opportunities for this market. “*Graças á Deus e Dilma* (Thanks to God and Dilma) because Dilma has formally recognised *turismólogo* (tourismologist) as a profession.” In highlighting this recognition, the representative sought to reinforce that Tourism had become a legitimate career choice – not simply a low-status service job. Prestige and respect were sure to follow this legitimacy. She finished with, “This is learning not just for the market but for your life! You go to the airport. Your friend has many questions but you know how it works!” An added bonus to Tourism Studies was the cultural capital attached to travel.

Each presentation offered information to help students imagine themselves and the future lives they might lead under the careers showcased. Travel (via study abroad, job opportunities or tourism) featured heavily. This fit with students’ articulations of their dreams to “know⁵²” European and North American destinations. Presentations also highlighted different types of cultural capital offered by careers: students could study their way into refined palates that appreciated international cuisine or they would know more about travelling than their friends. There was also much analysis of and emphasis on the local and international markets, including *new* markets into which students might cleverly insert themselves. Presenters focused on futures that were bound to arrive in Fortaleza, Ceará and Brazil: Brazil would transform its resources into goods via biotechnology, *fortalezenses* would acquire gourmet tastes and demand more variety in the restaurant industry, the World Cup and the Olympics would bring a tourism boom, etc. Market growth from these industries would transform not only Brazil but also those who got involved in the professions. Interestingly, the only practitioner *not* attached to a university-level course was less upbeat and optimistic; still, the physiotherapist offered ways to rework the realities of physiotherapy to make it more dream-like.

Overall, the *Feira das Profissões* weekend reinforced what students already knew about careers, from the prestige attached to certain professions to the “magical powers” of career dreams and life projects. Students were advised to know themselves so that they could find a career that would match the “real

⁵² *Conhecer* (to know) is the verb used to describe if one has visited a place. Thus, I “know” Rio de Janeiro because I spent six days there on holiday.

me". At the same time, students were bombarded with information about the market. This juxtaposition suggested that savvy students might be able to orient/reinvent that "real me" according to the market.

Juliana's (Market Flexible) Dreams

The Monday following the Career Fair, Juliana and I discussed her dreams – career and otherwise. Most of Juliana's dreams were short- rather than long-term. Her father and older brother would not permit her to date until she finished high school so she dreamt of the moment that she could finally have a boyfriend. She also dreamt of having her own money so that she could buy clothes and makeup without relying on her parents. The money that she earned selling underwear provided pocket money but she thought she would be able to generate more money with a different product.

As for university dreams, Juliana was concentrating her search on tourism and physiotherapy courses at private *faculdades*. Opportunities in the tourism market were tremendous *and* the career would allow her to travel. Juliana was already studying Spanish because she wanted to visit "*os países mexicanos*" (the Mexican countries). Still, Juliana wanted to be "*dona do meu próprio nariz*" (owner of my own nose, beholden to no one) and studying tourism seemed to lead to a job in *someone else's* travel agency. Her parents had always run their own small businesses so, if she was going to be in business, she wanted to be her own boss. Studying physiotherapy, which required university training, would keep those options open. Juliana's dreams were flexible. She had seen her parents change businesses several times so she was willing to go with the market. She could always start her own small business in tourism while working as a physiotherapist.

Colégio Ceará's University Fieldtrips: Filling Out Dreams

To encourage students to further imagine their *sonhos*, Colégio Ceará presented opportunities for students to visit the state and federal university campuses. Through these fieldtrips, Colégio highlighted options that were already valorised in the hierarchy of career choice. Thus, students enjoyed opportunities to get closer to those dream careers.

Colégio Ceará organised a fieldtrip to UFC's Technology Career Fair, a large-scale event that sought to encourage Fortaleza students' interests in science and technology careers. Students and faculty members made the atmosphere fun with music, games and demonstrations. Information sessions similar to those at Colégio Ceará's Career Fair were held throughout the day. Tremendous queues for each session snaked down corridors and around buildings. With no chairs left, I sat on the floor during the architecture and design presentations. Engineering proved to be worse, which I perhaps should have predicted given that 1 of every 3 Colégio Ceará students proclaimed an interest in the discipline. Hundreds of students crushed in around me at the entrance to the auditorium. I worried someone might be trampled. Undeterred by the crowds, *more* students joined the throngs to see what all the hype was. This was *concorrência* embodied.

Information sessions provided fodder for imagining successful futures: lucrative starting salaries, study abroad opportunities, scholarships, internships, etc. Again, markets featured heavily. Civil engineers from São Paulo and the US were being flown in because *cearense* engineers could not possibly keep up with the explosion of construction projects. Petroleum and environmental engineers were needed to ensure that Brazil's bountiful natural resources (particularly the recently discovered pre-salt deposits) could be turned into energy. Students should cash in on these market demands.

Students relished visiting the UFC campus. They explored the science labs, lay on the grass outside and generally enjoyed playing at being a UFC student. The same Colégio Ceará students I had watched fidgeting and restless during information sessions went home and posted pictures of their day at UFC on Facebook with captions like "Here's where I'm going in 2013!" and "My future campus". Embodied *concorrência* did not deter students; rather, the experience allowed them to fill out and then publicly pronounce their dreams, another important step in making powerful *sonhos*.

A trip to the UECE anatomy lab provided the same kind of "magic". After two hours gazing at cadavers and contemplating tables full of innards, Bruna, Rebeca and I walked back to the bus. Rebeca was smiling more than I had ever seen her smile before. "I thought it would be difficult to look at the

bodies, that I would be scared but once I got in there I only wanted to learn more. This experience *me emocionou* (made me emotional, made me feel). Just think that that could be our classroom next year! We could be studying medicine here at UECE!", said Rebeca. Bruna joined in, "Or at UFC!" I asked which university the girls would prefer. Not wanting to break the spell, Rebeca told me, "I would go *anywhere* to study medicine." While it is doubtful that this fieldtrip yielded an additional correct vestibular question for Bruna or Rebeca, the experience helped the girls to imagine their futures as doctors. Furthermore, as Rebeca noted, it offered a sort-of affective charge for her dream so that she could push aside her worries (temporarily) about the *concorrência* and imagine her future studying medicine.

Changing Dreams

Though Colégio Ceará urged students to know themselves, choose a career accordingly and then dream that future into existence, School Psychologist Ana Claudia tempered this approach with some pragmatic advice: students should be flexible about their choices. When ENEM results were released and it came time to register first and second choice courses, students should choose a first choice *do seu coração* (of your heart) and a second for which students might have an *afinidade* (affinity). Although students might have imagined themselves as doctors, they should try to find a second option. Likewise, though most students wanted a place at UFC, the pedagogical team urged them to consider UECE or even private *faculdades* like Faculdade Ceará. Though students were meant to build life projects that would sustain them through vestibular, they should be flexible about those projects if they wanted to gain admission to a university in the coming year.

Dayanne's Dreams of the Present

Dayanne's mother was the head teacher at a public school in the interior and her father had trained to be a lawyer. When she was young, her family had lived in a chic apartment in Aldeota but, when Dayanne's father suffered a heart attack, everything changed. Her mother convinced her father to quit his stressful job as "it was killing him". With growing kids (Dayanne had three younger siblings) and limited resources, the family had squeezed into a tiny

apartment in Montese. With the house so crowded, Dayanne had been sent to live with her grandparents so that she could focus on studying during third year.

In late January, Dayanne told me that she wanted to study medicine. In fact, she would consider going to Cuba – she heard it was easier to get into medical school there – because the *concorrência* was so high in Fortaleza. By March, Dayanne had decided that she wanted to study law. Classmates explained Dayanne’s change of heart differently than she did: Mariela and her clique of doctor wannabes had told Dayanne that she was not smart enough to study medicine. Dayanne did not address this alleged impetus for her change of heart but admitted that she had come home from school crying many times and, after that, her uncle helped her to choose a different option. In September, Dayanne decided on Biotechnology; however, her mother refused to accept that choice. She wanted Dayanne to choose a profession, not one of UFC’s new courses that had yet to yield graduates. In October, Dayanne chose Agriculture. Her mother was even less happy with this choice: agriculture sounded like farming, a practice connected to the interior that seemed anti-modern and backwards (the interior *and* agriculture). Her mother’s disapproval weighed heavily on Dayanne.

Dayanne’s experiences of past futures made her wary of the risk involved in any new future. She had once imagined growing up with status and stability but her father’s illness, which she characterised as brought on by stress from *his* dream career, had shaken the family. Under the fallout, her mother had turned from kind to demanding and her younger siblings had pushed her out of her own house. Dayanne’s grandparents had remained a loving constant but the future would almost certainly take them away from her. Given these circumstances, Dayanne struggled to invest herself in time work. Dayanne confessed that, while she dreamt of getting into university, her real dream was that things “can stay the same”.

Conclusions

During third year, Colégio Ceará promoted self-esteem as an imperative for creating powerful dreams that would transform students and their lives. High

self-esteem appeared to enable a student to construct and believe in her dreams for the future, turning that *sonho* into a *projeto de vida* (life project) towards which she could work. Students were urged to engage in time work, to fill out appropriate dreams for the future that would affirm their “modern” middle-class statuses. They engaged in affective work to help shift energy into imagining these futures. These imagined futures served to define students in the present.

Chapter 6 Oppression, Indignation, and Social Problems: *O Povo* in the Classroom

In the lull between the end of morning classes and Thursday afternoon logic and current events classes, honours student Isabela and I sat looking at the most recent edition of a current events study guide. The cover showed protestors in Greece with the headline: “Europe in Flames: The economic crisis provokes protests, obstructs governments and puts the continent’s union at risk.” The world economic crisis had been a common theme in the classroom. The general understanding was that the increased purchasing power of the new middle classes was pushing Brazil through the crisis unscathed so far – in fact, Brazil’s economy had just trumped that of the UK, turning it the world’s sixth largest. Elsewhere though, economic (false) idols like the US and Europe were falling.

Isabela closed the study guide and pointed to the cover, “What’s happening in Greece? They’re supposed to lower their salaries? Eat less food? And all of this is happening in Greece because of things that happened elsewhere?” Isabela posed the question as a critique, unveiling the absurdity and incompatibility of economics, politics and people’s real lives. Isabela put aside the study guide and turned towards me to better engage, “Michele, what about the crisis in the United States? Are they really living in tents? Don’t they want the government to invest in helping *o povo* (the people)?”

I struggled to explain the American dream – a Brazilian version of which it seemed many of my friends were living – and the bootstrap metaphor. Pulling oneself up by one’s bootstraps was, in fact, an expression coined during the 19th Century that meant an impossible task. Still, many Americans believed that the social, economic and political conditions of the US meant that an American should be able to pull herself up by her own bootstraps; that is, she should be able to overcome problems unaided so, while some Americans were asking for government intervention, others were against such measures.

Isabela looked incredulous at my explanation, responding, “I think the government *has* to invest in people, help them. When people are starving,

that's terrible." Here, Isabela referred to the investments that the Brazilian government had been making in *its* people with small cash-transfer programmes like *Bolsa Família* and social welfare housing construction projects like *Minha Casa, Minha Vida*. These types of projects were credited with lifting millions out of poverty.

Interested in learning more about Isabela's political views, I pointed to the headline of the newspaper kept in the classroom to help students follow current events. "But Dilma has just given R\$60 billion in tax breaks. Imagine what could be done for *o povo* with that money?"

Rebeca turned around in her seat and chimed in, "Brazil is already the best place for business."

Isabela nodded in agreement, voicing her disgust, "There's no doubt that it is. Here in Brazil, labour is cheap. They don't need to keep adding more incentives to increase private investment. Professor Victor is for privatization. He says the money goes to workers and improves the Brazilian economy but I think that most of that money leaves Brazil. Or it makes rich Brazilians richer. That doesn't help."

I asked Isabela if she had a party affiliation. (We all knew that Professor Victor was a staunch PT supporter.) "Not a party but an ideology. To the left. Parties like the PT, the PCdB [*Partido Comunista do Brasil*, Communist Party of Brazil]. My father votes with a party but I won't. I won't vote for anyone that's against *o povo*." Isabela's analysis articulated an alliance with or affinity towards *o povo*, the proletariat masses: Greece was *o povo* of the European Union just as cheap Brazilian labourers were *o povo* and private investors were most often *anti-povo*⁵³.

Thus far, I have focused on constructing "futures" as students and teachers worked on the co-curricular imperatives of self-esteem and *sonhos* in the classroom. In this chapter, I demonstrate a curriculum and pedagogy that

⁵³ Not all students at Colégio Ceará navigated complex ideas about politics and economics with Isabela's ease; nor were all students interested. Whilst some students slept through copying notes about neoliberalism from the board, I relished these and inevitably attracted more interactions with students like Isabela in and out of the classroom.

underlined and shaped students' understanding of the past and present as predictor for future possibilities for themselves and the nation. *O povo* (the people) proved to be an important reference for students. Contradictions and confusions arose as students and teachers both aligned and distanced themselves from *o povo*. Students were encouraged to recognise oppression and feel indignation about social, economic and political injustices. Often, *o povo* was oppressed but *o povo* might equally be oppressed turned oppressor through false consciousness. In this chapter, I show how a mix of populism, *pensamento social brasileiro* and Freirean pedagogy helped students to understand their world.

The Pedagogy of the Oppressed

07. Liberation Theology had its heyday in the 70s and 80s.... Organizing themselves in small communities of bible study (Christian communities CEBs) or in pastoral groups specializing in social movements (land, indigenous, minors, etc.), they developed a social vision of Christian salvation promises.

Source: Fernandes, Rubem César. *Religião. Pouco Padre, Pouca Missa e Muita Festa*.

The movement mentioned in the text can be characterized:

- a) as the principal representative of Protestant reform in Brazil.
- b) by its anti-socialist doctrine in Latin America.
- c) *by its position, which combines religion with Marxist doctrine.*
- d) by its conservative stance of detachment from revolutionary movements.
- e) by its defence of the military regime, inaugurated in 1964.

This vestibular-style question offered during a geography lesson tested Colégio Ceará students' knowledge of social movements and their affiliated political economic ideology. Although the question suggested that the time for liberation theology has passed, vestiges of the movement live on in the pedagogical approaches inspired by Paulo Freire.

Freire's (2005) *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is considered to be one of the seminal texts of critical pedagogy, an educational philosophy that draws on critical theory and advocates refiguring the traditional relationship between teaching and learning. In his book, Freire offers a Marxist class analysis to argue that people are divided into oppressors and the oppressed: the oppressed do not recognize their oppression just as the oppressors cannot always see the ways in which they are part of the system that oppresses. In order to work towards liberation, the oppressed must recognize the causes of their oppression. This recognition will help the oppressed to see their situation "not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform" (Freire 2005: 48). Ultimately, the pedagogy of the oppressed will become "a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation", as those formerly oppressed will free the oppressed and oppressors alike (Freire 2005: 53).

Given the emphasis on transformation, it is unsurprising that time features heavily in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In his characteristically dense prose, Freire delineates how time will feature in the hands of those *not* invested in the pedagogy of the oppressed:

The rightist sectarian differs from his or her leftist counterpart in that the former attempts to domesticate the present so that (he or she hopes) the future will reproduce this domesticated present, which the latter considers the future pre-established – and kind of inevitable fate, fortune, or destiny. For the rightist sectarian, 'today' linked to the past, is something given and immutable; for the leftist sectarian, 'tomorrow' is decreed beforehand, is inexorably preordained. This rightist and the leftist are both reactionary because starting from their respectively false views of history, both develop forms of action that negate freedom. The fact that one person imagines a 'well-behaved' present and the other a predetermined future does not mean that they therefore fold their arms and become spectators (the former expecting that the present will continue, the latter waiting for the already 'known' future to come to pass). On the contrary, closing themselves into 'circles of certainty' from which they cannot escape, these individuals 'make' their own truth. (Freire 2005: 37)

Thus, the rightist and leftist sectarians' decided lack of imagination blinds them to what Donaldo Macedo, in his preface to the 30th anniversary edition of the book, describes as "the power of thought to negate accepted limits and open the way to a new future" (Freire 2005: 31). Those engaged in the pedagogy of the oppressed use the problem-posing method as "revolutionary futurity" (Freire 2005: 83). As students and teachers act as co-investigators, critically analysing oppression as part of on-going historical processes, they begin to see how they might work in the present to create (a) better future(s).

How does this process begin? Freire argues that traditional schooling treats students as piggy banks to be filled with knowledge, that this system "involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students)" (Freire 2005: 70). He proposes shifting the balance to dialogical relations between teacher and student, with teachers engaging in "problem-posing" to provoke curiosity as well as critical consciousness. Hence, students become teachers and teachers become students as both "develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves" (Freire 2005: 82).

Oppression & *O Povo* in the Brazilian Curriculum & Pedagogy

The 1996 *Lei das Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (LDB, Law of National Education Fundamentals and Guidelines) characterizes education as a responsibility shared between the family and the state, "inspired by principles of liberty and the ideas of human solidarity" with its end being "the full development of the student, his preparation for the exercise of citizenship and his qualification for work" (LDB 1996: Art 2). Though the "dominant classes" constructed the LDB, Pereira and Werlang (2002) demonstrate a Freirian spirit throughout the document. Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed designates "human solidarity" as a specific goal towards which teachers and students should be working. The LDB is imbued with similar Freirian language throughout.

Additionally, the LDB outlines curricula that should encourage students to valorise non-dominant/oppressed identities and, potentially, recognize oppression. Although the LDB specifies that all educational institutions must

adhere to the National Education Plan (a separate document developed/updated every 10 years in concert with federal, state and municipal stakeholders), it still outlines basic tenets for the curriculum of *ensino básico* (nursery, primary and secondary schooling): each level must integrate age-appropriate lessons related to the environment, human rights, and the history and culture of Afro-Brazilians and indigenous peoples. Specific to *ensino médio* (high school) is a focus on technology, citizenship and modern production as well as mandatory philosophy and sociology classes.

Similarly, the “Human Sciences and Its Technologies” section of ENEM (see Appendix II) requires skills and knowledge that demonstrate a “critical consciousness” approach. Key skills include understanding cultural identity and showing how social, economic and political factors relate to power dynamics. Students should be able to trace these power relationships over space and time, relating them to changes in production, advances in technology, and the natural environment/resources. Political movements, citizenship and rights feature heavily as students are expected to draw on history from “democracy in antiquity” and “the development of liberal thinking in capitalist societies” to “the great revolutionary processes of the twentieth century” and current “networks and hierarchy in cities, poverty and spatial segregation”. Furthermore, students should understand how all of these are linked with production structures from slavery to capitalism and socialism. The LDB and the set of skills required for ENEM both suggest various versions of *o povo*: those oppressed economically, socially and politically.

Metodologias de Apoio: Áreas de Ciências Humanas e Suas Tecnologias (Support Methodologies: Human Sciences and its Technologies), produced by the State of Ceará as a guide for social sciences teachers, explicitly promotes Freirian pedagogy:

The teacher’s critical consciousness and interference as a political agent of transformation from his own practice can constitute [...a] mechanism for change that can catalyse ‘indignation’ as a driving force for a practice based on an ‘epistemological curiosity’ as suggested by Paulo Freire in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (Seduc 2008: 10)

Teachers should not be afraid to use their own politics to provoke indignation through problem-posing. (Freire posits that teachers made conscious are ethically bound to act both pedagogically and politically; thus, a mathematics teacher might incorporate his political knowledge about capitalist systems into the dialogical teacher-student relationship.) Although the pedagogical guide encourages an anti-hegemonic approach, it attempts to curtail teachers advocating *too* radical a revolution:

History teachers must take into consideration that the contradictions posed by the current stage of capitalism (flexible) have permitted Latin America and Brazil to advance in the struggle for implementation of effectively democratic societies. (Seduc 2008: 13)

The guide's approach posits that the current incarnation of capitalism and democracy are interlinked. Teachers should be wary of disputing this when provoking indignation to help students learn.

What does the prescribed Brazilian curriculum and pedagogy beget? Following Freire, a level of "critical consciousness" of the modes of oppression, oppressors and the oppressed should lead to indignation and, perhaps, liberation and/or peaceful revolution. Following the LDB, this critical consciousness should create capacitated citizens, qualified for work. Is indignation compatible with worker-citizens who slot into the structures of flexible capitalism? *Support Methodologies* argues that it is, that the work of teachers and students in dialogue will create students who will:

assume the role of citizen, critical subject, conscious of his role in society, capable of breaking with excesses and social injustices, in search of an egalitarian and democratic society that respects diversities. (Seduc 2008: 14).

In the following sections, I move into the classroom to show how these documents are (and are not) put into practice.

The Pedagogy of the Indignant

The LDB grants each school, private and public, the right to develop and follow their own pedagogical proposal (LDB Art12. I). At Colégio Ceará there

was little discussion of that pedagogical proposal. With third year largely a review of the first two years of *ensino médio*, perhaps elaboration of the pedagogy fell by the wayside. It was only after I finished fieldwork that I located a brief statement⁵⁴, informed by social constructivism, on the school's new website.

Rather than a consistent pedagogy, teachers were united in their use of the four 600-page *apostilas* that comprised the year's curriculum. Though there was no one pedagogical method employed, as I demonstrate below, a "pedagogy of the indignant" emerged. That is, many of the teachers (across the curriculum) continually revealed oppression and injustices against *o povo* – or even caused by *o povo* – inciting students to feel outraged, indignant.

History teacher Valdirene began her first class with the honours *turma* by sharing a bit about herself. She identified strongly as a Christian *and* a socialist. She laughed at herself as she pronounced that she loved Jesus *and* Former President Lula. She explained that Jesus would have been a socialist too. "Who did Jesus hang out with? Lepers. Prostitutes. The homeless. *Not* rich people!" Many would dispute Valdirene's assertion that Lula is a socialist but that is a different matter – what was important here was her emphasis on a kind of non-rich *o povo*.

Introducing her pedagogical approach, Professor Valdirene told the class, "This year, we will study history. History is actually politics, economics, and society. But everything is political. Am I lying?" Trained well in the call and response method, the class bellowed a prolonged, "Noooooo!" Even the boys chatting in the back of the classroom, those who I had written off as not paying attention, joined in. Though perhaps this was only that they were happy to be invited to move out of the passive role for a moment.

Glad to have recaptured waning attention, Valdirene continued, "Why is politics so important? Economic power *is* political. That means that decisions are almost always made by a small elite, a minority. We see that throughout history." Valdirene related how this was true in Brazil and all over the world. "Any country that develops but doesn't divide its wealth has what?"

⁵⁴ Because the statement is short, I do not analyse it here as it might provide information that would make Colégio Ceará identifiable.

Valdirene paused and scrawled “poverty and misery” on the board in answer to her question. “In this city, we have rich and poor side-by-side: Aldeota has the same income per capita as a European country while Vicente Pinzon’s is similar to the Ivory Coast’s. How is this possible?” She paused to let her statement sink in, “This year, we will study the modes of production to understand how these types of economic and social relations are possible.”

Whether or not she consciously chose to, Professor Valdirene employed elements of Freirian pedagogy as she identified her own political views and showed how these intertwined with Christian religion. Through the familiar idiom of the rich elite versus the poor *povo*, Professor Valdirene attempted to stoke indignation, showing the oppressed the processes that had led to and continued their oppression. Valdirene’s students were meant to understand how today’s poverty and misery – in their very city, perhaps in their neighbourhood or their houses – were linked to centuries of uneven global economic regimes, driven by a variety of self-interested political systems. Nonetheless, there was no real “dialogical” interaction in Valdirene’s class. Her impassioned introductions to class excited bored and sleepy students but, twenty minutes into copying notes from the board or watching Coppola’s *Marie Antoinette* with Portuguese subtitles, the aftereffects of indignation had worn off and many students had stopped paying attention. So while students may not have learned the specific material that teachers who deployed similar pedagogical methods had taught, they may have learned a kind of cultivated indignation.

How does the elite rich versus the poor *povo* idiom play out in a classroom where social class lines were being redrawn as students attempted to project themselves into better (and, more often than not, richer) futures? In the next two sections, I look at the contradictions and confusions that arose as economics and politics were constructed in the pedagogy of the indignant.

Economic Systems

141. Neoliberalism today is characterised by the way it superimposes the imperialist action of the major capitalist powers, in the sense of subordinating the political and social economy of other nations to the interests of [the major capitalist powers']; as in the seventeenth century, there has been a return to... the worship of the principles of 'free market' and 'minimal State.' With regards to Latin America, the implementation of neoliberal policies has represented:

a) the possibility of implementation of socioeconomic programmes shaped on the principal of redistribution of income in order to alleviate the greatest problem they faced: poverty.

b) the development of nationalization policies of the main sectors of the economy and the provision of services such as health and education, aiming to reduce intervention of the State in society.

c) expansion of state presence in the productive sectors, especially those linked to agriculture, in an attempt to increase the supply of foodstuffs on the market, reducing prices and minimizing the hunger problem.

d) the dismantling of public equity built with tax money paid by taxpayers, through a privatization policy that affects not only the economic sector but also important social sector areas like health and education.

e) the increasing of State educational policies geared primarily to the improvement of higher education in order to guarantee Brazilian universities as public, free, secular and quality institutions.

The "dependency" strand of *pensamento social brasileiro* (see Introduction and Tavolaro 2008) underlies this practice test question as neoliberalism in Latin America is characterised as loss of national sovereignty, the refigured continuation of colonialism. Because of the "major capitalist powers,"

taxpayer-funded resources are sold off in a wave of IMF-mandated privatisations. Not content to stop at national patrimony, these capitalist powers threaten to pare down the state entirely, selling off schools and hospitals to the lowest bidder. Neoliberalism is *not* helping *o povo* with cash-transfer programmes, hunger reduction policies, or expanded access to higher education.

Teachers reviewed test questions like these during class, stoking indignation at the injustices wrought by neoliberalism. Whilst I found this to be an accurate characterisation of neoliberal insidiousness, I began to wonder where this positioned Brazil and its people? Were the PT rogues making the most of a difficult situation – sneakily stealing from the upper middle classes to give to the poor whilst beholden to neo-colonialist robber barons? The niggling thought (which no one dared speak aloud lest oppressed turn oppressor) that underlined many of these questions remained: why was Brazil not calling the shots? Why was it not a major capitalist power (yet)? History, Geography, and Current Events classes presented continuous outrages like these wherein Brazil fell victim to the economic powers of the world, the Northeast fell victim to the economic powers of the Southeast or, more generally, *o povo* fell victim to the economic powers of the elite.

One thing was certain: even today, Brazil was *not* developed, economically *or* socially. The following passage in the history section of the *apostila* offered evidence of this:

In countries where the rights of *o povo* prevail, the government interferes in this opposition of classes, preventing capitalists' abuses and guaranteeing the workers dignified life conditions. In other countries (amongst which is Brazil) the perception that economic growth has to look at the greatest possible number of people – at the risk of the collapse of the system – still has not developed amongst the rich classes. In these cases, capitalism stops being an economic project that offers equality of conditions to become one of the cruellest examples of human exploitation.

The passage made no mention of *which* countries' governments had successfully intervened to guarantee its workers dignified life conditions.

Rather, the passage made clear that Brazil's version of capitalism was not yet balanced or developed enough.

Furthermore, geography teacher Raul spent weeks meticulously drawing and filling tables full of numbers and percentages to show how infant mortality and life expectancy had changed over time but still did not match that of the "developed" countries. A significant drop in the birth rate and an elevated life expectancy meant that Brazil's population was ageing, though it was still not at the average age of the "developed" countries. Data from 2010 revealed that Brazil had a higher percentage of young people (aged 0–20) than Japan and Sweden but a far lower percentage than Zambia and Nigeria. Information like this demonstrated Brazil's current place in the world: Brazil was advancing but there was still room for improvement. These demographics were outlined alongside other characteristics of Brazil's *subdesenvolvimento* (underdevelopment) including levels of inequality, basic infrastructural shortcomings, external financial and technological dependence, and uneven trade balances wherein Brazil exported cheap raw source materials but imported expensive manufactured goods.

Teachers and students kicked around a variety of theories, mostly drawn from the patriarchal-paternalist side of *pensamento social brasileiro*, in order to explain how Brazil had *become* underdeveloped. As the discussion in Chapter 3 showed, students and teachers characterised a particular laziness engrained in the Brazilian psyche that prevented economic development. In these theories, *o povo* proved a slippery category: *o povo* was oppressed by this underdevelopment; yet it was *o povo* who had never developed the right disposition for work.

Brazil seemed to be caught in a web of local, national and international economic systems that kept the nation and the people "underdeveloped" and at the whim of elites (both elite countries and individuals). This dizzying mix of information about economics forecasted an unsure future for Brazil and its people.

Politics in Brazil

Colégio Ceará students and teachers spent hours discussing another national ill; that is, that “all [Brazilian] politicians are corrupt or use politics for their own benefit” (Porto 2011: 64). These conversations were not unwarranted; in fact, they were in line with current events. In August 2012, the *mensalão* (“big monthly payment”) Supreme Court trials were finally beginning. (The *mensalão* scandal had broken in 2005 after it was discovered that the PT had issued “big monthly payments” to congressional members of other political parties in order to guarantee support for the PT agenda.) *Mensalão* was not the only evidence of political corruption as a 2013 rundown by The New York Times demonstrates:

One politician was elected to Brazil’s Congress while under investigation for murder after having an adversary killed with a chain saw. Another is wanted by Interpol after being found guilty of diverting more than \$10 million from a public road project to offshore bank accounts... Almost 200 legislators, or a third of Brazil’s Congress, are facing charges in trials overseen by the Supreme Federal Tribunal. The charges range from siphoning off public funds to far more serious claims of employing slave labor on a cattle estate or ordering the kidnapping of three Roman Catholic priests as part of a land dispute in the Amazon (Romero 2013).

These abuses of power sparked lively conversations in the classroom.

During a Current Events class focused on the new *Ficha Limpa* (Clean Sheet) law that prevented those under investigation or with a criminal record within the last 8 years from running for office, Professor Victor told students:

There will be elections this year and this will be the first time we use *Ficha Limpa*. A good proportion of our politicians have dirty pasts... The [political] environment is like this: 99 out of 100 are bad. Politics is dirty, dirty, dirty... You go into office with an old car and leave with a new car, a beach house, and a farm. The *jeitinho brasileiro* (Brazilian way) is corruption. We have this in our culture.

Professor Victor drew on the patrimonial-patriarchal strand of *pensamento social brasileiro*. Brazilian culture was seen to have failed “to establish an impersonal, sharp and effective normative framework” (Tavolaro 2008: 11). Rather “Iberian backgrounds” and other historical particularities led Brazilians to rely on “traditional”, personalistic ways rather than just and effective “modern” ways. Political corruption was but one symptom in this diagnosis.

This view went beyond the Colégio Ceará classroom, showing up in a Current Events study guide:

For citizens who accompany the nightly news there remains an uncomfortable question: how to explain that, a government comes in, a government goes out, yet corruption continues to be a feature in our country? ... All of this is not new, nor did it start with the current government. Unfortunately, corruption has marked our country for many years – we can say since the colonial period (Guia do Estudante Atualidades 2012: 72).

This article traced corruption practices under regimes throughout Brazil’s history – making corruption seem a particularly Brazilian problem. (There was no mention of corruption in other countries.) The article labelled present-day corruption a by-product of *governabilidade* (the ability to govern)— that is, making the political alliances necessary to form a government that can pass legislation. Thus, by its nature, Brazilian government would always be corrupt.

Going further, Professor Victor told students that *everyone* becomes corrupted by politics. To prove this, Professor Victor told the story of his own corruption⁵⁵. Years earlier, party leaders had contacted Victor to enlist his support for their preferred candidate. Leaders sweetened the deal with an offer of R\$2000. Professor Victor was insulted by such a suggestion. He knew that others had received more than R\$10,000 so why was he given such a meagre offer? Thus, Professor Victor demanded R\$4000. The next day, he

⁵⁵ During a different lesson, Professor Victor reflected on how this and other experiences had led him to abandon participating in local politics. Though he still supported his party, he had distanced himself from this corrupting influence.

took delivery of the money outside the school and taught the remainder of his classes with a cash-filled enveloped shoved down the front of his pants. Professor Victor finished his story with, “Look here, my child! Everyone’s dirty. Everyone!”

This understanding that politicians (and potentially everyone) were corrupt led to animated discussions of voting. Most students would be eligible – but not legally required as they would be when they turned 18 – to vote in their first election that year. One such discussion started even before Professor Luziane had finished writing the week’s ENEM-style essay topic on the board. The essay prompt read: “Voting is not just an exercise in citizenship but also a practice of loyalty for yourself and others.” The classroom exchange revolved around the notion that all people who run for office are corrupt so why should anyone bother – let alone, be legally obliged – to vote? Professor Luziane did not dissuade students from their analysis of politicians as corrupt swindlers. Rather she told the class, “Politicians are the worst criminals. Why are they worse than others? Because they are representatives of *o povo*. The people put their confidence in politicians.” She proposed that perhaps a poor person could be an honest politician but even that was debatable. Thus, Luziane reinforced the elite–*povo* power divide, charging that any person who stepped out of the masses and gained power might be susceptible to corruption.

“Hey teacher! What about Tiririca?” one of the boys in the classroom shouted. Born Francisco Evarardo Oliveira Silva in the interior of Ceará in 1965, Tiririca (his clowning stage name) grew up in extreme poverty (Becker 2012). In his early years, Tiririca performed in a travelling circus. By 1996, his bawdy songs had landed him a recording contract and fame. In 2009, Valdemar Costa Neto, then secretary of the *Partido da República*⁵⁶ (PR), asked Tiririca to run. (A survey indicated that Tiririca would sweep the election and, with proportional representation, bring more seats to the PR.) Tiririca ultimately won that election with slogans like “I don’t know what a federal deputy does but if you vote for me I will find out and tell you”, “It can’t get any worse, vote Tiririca” and “If elected, I will help all Brazilian families... especially

⁵⁶ Valdemar Costa Neto is currently under house arrest for his role in the *mensalão* scandal.

mine.” These commercials with their absurd messages and catchy tune went viral and Tiririca, a functionally illiterate former clown, had become the second most voted-for federal deputy in Brazil’s history.

A group of boys in the honours *turma* (including class president Jorge) had presented on Tiririca for their sociology project at the end of second year. They liked Tiririca’s refreshing honesty and his humble origins. Given the circumstances, why *not* vote for a clown – especially one who understood poverty and misery. Tiririca had been part of *o povo* and he made no grand allusions about his intensions. The boys reasoned – as had those who voted Tiririca in – that a clown was better than a crook. Professor Luziane disagreed, “I don’t want to put a clown – an illiterate – in power, nor a crook. I know that people say that I’d prefer a clown to a thief. Not me!” Professor Luziane expressed her embarrassment that, although Tiririca represented São Paulo, he was a *cearense* and, therefore, Tiririca gave the rest of Brazil a terrible impression of the Northeast. Professor Luziane blamed *o povo* for their ignorance in voting for Tiririca. How could the country change if the people continued to act this way? Professor Luziane’s indignation about politics evoked different views of *o povo*: they were honest and repressed by elites; they were stupid and easily fooled by gimmicks. Luziane modulated her position in relationship to the people as it suited her argument.

Similarly, Bruna’s essay on voting showed a contradictory relationship with *o povo*.

Because in Brazil the vote is compulsory for those over 18 years, many go to the polls forced and end up choosing their representatives badly. In the majority of developed countries voting is not compulsory but such a large part of the populace appears at the polls, because they are aware that through voting they can change their country for the better.

Bruna starts out by positioning Brazil as underdeveloped with a mandatory voting system that begets bad decision-making and bad politicians. Indignation would not be an appropriate tone for an ENEM-style essay so she maintains a detached tone compared to that of the classroom discussion. According to Bruna, voters in the developed world, where there is less inequality and thus a lesser dynamic of elite versus *o povo*, make better

decisions that change their country for the better. Bruna appeared to assign some of the blame for corrupt politicians in Brazil to the uninformed masses who voted for them. With a more educated, developed population and without mandatory voting, Brazilians (the ones who *had* informed themselves) would make decisions that could change their country for the better.

The subject of corrupt politicians came up again in Sociology class. Professor Andressa tried to reframe the debate:

Politics is not a bad word. We need to participate. Our government is the fruit of us. We need to watch the government. We need to exercise our rights. We need to participate politically. They are our representatives. You put the politicians there. It's our question, not a question for the politicians.

Perhaps feeling stirred by this speech, Carla, who had turned 18 and was thus legally obliged to vote, turned to me and said, "I'm going to vote blank," meaning that she planned to leave her ballot blank. Carla absolved herself from the decision: she refused to choose the best of a bad bunch.

The most radical response to corrupt politicians came in a discussion I had with João Lucas, an afternoon student keen on studying social sciences. He told me about how Paulo Maluf, Brazil's federal deputy wanted by Interpol on charges of international money laundering, had inspired the verb *malufar* ("to steal money through politics"). João Lucas shook his head, describing the disgrace he felt that *malufar* was now being used as far afield as France. He explained that I could learn what I *really* needed to know about Brazil by reading conservative blogger Sebastião Marques's manifesto, "The 11 Greatest Lies from the Republic of Brazil⁵⁷". He brought me a printout of the document which explained that, "as soon as the Monarchy was overthrown, the dictatorships, economic crises and out-of-control political corruption started." It concluded with:

⁵⁷ <http://cavaleirodotemplo.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/as-11-maiores-mentiras-da-republica-no.html>

From the logical point of view, there is no way to defend the Republic of Brazil. It does not produce results, it is inefficient and a sponsor of corruption. On the contrary, the monarchy is more honest, democratic and a better provider of public services.

João Lucas clarified that he did not agree with everything that the author argued. (For example, the author concludes that, “Therefore, just as there are irrational people who enjoy picking up or surrendering themselves to prostitutes; there are also those who defend the republic in Brazil.”) Still, João Lucas agreed with the author’s indignation over corrupt politicians and appreciated that *someone* was trying to solve Brazil’s problems.

What did these *batalhadores’* children take from all this talk of politics and economics in the classroom? Jorge wanted to vote for a clown rather than a crook, Bruna argued that obliging people to vote in an underdeveloped country yielded bad candidates, Carla decided that she would take a stand and nullify her vote, and João Lucas considered advocating for the return to a parliamentary monarchy. Was this the outcome that teachers and curriculum designers had expected? Regardless, this knowledge of Brazil’s past and present informed what Colégio Ceará students could expect of the future for their country.

Taking Responsibility: ENEM & Social Problems

The ENEM 2009 essay title, “The Individual Against the National Ethic”, played with this sense of despair and alienation. The texts provided to motivate students’ writing included Figure 6.1, a drawing that appears to have been done by a child with the message, “Only work with honest people. My God. What loneliness!” This juxtaposition suggested that even young children knew that there were few honest people. Another motivating text entitled “What is the effect of ‘they are all corrupt?’” addressed indignation:

The denouncements [of corruption] that plague our daily lives may give rise to a desire to transform the world if only our indignation did not affect the entire world. “They are all corrupt” is a thought that only serves to ‘confirm’ the ‘integrity’ of the person who is indignant. The cliché about widespread corruption is not a trap for the corrupt: they

remain the same and free, while, closed in our houses, we celebrate our magnificent righteousness. The aforementioned cliché is a trap that binds and immobilizes the people who denounce the imperfection of the entire world.

This essay prompt challenged *vestibulandos* to move beyond what appeared to be a 'national ethic' of lies and indignation. It attempted to counteract the social problem of alienation and engage test-takers in taking responsibility for themselves and, by proxy, their nation.

PROPOSTA DE REDAÇÃO



Com base na leitura dos textos motivadores seguintes e nos conhecimentos construídos ao longo de sua formação, redija texto dissertativo-argumentativo em norma culta escrita da língua portuguesa sobre o tema **O indivíduo frente à ética nacional**, apresentando proposta de ação social, que respeite os direitos humanos. Selecione, organize e relacione coerentemente argumentos e fatos para defesa de seu ponto de vista.



Milior Fernandes
Disponível em <http://www2.uol.com.br/milior>. Acesso em 14 jul.2009.

Figure 6-1 This image was provided as one of the motivating texts for the 2009 ENEM essay with the title "The Individual Against the National Ethic". The child-like drawing says, "Only work with honest people. My God. What loneliness!" Source: ENEM 2009

Each year, the ENEM essay attempted to draw *vestibulandos* into this kind of national problem solving. Comprising one-fifth of the averaged score, *redação* (the essay) was described by teachers and students as key to achieving a top mark on ENEM. A popular *redação* study guide explains that:

The *redação* test seeks to evaluate if the candidate possesses the capacity to interrelate information, analyse complex themes not necessarily discussed in school and provide an opinion. These are important

aptitudes for universities that strive to find well-prepared students to question, argue, and produce future knowledge for society (Guia do Estudante Redação 2013: 24).

Given the importance of that “future knowledge for society,” the theme of the *redação* was always a social problem. These social problems could be divided into two types: the relationship of the individual with others (with themes like civil rights, violence, work, social inclusion) or the relationship between humans and the natural environment (with themes like deforestation, biodiversity, sustainability) (Guia do Estudante Redação 2013). Past ENEM essay themes included preservation of the Amazon forests, the challenges of living together with differences, child labour, and the transformational power of reading.

Instructions for the essay dictated that each test-taker must produce an essay of between 7 and 30 handwritten lines that contextualized, analysed, and then *proposed a solution* for a particular social problem. Essays had to be written in black ink and any text that copied from the essay prompt and/or strayed from the topic will be marked down or given a zero. Perhaps the most interesting rule for *redação* was that any essay that presented a solution that disregarded human rights would receive a zero. Why the emphasis on human rights? Although human rights were enshrined in the 1988 Constitution, Brazil’s record with human rights had proven to be blemished. ENEM appeared to test its newest citizens’ abilities to project a more socially just future. How did this manifest itself in a classroom where teachers and students regularly invoked indignation and proclaimed systems to be oppressive?

Defining and contextualizing social problems

Colégio Ceará students “trained” on various social problems throughout the year in order to build their skills for a high mark on the exam. According to an essay-writing study guide, “in an argumentative essay, it’s fundamental that the text demonstrates your interest in the subject” (Guia do Estudante Redação 2013: 24). Supposedly, test markers would be able to detect an essay obligatorily feigning interest. Advice from teachers and test guides stressed that, in order to construct a solid argument, students must expand their

knowledge base by reading widely. So how might students expand their literary repertoire and cultivate genuine interest in social issues? National and international news – particularly that which could be construed as a social problem – was brought to students during current events and essay-writing classes.

The personal and socioeconomic benefits provided through reading and the losses arising from the absence of such practices
The effects of cowardice and courage on society
The effects of urban violence on society
Voting: an exercise of citizenship
Bullying: an act of violence and prejudice
Brazil's Lands Use Code
The World Cup and Olympics in Brazil
The Portuguese language orthographic agreement brings notable changes to which we must adapt
Create a text in the format of a recipe to guarantee sustainable development in our country
The value of friendship in an era of lonely people
"Ethics is the aesthetics of within": ethics and honesty
Brazilian transit problems
The challenges and benefits of ageing in Brazil
Analyse the reasons that lead Brazilian youth (especially public school students) to not involve themselves in studying. Present solutions.
Voting is not just an exercise of citizenship but also a practice of loyalty towards oneself and others
Child labour
Abortion in the case of anencephaly

Figure 6-2: List of Colégio Ceará *redação* topics

During writing classes, Professor Luziane set a social problem and then presented a series of videos – usually YouTube clips – so that students could gather details to develop their arguments about the particular problem. Luziane encouraged students to consider social problems from their perspective as citizens. For example, the first essay prompt read: "Write about the existing problems in Brazilian transit. Present interventions to minimize

the negative effects of this very serious problem.” Luziane emphasized the importance of the topic for students, “You are a citizen. You arrive late to meetings because of traffic. There must be a solution.” Figure 6.2 lists other social problems that students addressed throughout the year.

These essay topics frequently played with an implied sense of responsibility. For example, students were asked to “analyse the reasons that lead Brazilian youth (especially public school students) to not involve themselves in studying”. This topic would never have appeared on ENEM in that particular format wherein public school students were differentiated as social problem-making *povo*. In essay “training”, Brazil’s social problems were often contextualized in this way, as a sort of “us versus them, the social problem”. A tension emerged in locating the source and thus the responsibility for social problems in these exercises.

The second paragraph of Mariane’s essay on the social problem of Brazilian youth’s failure to engage with education demonstrates that tension:

One of the main factors for students’ disinterest is the poor structure offered to students who cannot afford the teaching materials, and secondly the students have no zeal for the material. As well as the precarious structure, many students drop out of school to help family with expenses since only one salary is not sufficient to sustain all. Moreover, the introduction of drugs in schools increased the dispersal.

Mariane defined the social problem of youth’s disinterest in education as a symptom of poverty and drugs. In so doing, she constructed herself (and her classmates) as outside the social problem. While ENEM test-makers might have sought to engage *vestibulandos* as citizens who take responsibility, students (and teachers) set about assigning responsibility for Brazil’s social problems

Solving social problems

Teachers taught students a formula wherein the final five lines of each ENEM-style essay should be used to provide concrete solutions for the particular social problem. Responsibility and human rights were important

considerations in elaborating these solutions. Professor Luziane advised that students should not use the tired adage, “every citizen has the responsibility.” She argued that this was throwing the ball to somebody else. “When you give someone the ball, they will pass it to somebody else too.” Likewise, students should not write, “the government should” as all Brazilians should be involved in solving social problems. Students must come up with their own *concrete* solutions. Thus, a sense of personal and collective responsibility came into proposing these solutions, even while social problems had been elaborated as “other” to the writer.

Luziane reminded students that they should not use their own personal opinion. Students could use examples from real life to avoid giving a personal opinion on a difficult topic in which students might disagree with what they supposed might be the government’s “correct” answer. Luziane also touched on the subject of “acceptability” when writing an ENEM-style text: “it’s OK that I, as the reader, don’t agree with your opinion but I must be able to accept it. I might not agree but I am a citizen. Remember human rights.” Portuguese teacher Clairton echoed this sentiment, “The people who correct ENEM are from the government. Are you going to do your *redação* based on religion? No! Will you propose the death penalty? No!” Thus, students were instructed to propose uncontroversial, human rights-compliant solutions for Brazil’s social problems.

When I asked students for their advice on how to write a good ENEM essay, Mário’s pragmatic comments stood out:

I always keep it short. Fewer lines mean fewer mistakes. As for solutions, I always say education. Almost every problem could have more government funding for education and parents who teach their children better.

Mário had established a formula that worked for him. Isabela’s “solution” to the effects of courage and cowardice on society revealed a similar approach. She wrote, “It is known that these values are acquired through the living environment with education and the example of those who are most close”. Through conversations with students and analysis of essays, it became clear

that most students had developed these kinds of formulas for approaching social problems in their essay writing.

Colégio Ceará trained students to diagnose and present solutions to Brazil's complex social problems. Or at least students learned to write this way. Interestingly, when I asked Eva about the future of Brazil, she shook her head and said, "Michele, Brazil has always been this way and it always will be." Here, Eva's comment referred to inequality, violence, and a state ruled by corrupt politicians – this 17 year old did not seem to believe that concrete solutions existed for Brazil's social problems.

Conclusions

On the Monday before ENEM, the mood amongst the honours *turma* was sombre: many were upset over the defeat of PT candidate Elmano in the mayoral elections. Students interpreted the success of Roberto Cláudio (dubbed "Penguin" because of his resemblance to the short, fat, bald Batman villain) as a return to the *coronelismo* (oligarchical patronage system) that had dominated Northeast Brazil throughout its history. Students had taken to Facebook the night before to protest the idiocy of the uneducated poor who had sold their votes to rich man Roberto Cláudio. To most of my friends, this victory signalled that *o povo* had unknowingly colluded with Fortaleza's elite; this would inevitably lead to increased suffering for all non-elites.

The Ceará guide for social sciences teachers posited that education would create students who "assume the role of citizen, critical subject[s], conscious of [their] role in society, capable of breaking with excesses and social injustices, in search of an egalitarian and democratic society that respects diversities" (Seduc 2008: 14). Clearly, students learned more than history, economics, geography and writing. Even while Brazil's position in the world (and the emerging middle class's position in Brazil) seemed to be improving, students critiqued economic and political systems. I do not mean to suggest that students learned this way of relating to the world exclusively through their classes – as I have shown elsewhere, a sort of pop *pensamento social brasileiro* combined with similar discourses about politics and economics pervades daily life. Still, it seems the classroom offered Colégio Ceará

students a place to hone and apply their abilities to recognise (and/or perhaps construct) their own (and others') social, political and economic oppressions and perform indignation – all the while articulating a relationship with (and sometimes against) *o povo*. Students employed these discourses to make sense of their past, present and possibilities for the future.

Chapter 7 O ENEM é uma bagunçagem

A week after ENEM, Carla told our group of friends, “Michele is going to call her thesis ‘*O ENEM é uma bagunçagem*’”. Here, Carla added ‘-agem’ to intensify the word *bagunça* (mess). Thus, she was joking that I would report that ENEM was a big mess. Since 2010, the Brazilian press, student protest movements and court cases had highlighted problems with the exam: leaked tests, incomplete test booklets and inconsistent essay marking. This had cast doubt on the test’s suitability as a university admissions tool but, with no major problems to report in the 2012 test, this was *not* what Carla meant; rather, Carla appeared to assess ENEM, after the fact, as not having done what had been promised.

Goodman (2013) argues that the “form and ritual” of national tests help to create imagined communities (103). National tests offer the same kind of “shared time” amongst a nation that Anderson (1991) argues that print materials provide. The ritual involved in performing national test taking further strengthens that national imaginary. Analysing the Thai national exams, Goodman concludes:

While formal education itself creates a general national imaginary, the national exam concretizes and narrows it. Such a national exam – administered all over the country on the same day, at the same time, according to the same protocol, using the same paper, and scored using the same units of measurement – helps foster an ‘imagined community’ (2013: 107)

ENEM functioned similarly in Brazil. As the test weekend neared, advertisements flooded newspapers, radio, and television. Commercials even popped up in between film previews at the cinema. The nation was reminded that, although Brazil stretched over three time zones with some regions adhering to daylight savings time and others not, the test would start promptly at 1pm Brasília time on 3 and 4 November. Furthermore, *vestibulandos* would need to produce identification issued by the Brazilian government in order to enter the exam. Through its *vestibulandos*, the nation would be participating in (and be constituted by) ENEM.

In this final chapter, I examine the national spectacle of ENEM. Through ethnography of the period leading up to, including and following ENEM I reassemble the divisions I have created in carving up chapters to demonstrate how these elements fit together. I analyse the “form and ritual” of the 2012 ENEM to uncover what Carla meant when she referred to the test as a *bagunçagem* and investigate how SISU (*Sistema de Seleção Unificada* or Unified Selection System) and students’ experiences in the national ritual modulated their *sonhos*.

Prelude to ENEM

During the final week leading up to ENEM, teachers and support staff barraged students with advice for the final steps in their *luta*. Students had already received numerous pep talks, watched motivational videos, attended countless hours of extra classes and sat practice exams but there was still work to be done.

Tuesday 30 October

During class with the afternoon *turma*, Professor Ismael cast aside his lecture on nematodes and launched into his version of a pep talk with, “Finally we arrive at the last class. You will be embarking on professions which society valorises. Death is inevitable but you can be immortal with what you do.” Technically, this was not the last class, nor was it Professor Ismael’s last class with these students. Colégio Ceará third-year students had three more weeks of scheduled classes after ENEM. Still, this was Professor Ismael’s final class with students before the event that they had trained together for all year. Juliana, usually distracted during biology lessons, leaned closer, concentrating on Professor Ismael’s words. Most students appeared to be mesmerised by his pronouncement about their potential for immortality.

Professor Ismael had rallied against ENEM and quotas throughout the year. As such, he did not miss the opportunity to register his indignation at this government-imposed national ritual.

I don’t agree with ENEM because it was developed to evaluate schools – this is not what it’s being used for now. It’s the latest way to try and

democratize entrance to university for public school students – as if it's a form of magic for bringing students into university... [Quotas aren't] democracy. Democracy means it must be the same for everyone. Quotas are a populist measure for the poor. Without irony, never in the history of this country have we had a democratic entrance exam! I'm not criticizing Lula but the system. I want to develop a perception in you. You pay taxes twice!

In his lecture, Professor Ismael problematized the relationships of democracy, equality and meritocracy. Professor Ismael acknowledged that previous vestibular processes had privileged elites – that, in fact, there was not equality in the past but there would not be equality or democracy in the future under the current system. The middle classes were being victimised under the government's latest anti-democratic, populist measures. Professor Ismael urged students to recognise that they (and their families) paid taxes twice. A common sentiment in Fortaleza, this reasoning posited that tax money collected from middle-class citizens paid for public education but the middle class still had to pay another "tax" to a private school. (The same was said for law enforcement and its second tax, private security, and public healthcare and its second tax, private healthcare.) What Professor Ismael did not say (but was clear from what he did say) was that the poor, who he perceived to pay no taxes while they attended tax-funded public schools, would now also have access to tax-funded public universities. In labelling these policies "populist", he charged that the PT had bought the votes of the foolish *povo* with money and resources of and for the middle class. His (populist) discourse established the middle class as a disadvantaged, more deserving people than the elites and the poor *povo*.

Underlying students' time work was the idea that they were capable of imagining and then enacting changes in their lives. Professor Ismael's comments disturbed the tenets of meritocracy and time work. Perhaps, as such, students' interest dwindled. Professor Ismael picked up on students' restlessness and changed tack. He began offering advice, "You should sleep well the night before ENEM. You're really nervous but your mother is even more nervous." Students laughed and nodded at this nod to *consideração*. He continued:

An athlete spends 4 – 8 years training for the Olympics – for immortality!... Until now you were all the same but next year you could be a lawyer, you could be a dentist. Even down to your uniforms you are equal but that will end [next year]!

Up to this moment, Colégio Ceará students had been equal individuals engaged in training for the future. ENEM would provide the (problematic) performance by which students would be judged and made unequal individuals (lawyers and dentists) for the rest of their lives.

Prof Ismael's talk had careened back and forth between advice, warnings, and congratulations. In this narrative, these students were facing the biggest *luta* as elites had always dominated and now the poor – those who paid nothing – threatened to usurp the place of the (emerging) middle class. Success on ENEM would separate and transform some into societally valorised “immortals.” Professor Ismael tied this non-magical immortality to professions that few students in the afternoon class could realistically hope to attain. All the same, this pep talk seemed to (non-magically) do its trick, as students were animated. Anxiety in the classroom seemed to have dissipated. While Professor's Ismael's indignation about ENEM and quotas suggested that students might not pass, it also named the oppressors (the government, populism) perpetrating this injustice whilst re-affirming that students had a right to a “fair” and democratic vestibular.

Thursday 1 November

Unlike many of his colleagues, Prof Nailton approached the last day before ENEM as any other. Skipping the well wishes, he filled the board with neat script and narrated the hydrogenation process of carbon rings. Most students did not bother feigning attention. Ana, who had asked to go to the bathroom and never returned, texted me. Had anyone noticed her absence? I assured her that no one had. Her reply read, “How dull! I'm feeling very self-destructive today!” I stifled a laugh at Ana's dramatic response, understanding that she felt the need to escape, to do something different, on this last day of school before what had been repeatedly billed as one of the most important and decisive events in a young person's life.

Fortunately, co-presidents Larícia and Jorge had anticipated this need to mark the occasion. Larícia had organized class photos with each teacher and collected students' baby and ABC photos⁵⁸ to put together pre-ENEM slideshows for the last class before ENEM. Where they had sat bored and detached in Professor Nailton's organic chemistry lesson hours earlier, students hugged one another and pulled their desks together to watch the slideshow. At the students' invitation, Professor Clairton (one of the few teachers who had accompanied students throughout high school) gave up his free period to watch the videos with them. Larícia's title for the slide show, "*Turma exemplo de luta e fé*" (Class example of fight and faith), drew attention to the twin imperatives for third year: working hard and believing in oneself. A chorus of squeals came with each new baby and ABC picture. The next slideshow highlighted students with their teachers. Students cheered as photos of their favourite teachers came up. The last video showed students in the classroom throughout the year. A number of pictures of students sleeping – particularly Jorge in a variety of awkward positions – elicited laughs. The final slide read, "What did you want to be when you were a kid? Your university is going to be federal!" The slideshows served to relive (and reinforce) the past-present-future trajectory that had brought students to this pivotal moment when they would compete for spaces in the federal university.

Though the slideshows had projected students' successes, Larícia's final statement offered the possibility for other alternatives. As the lights came up, she told students, "Remember this isn't the only test you will do. We are young. We can prepare more, later. Leave your problems at home. Only think of yourself this weekend. Good luck!" Perhaps this tempered final message reflected Larícia's experience. Larícia had missed weeks of class when her mother fell ill. Thus, Larícia had not engaged in the *luta* in the way she had proclaimed that she would at the start of the year.

The slideshow reflected Ana's earlier need to mark the last day of school before the national ritual. Students reflected on their trajectories and those teachers who had accompanied their progress. For these honours students,

⁵⁸ When students in *ensino fundamental* learn to read, they have their "ABC" graduation—sometimes complete with graduation caps and robes.

attending federal university and the imagined respect that this accomplishment would evoke played an integral part of attaining personhood. Yet, there was reassurance and room for those who might not achieve their goal in this first big competition that these emerging middle class students faced: there would be more tests ahead in life; they could/should stay with the *luta*, even if there was not success this first time.

Aulão de Véspera

To mark the final day of classes before ENEM, staff organised the *aulão de véspera* (“big class” on the eve of). More than 500 third year and *cursinho* students from both of Colégio Ceará’s branches filled the amphitheatre at Dragão do Mar. The location of the *aulão* (the cultural centre where Carla had celebrated her 18th birthday) added prestige and set the event apart from other vestibular activities the school had offered. Students took pictures with friends, celebrating having arrived at this crossroads.

The event started with an address from Director Costa who told students that this was their night and that Colégio Ceará knew they would all do well and go on to the courses they wanted, at the universities they wanted. The crowd burst into cheers and applause at this familiar refrain – so close to test time – in this venue. Next, a physical education teacher took the stage to get students physically readied for the mental exercises of the night. Because there had been no physical education in the third-year curriculum and most students had abandoned team sports, I found this to be a strange message. Students, on the other hand, did not mind the inconsistencies. They danced and clapped, trying not to injure one another with their close proximity and star jumps.

Finally, the night’s entertainment got underway: Colégio Ceará teachers took turns presenting and solving ENEM-style questions. Teachers kept the evening interesting by performing their questions. The Chemistry teacher demonstrated a pyrotechnic display of combustion, a History teacher strummed his guitar and sang and Professor Luziane and a male teacher flirtatiously recited a poem about maths. What varied between other practice questions and those delivered at the *aulão* was the way in which Brazil’s present and future was portrayed. Professor Artur presented a question about

the world crisis that included 4 correct answers aggrandizing Brazil for its current economic successes. He told students:

In Europe, there are strikes, recession, rising taxes, getting rid of holidays. Brazil is surviving because of its internal market, because millions of families receive *bolsa-família*. People are buying more because there are more people in the middle class. Twenty-five per cent are unemployed in Spain. Six per cent are unemployed in Brazil!

Artur's question stirred optimism amongst the crowd. It turned students' common knowledge about Brazil (and Brazil's place in the world) on its head. Life in Brazil was better than life in Europe. Brazilians were better off than Europeans. Brazilians prospered while Europeans struggled and suffered. Furthermore, *batalhadores* played a crucial role in transforming the nation: Brazil's expanding middle classes had consumed and spent well to save the country from the fate that the rest of the world was enduring.

Professor Victor – who typically extolled his country's failings – multiplied the positive atmosphere with humour and a question about Brazil's changing demographics. Students laughed at the image that accompanied his question: a miserable looking family with 16 children. Professor Victor said, "Do you want to have a family like this? No! Why? *A galera é cara!* (People are expensive!) This isn't a family. It's a gang." Professor Victor waited for the laughter to subside so he could continue. "Today, families are smaller than they used to be. You are lucky to be living in the best period of Brazil – this demographic transition! Couples are having fewer children. Income is better distributed." Professor Victor provided the correct answer for his practice question and told students, "Remember that you are the key to turning this country *desenrolado* (literally unwound but, here, un-convoluted)." Professor Victor's demographics question and his accompanying comments impressed upon students the importance of family planning (and the backwardness of those who had big families) whilst reaffirming that Brazil's present and future were promising. This was not the tone of most of Professor Victor's lectures: though he alluded to Brazil's problems, Professor Victor reassured students that, as adults, they could tackle these.

That night, Colégio Ceará teachers shelved indignation as pedagogical method. Teachers used Brazil's economic present to bolster students' esteems and hopes for the future. Earlier that year Professor Clairton had asserted that Brazil's wretched history was linked to students' poor self-esteem. Perhaps a glorious present and future could bestow positive self-esteem? It seemed that students did not look around the amphitheatre and think about the scale of competition that they might be facing; instead, they drew on the energy and enthusiasm of the crowd, as they would *all* be working towards accomplishing their dreams.

The next day, the day before ENEM, was a holiday and, as such, the city was quiet. Most of my friends stayed in (as teachers had instructed) and tried to relax. Professor Luziane posted on Facebook:

To my fantastic students, I want to reinforce that you are ready. We trained the entire year on diverse themes, we reflected, we thought of viable solutions [for essays centred on social problems], we did our part of this contract. Therefore, this moment cries for calm and tranquillity because it is going to go well. I will be here cheering for you, shaking, believing... I have much faith that you will do it.... And now, please, PASS!!! Do this for your parents who deserve it very much. Pass for the teachers that have dedicated themselves to you and finally because you have struggled so much for this moment.

Luziane's Facebook message invoked the difficulties of third year and issued one last call for *consideração* whilst giving an extra dose of *força*. Luziane attempted to talk students out of anxiety and into confidence by describing vestibular preparation as a contract that Colégio Ceará students had already fulfilled. Her reminder to students that they had already thought of solutions for social problems implied that students were equipped to become adults. Students posted similar inspirational messages, reassuring one another that they had prepared and were ready.

During this week, ENEM was further constructed as a critical event in students' lives, a rite of passage with the power to valorise, create new class distinctions and even render some "immortal." Simply put, ENEM would transform emerging middle-class high school students into (the right kind of)

people – or, if a student were unsuccessful, perhaps she would be condemned to the purgatory of a *cursinho* with the option to try again a year later. The option of *not* attending university was not discussed nor was the option of attending a private university.

Teachers, staff and students attempted to turn this national ritual, local and personal. On Saturday, Colégio Ceará students would be spread out in test centres across Fortaleza and the overwhelming scale of the test would become apparent in the traffic that paralysed the city and the entry queues that snaked around the test centres. Teachers' advice and reassurances attempted to shift the focus on to the student or, at most, the Colégio Ceará student body. Students and teachers alike seemed to think that the magic conjured in the *aulão* might carry students through the test. Emotion and *consideração* were invoked in order to keep the focus on imagining oneself into better self-esteem, a better performance on the test and, indeed, in life.

ENEM 2012: Experiences in the National Ritual

A few weeks before ENEM, every test taker in the nation received an official ENEM confirmation card that included the location of their test. Colégio Ceará students awaited these with trepidation since the exam was held at (public and private) schools and universities throughout the city and test centre neighbourhood usually did not correspond with one's home neighbourhood. Figure 7.1 shows a popular Internet meme's take on the subject: Toinha cries when she finds that she has been assigned to take ENEM at Middle of Nowhere Public School, which is located on Avenida Where Judas Lost His Boots in End of the World neighbourhood.

Test centre allocation was one way in which ENEM was deemed fair, a suitable tool for meritocracy. *Vestibulandos* were assigned to test centres and rooms by first name. (I completed my exam in a room for people called Michel, Michela and Michele.) Still, Colégio Ceará students contested that logic: those taking tests in well-appointed, air-conditioned private schools were sure to have an unjust advantage over those who were assigned to poorly ventilated public schools in dangerous, unknown neighbourhoods.

Students told me I was lucky, as I was assigned to a Big 4 school in a rich neighbourhood.



Figure 7-1: An Internet meme makes light of the worries students suffered regarding test location. Toinha finds that she will be taking ENEM at Middle of Nowhere Public School with the address, Avenida Where Judas Lost His Boots in End of the World neighbourhood. Toinha cries, “Oh my goodness where is that?” Source: Suricate Seboso, Facebook

On the first morning of the test, my bus was packed with students clutching ENEM confirmation cards. Several mothers accompanied their daughters on the journey. A girl read her Bible, perhaps drawing last minute inspiration. The bus terminal – my test centre was two buses away – had anticipated the jump in passengers. Extra attendants checked test location and advised *vestibulandos* on best buses. Test takers also received a leaflet with test-taking

advice⁵⁹. The bus and the terminal had never been such an experience of camaraderie! That Saturday morning, everyone seemed to be involved in this national ritual.

I followed the crowds towards the entrance of my test centre, feeling for my passport and Brazilian ID card. (I had stowed them in my underwear to deter would-be thieves – being robbed was no excuse for not bringing identification.) The school entrance was reminiscent of an airport departures area. Tickets (confirmation cards) and IDs were checked at the gate. Street vendors administered last-minute feedings and sold regulation black pens for those who had forgotten theirs. A well-dressed mother and father embraced their daughter. The mother wiped tears away as the daughter entered the school. A couple kissed frantically before the boy slipped into the test centre. As Colégio Ceará staff had warned, Big 4 staff engaged in “psychological warfare” by stationing themselves outside the test centre to cheer their students as they entered.

As with most big *concursos*, the local and national news carried photos and videos of students running into test centres last minute as gates were closing and of those students who arrived seconds too late, crying at their disqualification. Reporters stationed themselves outside gates to capture these dramatic shots as latecomers told stories of buses that never arrived, traffic jams and assaults on the way to the exam. Why were these stories so popular? Why were people interested in reading about a girl who could not take the test because her government-issued identification was stolen on the way to the exam? Or of the girl who had prepared all year but her father had refused to take her to the test as he was watching television? This *schadenfreude* dominated the weekend’s news reports. These were the first casualties in the *luta*; most were (supposedly) people unmade for at least another year.

The media’s participation further reinforced ENEM as an important national rite of passage. Commercials and advertisements had set the scene months earlier. The arrival of ENEM confirmation cards (and the conversations that these generated) signalled ENEM’s imminence. In assigning *vestibulandos* to

⁵⁹ Which *vestibulandos* would take test advice on the morning of the test? Most likely, the leaflets allowed the city bus company to demonstrate their participation in and support for this national ritual.

disparate test locations across the city, ENEM sought to mix people in ways that they normally did not: high school students mixed with adults in their fifties⁶⁰; private school students mixed with public school students. Across Brazil, 4.17 million test takers queued outside test centres at the same scheduled hour, to take the same test following the same rules and regulations. Banerjee (2011) demonstrates how, within the national ritual of voting, “radical social mixing... facilitate[d] the suppression of everyday social discrimination and the assertion of a more egalitarian vision of society” (92). Similarly, Goodman (2013) argues that standardised, nationalised procedures convinced students, teachers and families that the test was “an impartial rational tool to evaluate students’ academic capacity, one that provide[d] a score without favouritism” (125). The standardised, nationalised procedures employed in ENEM sought to help Brazilians to imagine a Brazil with *vestibulandos* competing in a fair contest.

Once inside my test centre, I marvelled at the Big 4 school’s manicured courtyard, far different to the concrete and aluminium of Colégio Ceará. The halls were lined with motivational posters and the faces of students who had triumphed in past vestibulars. After more than a year in Fortaleza, I found it easy to read a range of class markers on test takers. (Recognising Big 4 colégio and *cursinho* students was especially easy: they wore branded t-shirts designed specially for ENEM.) Given Colégio Ceará’s emphasis on self-esteem (and its supposed underlying links with social class), I wondered how lower-income *vestibulandos* must have felt to arrive in this rich school with pictures of successful (and wealthy) students lining the walls. Perhaps some were buoyed by the luxury that surrounded them, others might have felt out of place.

ENEM 2012 Analysis

What tasks faced these 4.17 million *vestibulandos* ? ENEM candidates tackled 30-page exam booklets with 90 multiple-choice questions on both days of testing. On Saturday, test-takers had 4.5 hours to respond to 45 human sciences and 45 natural sciences questions. On Sunday, there were 5.5 hours

⁶⁰ At 35, I was by no means the oldest test taker in the room. I estimated that about a quarter of the Michelas, Michels, and Micheles were over thirty.

to solve 45 language and 45 mathematics questions and write an essay. With no scheduled breaks, test-takers had to budget time accordingly and pace themselves for hours of dense reading passages and reasoning. There was not even allotted time for eating – instead, *vestibulandos* were allowed to bring snacks to consume while working the test. ENEM was a veritable marathon.

Goodman (2013) argues that national exams may be used to “promote the ever-changing long- and short-term goals of... government” (109) as well as “to train social and political problems out of the nation” (110). ENEM operated similarly. The content of ENEM 2012 allowed test takers to imagine a particular kind of modern Brazil. At the same time, embedded within the test were ideas about the ways to be a good citizen, to govern one’s self and to be governed.

The Brazil Imagined by ENEM

Before investigating ENEM’s imagined Brazil, it is worth exploring how the test portrayed the rest of the world. Though Colégio Ceará had continually quizzed students on the BRICS, there was little mention of the world’s other emerging economies. In fact, there was only one reference to Asia: a political cartoon that highlighted Ghandi’s role in liberating British-colonised India. (China was conspicuously absent.) Similarly, Africa’s only mentions were uneven postcolonial agricultural land distribution and brutal slavery practices that resulted in vibrant Afro-Brazilian culture. Latin America featured somewhat more prominently – largely because of the Spanish language test – with questions that referenced colonisation, Andean archaeology, Guatemala’s dependence on foreign goods, Argentina’s claim to the Falkland Islands and Bolivia’s poverty. The overwhelming majority of non-Brazil references were to European countries (especially France and the UK) and the US. Great thinkers, the Roman Empire, historical monarchs, technological improvements in agriculture, the on-going world economic crisis and, of course, colonisation characterised Europe. The U.S. appeared in Ford’s assembly lines, the Great Depression, Captain America comics and African Americans’ struggles for rights. The exam’s reading of the (incomplete) world revealed fundamental divisions: there were those who had colonised and those who had been colonised *and* there were those who had oppressed and

those who had been oppressed. Worldwide, suffering had occurred under various versions of capitalism (mercantilism, colonialism, industrialisation, finance capitalism) and governance (absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy, dictatorship).

ENEM portrayed Brazil, through its past and present incarnations, as a country that had struggled under various versions of capitalism and governance too. During the 1740s, white people moved indigenous people to villages “aiming to adapt Indigenous people to the demands of regular work”. During the Estado Novo, Vargas disarmed class struggles by introducing workers’ rights. In 1975, freedom of the (already censored) press was compromised when journalist Vladimir Herzog was tortured and killed under the military dictatorship. Perhaps all of this could be summarised with the correct answer to the question about why there was violence and aggression in Brazilian society; that is, “the historical difficulty of Brazilian society to institutionalise forms of social control compatible with democratic values”.

ENEM acknowledged these past and present shortfalls but also demonstrated the ways in which various social and political movements had led to improvements. Protests against authoritarianism at the end of King Dom Pedro I’s reign ultimately prompted the King’s abdication and return to Portugal. Padre Cicero fought to better the lives of sugarcane plantation workers. Fellow journalists protested Herzog’s death and pressured the government to change its approach. Through these questions we see that, when Brazilians are made victims, they take responsibility, they find ways to organise and reassert themselves in order to create positive social and political change. This says little about the Brazilians who are oppressing others – plantation owners, torture squads, etc. – but offers a narrative about struggles of particular versions of *o povo*.

ENEM evoked a Brazil with a rich cultural heritage: poems, songs, sculptures, short stories and other works by Brazilians served as source material for questions. A unique Afro-Brazilian culture arose out of “the contact of individuals from different parts of Africa” under slavery. A Luíz Gonzaga song expressed the sadness and loss of *nordestino* migrants living in the

Southeast. Spoken Portuguese was recognised as a valid form of the language that was different to, but no better than, the written form. Tokenistic references to these identities and regionalisms pointed to (and perhaps reinforced) implied centres: non-Afro-Brazilian culture, Southeasterners and those who had excellent command of written Portuguese did not need to be valorised.

Finally, a modern Brazil was constructed through focuses on sustainability, technology and production. Brazilian cities should expand mass transit in order to decrease carbon emissions. The Internet was democratising access to information. Exporting goods could be made more efficient by identifying weaknesses in the transportation infrastructure. Mirroring the positive tone that teachers had presented at the *aulão*, these test questions pointed to a Brazil that possessed formulas for success, formulas that good citizens could help to implement.

Perhaps the best example of the Brazil imagined by ENEM comes from the *redação* question. *Vestibulandos* generated an essay entitled “The Immigration Movement to Brazil in the 21st Century” with the help of three motivating texts. The first text outlined how 19th and 20th century European immigration had contributed to Brazilian culture and invited the reader to imagine the positive contributions of Brazil’s newest immigrants. The second text characterised recent Haitian refugees as middle-class people with professional qualifications who had no way to survive after the January 2010 earthquake. The passage concluded, “Brazilians always criticize the way that European countries treat immigrants. Now, our turn has arrived”. The final text outlined Bolivia’s poverty as a driving force for migration and their subsequent insertion in Brazil’s clothing industry. What Brazil was the test taker meant to imagine through the essay topic and motivating texts? *Vestibulandos* could decide whether to accept or reject these immigrants through their essays but the message was clear: Brazil was a modern economic powerhouse; a desirable country bound to attract skilled and unskilled immigrants, especially from those less economically successful countries.

Imagining Good Citizens

During the test, I found myself considering what the Brazilian government would want me to think the correct answer was. What would a good citizen know? What would a good citizen do? What would a good citizen choose? Test questions, principally in the human sciences section, implied an easily governed and governing “good citizen” who engaged in particular ways of knowing. All exams are designed to test specific ways of knowing but ENEM did this self-consciously, drawing attention to the types of knowledge that the “good citizen” (or successful test taker) should use and that which should be discarded or relegated to culture. To quote ENEM, it seemed to be attempting “to institutionalise forms of social control compatible with democratic values”.

Starting with Ancient Greek philosopher Anaximenes of Miletus, ENEM traced the development of rational thinking. Excerpts from Hume, Descartes and Kant compared and contrasted ways of knowing. Enlightenment was defined as “the demand for autonomy on the basis of rational capacity as an expression of adulthood”. Reading these questions together, one could imply that a good citizen was one who came of age through rational thinking.

Religion did not appear to fit into this kind of rational thinking. In fact, there were only three mentions of religion. The first included a Frenchman’s shocked observations of a lively colonial religious festival in 1717. The correct response to which read, “Like other religious manifestations of the colonial period, [this religious festival] affirmed a communal sense of shared devotion.” Here, the *vestibulando* assumed the role of the horrified Frenchman and determined the *rational* role of religion. An excerpt from Machiavelli’s *The Prince* offered another take on religion:

I do not ignore the old and widespread opinion that what happens in the world is decided by God and chance. This opinion is widely accepted today because of the great transformations that have taken place and that occur daily, those which escape human conjecture. Nevertheless, to not entirely ignore our free will, I believe that one can accept that fate decides half of our actions, but [free will] permits us control over the other half.

Machiavelli, N. *The Prince*. Brasília: EdUnB, 1979 (adapted)

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli reflected on the exercise of power in his time. In the passage cited, the author demonstrates the link between his political thought and Renaissance humanism to:

- A. valorise the divine interference in the defining events of his time.
- B. reject the intervention of chance in political processes.
- C. *affirm confidence in autonomous reason as the foundation of human action.*
- D. break with the tradition that valued the past as a source of learning.
- E. redefine political action based on the unity of faith and reason.

This question posited that Machiavelli believes that reason – rather than religion or chance – should be the basis of human action. Combined with the rest of the exam, though, it implied that the good citizen should adopt a similar rational approach and minimize the role of religion.

The evolution (and explanation) of democracy featured heavily. Freedom of the press as well as social and political movements played key roles in democracy whilst an excerpt from Habermas demonstrated the importance of public debate. Yet, as the next question shows, the good citizen had responsibilities too:

It is true that in democracies the people seem to do what they want but political freedom does not consist of this. One should always bear in mind what is independence and what is freedom. Freedom is the right to do everything that the law allows; if a citizen could do all that which they are forbidden, there would no longer be freedom because others also would have such power.

Montesquieu. *The Spirit of the Laws*. São Paulo: Editora Nova Cultura, 1997 (adapted)

The characteristic of democracy highlighted by Montesquieu refers to:

- A. the status of citizenship that the individual acquires when taking decisions for himself.
- B. *the conditionality of citizens' freedom to the conformity of laws.*
- C. the possibility of the citizen to participate in power and, in that case, exemption from submitting to laws.
- D. the free will of the citizen in relation to that which is prohibited, provided the citizen's awareness of the consequences.
- E. the right of the citizen to exercise their will in accordance with their personal values.

Thus, the good citizen must recognise the importance of following rules in a democratic society, as there is no real freedom without laws.



Figure 7-2: “Here in our house social network/hammock is something else.” In this language question, students must recognize the polysemy of the word *rede* (network/hammock). Source: ENEM 2012.

ENEM also implied a citizen who is governable and governing. Questions about type II diabetes, Chagas disease and leptospirosis suggested that a rational citizen could manipulate their food intake, environment and hygiene in order to avoid certain diseases. Questions on sustainability pointed to ways

in which production and consumption could be modulated to conserve natural resources. Other items asked *vestibulandos* to calculate best prices and recognise advertising tricks, eliciting a rational consumer citizen. Figure 7.2, which accompanied a question about the polysemy of the word *rede*, offered a nod to family planning. A man and woman share their worn *rede* (hammock) with their eight young children. “Here in our house *rede social* is something else,” says the man. *Rede social* means social network – as in English, the term is often used to describe online social networks – but, in this case, the *rede social* is an overcrowded social hammock. The good citizen recognises polysemy *and* the ideal (small) family size.

Given the skills and knowledge for the Human Sciences and Technologies section that MEC had provided (see Appendix II) as well as my experiences in the classroom, I was surprised that there were not any questions specifically addressing socialism or communism. Rather, ENEM offered a catalogue of abuses associated with various forms of capitalism *and* non-democratic rule, an evolution of a nebulous “democracy” (defined primarily by what it was *not*) and an imagined rational Brazilian citizen. Perhaps this national ritual, this imagined Brazil and this imagined Brazilian sought to speak to and counteract Eva’s evaluation of her country. “Michele, what kind of a country has *two* dictatorships? A stupid one. That’s Brazil.”

Now What? After the Ritual

At least half of the students were absent on the first school day after ENEM. Prof Danilson ploughed on with his scheduled history lesson, “Brazil and the New World Order” but students did not take notes or pay much attention. What was the point? There had been so much fanfare and build up to ENEM that few students had thought beyond the test. Rather, they had dreamt extensively about what was to come as a result of the test but they had not thought about that liminal phase between taking the test and getting into university. Students were disappointed to learn of another three weeks of obligatory classes, a round of final exams, and then *recuperação* (extra “recovery” classes) for those who had failed. Regardless of what teachers said about needing to remain focused, coming back to school after ENEM felt anti-climactic.

That first day, the ENEM essay dominated students' conversations in the honours *turma*. Hoping that the person who corrected my essay would have a sense of humour about my immigrant Portuguese, I had dutifully filled in the pro-immigration arguments that Professor Victor had made about the ageing Brazilian population and the need to maintain the tax base. I had taken Mário's advice on generic solutions and proposed that, regardless of legal immigration status, children should be educated. My friends discussed the arguments that they had made – mostly about the difficulties that immigrants would bring to Brazil and their arguments against illegal immigration. Students seemed to have employed a similar approach to the test that I had: what would a good citizen say? Some contested the topic, labelling it a politically correct trap that *vestibulandos* would fail if they took an “anti-human rights” stance and argued against immigration. This was an example of over-the-top PT liberalism. In their responses, students contested the state that made the test/national ritual, they contested the fairness of the national ritual and they contested the imagined Brazil that could afford to absorb poor immigrants.

During his class, Professor Victor sought to quell these contestations. He explained that this was the first time that there had been no problems or fraud with ENEM. Here, one of the students interjected, “Not yet!” The rest of the class laughed. Professor Victor reasoned that, because of ENEM, schools like the Big 4 would stop being number one. Rich people in Ceará would try to annul the test⁶¹ since there were no *dicas* (insider tips on test content) anymore. (Professor Victor and other teachers claimed that Big 4 schools had bought or stolen locally constructed vestibulars and then prepared students accordingly.)

It used to be that rich students had extra classes with *dicas* but now annulling is the rich schools' way. Our country is very bourgeois. Anybody who would try to cheat on the test needs to be punished. This test can't be fraudulent! It needs to be valorised. Our elite is disgusting!

⁶¹ There have been numerous cases challenging the validity of ENEM in the Ceará court.

Professor Victor employed a peculiar breed of optimism. Recognising ENEM and fighting to legitimise it as a meritocratic tool would help to topple Brazil's rich. Underlying this discourse was the assumption that ENEM was a revolutionary exam that would deconstruct (previous) class boundaries. Professor Victor's reassurances about the test (and perhaps about elites) helped to calm some students. Professor Victor's diatribe worked on multiple levels: the elite Big 4 could have stood in for the world's top economic powers whilst Colégio Ceará students were Brazil. This new test had to be fair, as Colégio Ceará students (and Brazil) would finally overcome the built-in biases and be successful.

Throughout the day, students shared ENEM experiences and the number of questions they had answered correctly. (*Veja* had published a preliminary answer key. Many students had checked their answers online.) Maynara had done well, as had several others in the honours *turma*. Dayanne was able to reel off most students' scores. I tried to avoid giving my score but Dayanne prised the information out of me, leading Rebeca to exclaim, "Even Michele did better than me! Oh no." I understood then why Carla had stayed home that day: the pressure to share scores was overwhelming. Carla had felt too *desanimada* (discouraged) and sad about her ENEM performance to be in that environment.

While the honours students seemed cautiously happy or at least relaxed, the afternoon students seemed more worried than they had before the test. Juliana recounted having left after two hours on the first day. "I looked at that test and thought, 'No, I can't do this!' and I sat there and waited until I could leave⁶². I'm not going to the federal university." Janaína, normally a quiet student in a room full of chatty peers, grew tired of Professor Victor's usual politically-charged commentary and muttered, "Ugh! Can't you just teach the class?" Later that afternoon, she dejectedly told me that she did not think she had done well enough to get into Civil Engineering. Moacir, the paraprofessional hall monitor, did little to brighten the gloomy atmosphere in the class: he gave students information about their final exams, eyes twinkling as he added his caveat, "But everyone will be in *recuperação*. We are going to

⁶² Test takers were not permitted to leave the test centre until two hours had passed. This measure was meant to diminish the opportunities for cheating.

see everyone until January. I'm certain." With ENEM over, there was little energy to feign positivity.

In honours *redação* class a week later, students multitasked chatting and copying notes for the next task: preparing for UECE's vestibular. Mariela seemed to be consulting her phone frantically. A moment later, she burst into tears. The lighter mood that had characterised honours classes since ENEM ended. Professor Luziane excused Mariela from class and told her friends to help Mariela pack her bag. After Mariela left, Sara told us that Mariela had just learned that she had not passed the vestibular for medicine at a private university. Professor Luziane told the class, "Oh now I see. She's very nervous. She's thinking, 'If I did not pass this vestibular, what is the chance that I will pass on ENEM?' Poor thing. Everyone is nervous now." At once, it was clear that ENEM had not been the answer or an end but another precarious continuation. As much as students had worked for the future, it was still the present. During break that day, Carla made her pronouncement about her idea for the title of my thesis: "*O ENEM é uma bagunçagem.*" ENEM is a big mess.

Facing this precarious liminality, some students began to re-evaluate their goals. Ana, who had always professed an interest in marketing and publicity, reported to Maynara and me, "I have been thinking that maybe I don't want to do publicity. Maybe I don't want to change people's minds. Maybe I would have to do publicity for someone who I don't agree with. I might have to help them to have a better business because they pay me." Here, Ana justified her shifting *sonhos* in the face of the reality that she might *not* get in. Maynara argued that Ana should not give up, "But you can take this knowledge, understand how it works and do good things instead of bad! Maybe you could work for non-profits?" Ana contemplated Maynara's comment and went back to the picture she was drawing.

Other students who had professed big dreams were shifting theirs too. Rebeca was not satisfied with her ENEM performance. Maybe she would study Chemistry at UFC, do a *cursinho* and try again for medicine? Bruna announced that she had passed vestibular for physiotherapy at a private university but Bruna had professed her lifelong dream to study medicine —

why would she have signed up to do the vestibular for physiotherapy? How were my friends making over these dreams they had worked on creating to propel them through third year?

A few days later, Ana and I sat in the *praça de alimentação* pondering my imminent departure and her unclear future. Ana was angry at ENEM. With scores being released on 28 December, the anticipation would ruin Christmas and the (probable) fury of her mother would ruin New Year's. Ana had been re-working her future though. She would take the UECE vestibular for English. She had learned English from watching television and playing video games. Imagine how much better she would be if she learned properly. She could enrol in English but keep studying for ENEM. Maybe she would still do publicity. Maybe she could get a job.

SISU: The Scoundrel's Trick

By the time ENEM scores had been released, many of my friends had re-crafted their dreams to include less prestigious universities and/or courses. Still, a final component remained in the national ritual for those who hoped to transform themselves through attending the federal university. In January, SISU (the Unified Selection System) took place. Though I had already left the field, I used my scores to participate in the selection process and accompanied Colégio Ceará students' participation via the Internet.

Participating in this national process offered some final insights into the ways in which ENEM was constructed as a meritocratic tool as well as how *vestibulandos* refashioned their dreams. Under SISU, candidates could enter their first and second course choices (attached to a specific university) into the online system over a period of five days. Each day, the computer system generated cut-off marks determined by candidates' scores. That is, if there were 40 spaces, the score of the 40th ranked candidate provided the cut-off mark. This formula was further complicated by candidates' ability to change their first and second choice until the very last moment. Under this system, a candidate might be in the front running for medicine or engineering at the beginning of the week but, as other students input their first and second choices, that student might watch his score dip further and further below the cut-off. Most frustrating for my friends was that, as courses like medicine

were deemed unattainable, cut-off scores for popular second-choice courses like psychology rose, pushing out those who had always intended to study psychology.



Figure 7-3: SISU, the scoundrel, plays a trick on the student by putting her in the course that she will probably drop out of rather than in the course that she really wanted. Source: Facebook

The computer system appeared to add a level of transparency and fairness to this national process. Coles (2004) demonstrates how, in voting, a “stress on technicality downplays the political and social nature of election day and democracy” (557). SISU’s technology lent a similar credence to the meritocracy of selection. At the same time, SISU’s daily vacillations of the cut-off marks felt like a lesson in market forces, competition or even gambling in which *vestibulandos* were to sort themselves. Candidates were meant to judge their own scores against the cut-off mark (a kind of national-level competition) and then adjust expectations accordingly. These characteristics were meant to shore up the fairness and appropriateness of ENEM and its use as a sorting system. Still, SISU was not always imagined as a fair meritocratic tool. Figure 7.3, a cartoon posted on Facebook, portrayed SISU as a scoundrel who played tricks on the *vestibulando* by throwing her into her second choice,

a course she would probably end up dropping out of, instead of her first choice, the course that she really wanted.

SISU incited a scramble to adjust expectations and play the game long enough and well enough to get a good result. Some students told me that they would keep courses like medicine, law, and engineering as their first choice and perhaps the waiting list would be exhausted enough that, eventually, they would gain entrance. Some discussed whether or not they might be able to transfer into their desired course from another course. Thus, I found my friends who had wanted medicine taking spaces in physiotherapy and nursing, those who had wanted civil engineering taking less competitive engineering courses like fisheries or food production, those who wanted law choosing accounting or business, and those who wanted psychology choosing Portuguese or history. Some planned to study on that course, hoping that it would help them continue learning and allow them to do well enough on ENEM the following year to transfer to their dream course. SISU, the scoundrel, allowed some Colégio Ceará students to refashion their plans for the future without languishing in a *cursinho* for another year.

In the interest of full disclosure, I should add that my ENEM score netted my second choice course, UFC's geography⁶³. Sadly, my score was not high enough for social sciences. (I have tried not to overanalyse this shortcoming.) Like my Colégio Ceará friends, I would have adapted and enrolled in geography, keeping my name on the waiting list in case a space came available in my dream course. Instead, I returned to Scotland and wrote a thesis.

Conclusions

Carla and I exchanged letters after I returned to Scotland. I told her about my disorientation in returning to the UK. She told me of the difficulties of waiting for her future to arrive. Our honours classmates Maynara and Jorge had been admitted to their first choice courses (Biotechnology and Law respectively) during the *primeira chamada*. Carla, on the other hand, had not secured a space in the São Paulo university that she had dreamt of attending. I continue

⁶³ From what I learned at Colégio Ceará about course hierarchy, my choice forecasted a future house slightly better than a shack.

Carla's story both as postscript to/of my dear *batalhador* friend and as demonstration of the ways in which the themes of my thesis tie together.

Carla's flexible strategy for the *luta* of third year, wherein she gave herself over to "watching" classes at both Colégio Ceará and her Big 4 *cursinho*, had failed to yield results. Carla had hoped that the symbolic power and resources of these two private educational commodities would help her to realise metaphorical and physical movement. She had dreamt of relocating to São Paulo to live a more cosmopolitan life closer to the nation's economic centre and far away from the backwards Northeast with its unbearable heat, poverty and crime. She had imagined that her studies would offer her a stable job with good financial remuneration that would allow her to live a "good" life. However, it seemed that her dreams might not have been powerful enough – in fact, she *had* struggled to make a decision about what to study, vacillating between courses as wildly different as social sciences, engineering and nutrition. Furthermore, Carla acknowledged that she had lacked the *força* necessary to overcome exhaustion and *preguiça* near the end of third year.

In February, Carla placed her name on the waiting list for a different São Paulo university and returned to the Big 4 *cursinho* she had frequented during 2012. In mid-February 2013, she wrote:

I can't give up. Practically everyone is in university. Many [of our classmates] are in courses that they don't want but SISU helped and they're happy. Others are in private universities. I would have gone to a private university. It was what my parents wanted but I am going to the PUBLIC. I'm going to be a *guerreira* (warrior, fighter) and revolutionize this shit... I'm going to try until I make it. I owe this to my parents who are already old.

Though her previous participation in the national ritual had led her to declare it a farce, Carla would soldier on and submit herself to this rite of passage again. Despite her sadness and exhaustion, Carla would continue to fight – she might even incite revolution – for a position in the esteemed public university system. She saw this accomplishment as critical both to demonstrating *consideração* for her parents and to becoming the right kind of (consolidated middle-class) person. Perhaps a necessary step in this "war",

this “revolution” within the system, was testifying to me (and others) that, with hard work, confidence and demonstrated belief, her transformation was imminent. Carla urged me to continue cheering for her from afar.

Several weeks later, Carla received word that a space had come available for her in biological sciences at a federal university in the state of São Paulo. With the semester starting in less than a week, Carla and her family would have little time to arrange the long distance move. Carla leaned towards flexibility: she would do whatever it took to study in a federal university in São Paulo – even if it was not the course or university that she had *really* wanted. Still, the family finances could not withstand the last minute expenses involved in moving and setting up home. In addition, Carla’s parents thought biological sciences was *not* a prestigious course. A course with more *concorrência* would be worth the move but, in the hierarchy of courses and their projected futures, biology was not an appropriate dream worth uprooting one’s life.

Carla’s postscript overlaps with arguments extended throughout the first five chapters of the thesis. In Chapter 1, I moved into and through Fortaleza to examine the inequalities and segregation manifested in the city. I argued that students’ movements through the city produced knowledge of self, others, economics and society. These physical trajectories mapped onto class movement as Colégio Ceará students came to understand limits and possibilities for their lives through their trajectories through the city.

As Chapter 2 shows, education offered a plan for realising metaphorical (and perhaps physical) movement. I detailed a history of schooling that encouraged the middle and upper classes to abandon public primary and secondary education. I showed how private schools in Fortaleza have become commodities associated with class, taste and distinction. Private schooling provided Colégio Ceará students and their families an imagined short- and long-term trajectory of upward class mobility. Private schooling – especially private secondary schooling – allowed these families to align themselves with those who “have” in Fortaleza whilst distinguishing themselves from those who do not.

Chapter 3 focused on vestibular (and vestibular preparation) as a rite of passage. I provided a history of vestibular to demonstrate that, regardless of

format, university entrance exams in Brazil have always selected for the children of the upper middle and upper classes. As such, teachers and students characterised vestibular as a year-long *luta* that could be won or lost. During the *luta*, students imagined battling a variety of opponents (self, system, and others) in order to transform themselves from (emerging middle-class) youth into (middle-class) adults. Students had to decide on an individual approach to third year and their studying practices during this literal and figurative test. “Successful” students approached the *luta* with flexibility, commitment, and determination to endure hundreds of hours of classes and practice tests.

In Chapter 4, I demonstrated the ways in which teachers and students cultivated and employed the self-esteem necessary to persevere during the *luta*. Without self-esteem one would not be able to endure the hardships of third year or other future *lutas*. In Colégio Ceará, self-esteem related to confidence, motivation and one’s ability to persist in the face of great adversity. Self-esteem was also relational and involved affective work wherein one publicly performed self-esteem and gave and received *força*. Underlying this knowledge was the argument that belief in one’s self would transform an individual. Self-esteem, a technology of the self (Cruikshank 1993), offered the feeling of being more (or sometimes less) in control.

Chapter 5 showed how this self-esteem related to *sonhos*. High self-esteem helped a student to construct and believe in her *sonho*, perhaps turning that dream into a *projeto de vida* (life project) towards which she could work. These *sonhos* were viewed as magical targets, power-imbued imagined futures that helped students to navigate a difficult present. Young people needed to successfully shift energy into time work, imagining a better future – much like their *batalhador* parents did. Colégio Ceará students’ dreams often involved consumption practices that would affirm “modern” middle-class lives. Here, modernity meant economic stability, family planning and connection to places and people already deemed “modern”. Colégio Ceará, along with family and friends, urged students to create appropriate (often market-driven) dreams.

While the first five chapters focused on ways in which teachers and students sought to bring about class movement and/or imagined futures, Chapter 6 focused on the pedagogy and curriculum that demonstrated past and present impediments to these objectives. Through a curriculum imbued with a mix of populism, *pensamento social brasileiro* and Freirean pedagogy, Colégio Ceará students came to understand themselves as oppressed and Brazil as underdeveloped and not quite modern. Students imagined that cycles of economic inequality and political corruption would be nearly impossible to break, as they alternately classified *o povo* as victim and perpetrator of these failings. Though ENEM attempted to elicit *vestibulandos* to take responsibility for and participate in social problems, students resisted this move in their “training” for the test.

In this final chapter, I examined the national meritocratic ritual of ENEM 2012. As the test grew closer, teachers’ encouragements attempted to shift the focus away from the national character of the event on to the individual student. As Colégio Ceará students disappeared into the masses taking the test across the country, they contested the conditions that offered the appearance of fairness. ENEM imagined a particular kind of modern Brazil that reflected on its wrongs (slavery, military dictatorship), celebrated its uniqueness (Afro-Brazilian culture, abundant resources) and looked towards a bright future (economic development, sustainability, citizenship, technology). It also conveyed ideas about how to be a good citizen as well as how to govern one’s self and to be governed. Many Colégio Ceará students returned to the classroom ready to modify the dreams they had worked so hard to create.

Carla battled on in her *cursinho*. She re-worked her dreams again to better match what her family deemed appropriate. She wrote of the sadness and the guilt she felt. Although her father’s business was struggling and finances were tight, her parents continued to pay for her *cursinho* and living expenses. In May, she reported:

I don’t want to stay here any longer in this rubbish city, in this tiring *cursinho* and have patience. I don’t have a choice. It’s too difficult, too many responsibilities. I miss my parents, my friends and the happy life

that I had... In truth, I'm sick of this country, this place without a future, this shit president. A giant flood should come and end it all. Or we could deliver it back to the Indians and say, "Sorry, that was bad".

Carla's juxtaposition of her struggles and the failures of her country portrayed Carla's frustrations with time work, for her *and* her country. Carla did not want to continue sacrificing her present whilst shouldering heavy responsibilities for a future that might never arrive. During these sad moments, Carla directed her outrage at President Dilma who (perhaps likewise) was failing to transform Brazil. Carla and the country were still struggling to develop, to reach a better future; they were still struggling to become "modern". In these moments, Carla took comfort in disparaging the system: surely a better system would have kept her from the *cursinho* and yielded better opportunities.

Making *Batalhadores*?

Juliana did *not* curse the Brazilian state. She focused her attentions on what *she* could do. She enrolled in physiotherapy at a private university and juggled classwork alongside her jobs as a shop assistant and in her parents' Centro clothing stall. Between her studies and her work, she also found the time to parlay her fashion and business knowledge into marketing and selling clothes and make-up using Facebook and Whatsapp. Like her *batalhador* parents, Juliana endured long work days. Still, she felt confident that this work would bring her a better future.

Similarly, Renan preferred to focus on the positives. Renan was thrilled to put the stress of third year behind him. When he did not get into his first choice course at UFC, he enrolled in a Chemistry degree. When the federal university inevitably entered another months-long strike, he began working in his parents' shop. The job offered easy money and, eventually, prompted him to dream up his own business venture: t-shirts emblazoned with lyrics from his favourite English-language bands. Renan continued with his degree. Perhaps one day he would use it, perhaps not. This did not seem as important as it once had. Renan was relatively content in his present.

Like Juliana and Renan, a number of Colégio Ceará students have followed in their parents' footsteps by selling clothing and/or working with their parents while they study in public or private universities. Ana and Eva develop curriculum for Big 4 schools whilst studying. Rebeca toiled through two years at a Big 4 *cursinho* before modifying her dream of medicine to engineering. Two afternoon *turma* students have daughters born the year after school finished. Two other afternoon *turma* students recently arrived in Europe to take part in Brazil's federally-funded study abroad scheme. Given these disparate presents that I could not have predicted when I left the field, I do not wish to collapse the complexity of my friends' stories and perform reductive time work by prescribing one-size-fits-all *batalhador* futures.

What I *can* say is that schooling at Colégio Ceará helped to create Brazil's newest emerging middle-class citizens. Many of these young people distrust the state and/or are plugged into their families and the neoliberal economy. They work (or do not) to differentiate themselves from a host of others: the rich, the poor, the corrupt, the lazy, the foolish, etc. Though they recognise the gross inequalities perpetuated by local, national and international political and economic systems, most believe in the power of dreams. The inherent fairness of meritocracy seems less easy for (some of) them to believe in but what other options remain?

Third Year as Rite of Passage

Though I did not initially (or, in fact, intentionally) set out to produce an ethnography that mirrors Turner's (1967) observations about rites of passage, the astute reader will have picked up on elements of the three phases that comprise the rite of passage. In this section, I wish to make these connections clear. As Chapter 3 revealed, university entrance exams in a variety of countries (including Brazil) have been characterised as rites of passage. Still, third-year students at Colégio Ceará were not simply "betwixt and between" (Turner 1967) phases of schooling. Third year repeatedly promised to transform students on various levels: from *vestibulandos/pre-universitários* to *universitários*, from emerging middle-class high school student to young adult citizen with appropriate middle-class identity and dreams, from unlikely underdog to triumphant hero, from periphery to centre.

Separation

According to Van Gennep, the first phase of any rite of passage is separation: “the detachment from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions” (Turner 1967: 94). Chapters 1, 2 and 3 touched on various ways in which students were detached. They physically moved through the city, separating themselves from peripheral neighbourhoods in order to attend a particular kind of private school. Parents who choose to send their children to Colégio Ceará distinguished and separated them from those who attended public school or smaller, less-esteemed *colégios de bairro*. Attending Colégio Ceará offered students a particular (private) experience preparing for the national (public) ritual. Once at Colégio Ceará, third-year students were made different to other students. Discourses repeatedly emphasised that the third year of high school would be a *luta* unlike anything students had experienced before. Students were told to abandon boyfriends/girlfriends, parties and all other distractions during third year – they could resume these after they passed vestibular. Similarly, Colégio Ceará instructed parents to discipline themselves and their families differently during third year. Made *vestibulandos* or *pre-universitários*, students were separated from others (neighbours, siblings, younger students, etc.) at the outset of third year as they embarked upon their rite of passage.

Limen

The bulk of third year proved to be an extended liminal period, the second phase in a rite of passage, wherein students’ status was “ambiguous” (Turner 1967). Teachers continuously reminded students of the uncertainty of their position: those with dedication, focus and cooperation might pass onto adulthood/university but those who played, joked or antagonised teachers might never pass vestibular and would remain people unmade. Daily lessons were peppered with risqué jokes to show students that they were more mature than the younger students – still, they had to sit through many of the same lessons that they had heard before. Similarly, *vestibulandos* enjoyed a different dress code: they could choose their own jeans and trainers (as they would be able to do when they reached university – rather than a low wage job where they would be required to wear a uniform) but they still had to

wear the third-year polo shirt. Ambiguity extended beyond these simple markers; emerging middle-class students worried about how they would fare against students from the Big 4 and how the race- and public school-based quotas might affect their chances at attending the much sought-after federal university.

Whilst teachers helped to construct ambiguity, they also offered options for managing uncertainty. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 outlined various solutions. Students were taught that there would be tremendous *concorrência* to gain admission to university; there would be many enemies to confront yet the greatest enemy would be one's self. Thus, the technology of self-esteem emerged. At Colégio Ceará, self-esteem was relational and involved affective work wherein one should publicly perform self-esteem as well as give and receive *força*. Some students were induced to reinvest themselves out of *consideração* for their families while others found themselves moved by conversion tales that saw poor underdogs transformed into prosperous heroes. Emotion and affect proved valuable tools during the *luta*.

Turner contends that:

During the liminal period, neophytes are alternately forced and encouraged to think about their society, their cosmos, and the powers that generate and sustain them. Liminality may be partly described as a stage of reflection. (1967: 105)

Third year proved to be a rehash of past curricula as students reviewed knowledge gained during the first two years of high school. Though this knowledge was ultimately key to passing vestibular, third year delved into understanding society and the cosmos with complementary discourses on power and agency. On one hand, students were encouraged to engage in time work: that cognitive, behavioural, emotional and affective work involved in preparing one's future within the present. With good self-esteem and powerful dreams, an individual student could muster the hard work necessary to reach an imagined future. On the other hand, students learned to anticipate economic and political impediments from a corrupt system. They honed their abilities to recognise (and perhaps construct) social, political and economic oppressions. This version of the cosmos provided a useful range of

explanations for the ways in which the world worked. Individuals or (less likely) *o povo* could bring about change. At the same time, the blame for injustices could be assigned to one's self, elites or *o povo*. There was power in dreams *and* indignation.

Moral and ethical quandaries (supposedly) particular to Brazilian society were also highlighted as *pensamento social brasileiro* played out in the classroom. Thus, though Eva told me that Brazil would never change, she catalogued a list of ways in which Brazil *should* change. Moral and ethical expectations for what the country and its people should be and do emerged. Still, Eva argued that she could not count on the state or politics to solve problems. Rather, the individual must go out and battle for a better future.

Teachers and students anticipated ENEM as a kind of ritual that would confirm a new status. Yet, students contested ENEM's standardised, nationalised procedures that sought to demonstrate a fair contest. As Chapter 7 shows, ENEM valorised the power of "democracy", the state, and citizenship. Individuals who helped to "institutionalise forms of social control compatible with democratic values" were valorised alongside those who fought for their rights. (Presumably these fights were in keeping with democratic values.) Still, most students did not internalise this power of democracy discourse – students did not necessarily doubt the power of all democracy; some simply doubted the power of a *Brazilian* democracy. Like me, many of the students reported approaching the test with scepticism: they tried to divine what answer the government might want and produced that. Students like Ana, Carla and Renan returned from the ritual feeling uncertain, perhaps duped. The ritual had not done what it said it would do or perhaps they had not done what it said *they* should do? This ambiguous liminal phase continued as students shifted their dreams in anticipation of SISU.

Aggregation

As Turner maintains, "[r]itual is transformative, ceremony confirmatory" (1967: 95). Ultimately, Colégio Ceará students who passed vestibular faced *trote*, an initiation ceremony whereby they were made *universitários* during enrolment. Returning students covered new students in paint, writing the name of the course on the new student's face. (Male students admitted to

prestigious courses like medicine had their heads shaved.) Students posted *trote* photos on Facebook, demonstrating that their transformation was complete.

Not all students bought into the rhetoric of the *luta* equally. Nor did all students pass. Yet, these categories did not necessarily overlap: some students, who committed themselves as they had been instructed, did not pass; others, who did not invest as they should have, did pass. What, then, might reading third year as a rite of passage allow us to understand? This thesis demonstrates the kind of knowledge and understanding – beyond the curriculum – that was deemed essential to transform an emerging middle-class underdog into a middle-class citizen with an appropriate identity and dreams.

Key Themes

Below I briefly outline some key themes in the thesis in order to show how they relate to the thesis as a whole and how they might inform further research.

Self-Esteem, Emotions & Affect

As I showed in Chapter 4, self-esteem has been compared to “having a soul, attention deficit disorder, karma, or tuberculosis [; that is, it] is only possible within the confines of a particular associational network” (Ward 1996: 17). Cruikshank calls self-esteem a “practical and productive technology available for the production of certain kinds of selves” (1993: 329). In this thesis, I showed the national and international historical contexts that brought self-esteem into the local vernacular in the Brazilian classroom. Then, I demonstrated how various students and teachers understood self-esteem in different ways. My work suggests that anthropologists must contextualise and consider local definitions of self-esteem when the term is used in ethnography.

For students and teachers, self-esteem related to emotions and affect. While ENEM attempted to elicit rational citizens who trusted reason, practices in the classroom resisted these kinds of divisions between the emotional and the

rational. Powerful emotions (and their accompanying affect in and on the body) did some of the metaphorical heavy lifting in the classroom. YouTube videos and heroic conversion narratives brought some students to tears, giving them the space to reflect and then rededicate themselves to studying; whereas dull classroom techniques might make a particular subject seem impossible. Affect could be *força* embodied. My findings complement Watkins' (2010) conclusions about affect and cognition in the US classroom. Further research on emotion, affect and the classroom would help establish a better understanding of how emotions experienced in the classroom can be stored (and recalled) in the body to "act as a force promoting interest, which over time may accumulate as cognitive capacity providing its own stimulus for learning" (Watkins 2010: 278).

Given that I conducted intensive research in a single emerging middle-class high school, the connections between class and these kinds of emotional/affective practices are unclear. For instance, a reader of an early draft of this thesis, an upper middle-class *fortalezense* who attended a Big 4 school, recognised how affect might increase/dissuade studying but found the emphasis on self-esteem and conversion narratives peculiar. Similarly, Brazilian colleagues generated the Portuguese words *cafona* or *brega* for some of the emotional displays I described in the classroom. These words imply over-the-top or tacky but also often relate to a particular class(-less) sensibility. Further research would allow an investigation of a potential entanglement between emotion, class and affect. Additionally, it would allow further exploration of connections between indignation, "bad" self-esteem, a supposed Brazilian-ness and *pensamento social brasileiro*.

Futurity & Time Work

Cole and Durham examine the literature on youth and the future and find that "existing work persists in foregrounding children and youth's role in reworking the emergent cultural geographies associated with new spatial relations... [This] analytically privileges space over time" (2008: 5). In examining youth and futurity as a recurring theme, my thesis addresses this imbalance. I have demonstrated how *pensamento social brasileiro* permeated classroom discussions, encouraging students to examine their future

alongside that of their country. Though we tend to think of youth as the future of a country, Colégio Ceará students looked at Brazil and made judgements about the possibilities for their own futures. In this thesis, there exists a continual pointing back and forth between youth, future and the national imaginary.

Time Work

Key to the rite of passage was time work. Sociologist Michael Flaherty (2011; 2014) developed the concept of time work; yet, my use of the term might confuse the reader familiar with Flaherty's body of work. In this section, I seek to clarify my understanding of time work and show how it might be usefully applied as an analytical category.

In *Textures of Time*, Flaherty (2011) explores the ways in which people tailor their own experiences of time. For example, one might speed up time during a boring class by doodling or, conversely, slow down time to savour a holiday by purposefully stopping and taking in the surroundings. Here, Flaherty defines time work as:

intrapersonal and interpersonal effort directed toward provoking or preventing various temporal experiences. This concept implicates the agentic micromanagement of one's own involvement with self and situation. Time work is the self-selected cause of one's temporal experience (2011: 11).

Thus, individuals attempt to assert temporal agency by manipulating various dimensions of time including duration, frequency, sequence and allocation. This first iteration of time work emphasises the subjective quality of time but does not have a particular orientation towards the future.

A second iteration of time work appears in an afterword summarising the findings of *Ethnographies of Youth and Temporality: Time Objectified* (Flaherty 2014). There, Flaherty again asserts that time work involves resisting "external sources of time constraint or structure" (176). However, time work (both behavioural and cognitive) may also consist of imagining a future different to the present as well as planning and acting on that imagined

future. Drawing on conclusions from the ethnography, Flaherty acknowledges that emotions and relationships enable (or prevent) time work as exercising temporal agency often requires confidence, discipline and perseverance. Still, Flaherty concludes that time work is “typically interstitial, in that it transpires within the parameters of existing social structure without challenging or changing the status quo” (2014: 187).

My use of the term “time work” draws on this second iteration. Although (by definition) we never reach the future, we work on that future within the present (Leccardi 2005), in order to exercise some control over uncertainty in “a modern equivalent of magical practices” (Leão et al 2011: 1073). Dalsgaard (2014) shows how residents in a poor community in Recife, Brazil, “tried to link up to a future that is not the logical consequence of where they are in the present [, a future] that is wilfully projected and sustained by mutual affection” (98). Building on this previous research, I take time work to be that cognitive, behavioural, emotional and affective work involved in preparing the future within the present. Implicit in time work, then, is a modernist linear construction of time wherein individuals may exercise agency. An imagined future, made possible by time work, provides identity, purpose and/or affect in the present (Leccardi 2005; Dalsgaard 2014). Other narratives about society – an example in my ethnography includes those common to *pensamento social brasileiro* – threaten to undermine or derail time work. Some people are more successful than others at resisting these narratives and projecting themselves into imagined futures. The concept of time work that I have outlined allows us to explore these social processes that encourage and/or make it possible for individuals to “stand apart” (Dalsgaard 2014) from the present. Furthermore, time work encompasses three dimensions of the future that Durham and Cole (2008) outline:

- (1) how the future is imagined through specific representations of temporality,
- (2) how one orients oneself and others to it through sentiments like hope or anxiety and their relationship to risk, and
- (3) how one substantively creates it by designing and normalizing new kinds of practices. (2008: 11)

Using time work as an analytical category allows us to examine how these processes work across and within these dimensions of the future.

Notes for the Reader

Though I conducted research outside of Colégio Ceará, I have chosen the frame of the school and the classroom as a way to contain this thesis: both in terms of the space constraints imposed by the word count and the parameters necessary to delineate an intellectual project. As the place where the majority of the rite of passage and preparation for ENEM took place, the choice to use the classroom as a sort of container for the thesis seemed logical. This methodological choice meant limiting opportunities for participant observation of the family. Thus, though the thesis follows individual students, I admittedly have missed being able to contextualise significant parts of these students' lives⁶⁴. Nevertheless, by focusing on following students from two *turmas* at a particular *colégio*, I hoped to take the reader through a certain kind of vestibular preparation. The classroom offered a setting to observe the knowledge and understandings regarded as crucial to transforming an emerging middle-class teenager into a middle-class citizen. Furthermore, the classroom offered a setting to examine people (and ideas) in formation during the period when it was widely pronounced that the future had finally arrived for Brazil. Previous research on aspirations (Mattos 2012; Rodrigues & Pelisoli 2008) and time (Dalsgaard 2014; Franch 2008) amongst Brazilian youth has been conducted outside of schools so this ethnography helps to build on that knowledge.

My ethnography presents a portrait of a certain subset of the emerging middle-class Brazilians who were said to be propelling Brazil through the world economic crisis unscathed. Previous ethnographic research on Brazil's *batalhadores* revealed parents who worked hard to ensure that their children would have an easier life (Souza 2010). In engaging with these students, I wanted to bring to life the complex workings of class (re)production. These students, living in a profoundly unequal city in Brazil, attempted to bridge

⁶⁴ That said, I imagine that a third-year student would have related to me differently if I had been engaged in this kind of participant observation. Managing competing relationships might have impacted on my ability to access certain aspects of students' lives.

that divide. Given that my research focuses on one particular school, findings cannot (and should not) be generalised towards a generic emerging middle class. Rather, in portraying students' individual journeys through third year, I have tried to show the variation that exists within this group. Still, this work highlights ways in which "schools are primary sites for social sorting and the reproduction of class hierarchies" (Woronov 2011: 98).

In addition, this in-depth portrait of a particular *fortalezense* private high school should not be used to generalise about all Brazilian high schools, public or private. Rather it might serve as comparison though, as I pointed out in the introduction to this thesis, very few in-depth ethnographies of Brazilian high school classrooms and/or, more generally, *nordestino* schools exist.

In reference to comparisons, I must acknowledge that I do not make many explicit comparisons between Colégio Ceará and other cross-cultural school contexts. Surely my experience of high school(s) – I attended three very different US high schools – mediated my understanding of what high school is and should be. Remnants of this appear in the text as, for example, I puzzled over what I perceived to be a disorganised time schedule or a peculiar focus on self-esteem. Still, in writing this text, I hoped to allow the reader to compare and contrast with their own experiences of schooling. What I have found in presenting this material is that, because nearly everyone has schooling experience, they will compare and contrast readily. Through these comparisons that the reader has made, I wish to have challenged the reader's notions of what school, the classroom and learning are. What is the purpose of schooling? Should high school students be "patient, listening objects" (Freire 2005: 70)? How do schools encourage pupils to engage in time work? How do emotion and affect (often unwittingly) feature in every school curriculum? These are a few of the questions that I hope my thesis will have provoked in the reader.

What to Believe in

When Jorge and I met to discuss my research findings in May 2014, our conversation lingered over the subject of dreams. Jorge insisted that dreams must be unattainable for most in order to remain special and powerful. If

everyone (or anyone) could reach a particular goal, then it was not really a dream. Perhaps this was a good position for him to adopt: Jorge, a young man studying on scholarship at Colégio Ceará from one of Fortaleza's most economically deprived neighbourhoods, had managed to get a place on his prestigious dream course.

Since that chat with Jorge, I have wondered about temporal agency and the power of dreams. What *should* one believe in? This thesis has portrayed a range of entangled situations in which third-year students grappled with what to believe in: Dreams? Self-Esteem? The Future? One's self? Meritocracy? Religion? Democracy? The State? The Economy? Colégio Ceará students seemed to modulate their beliefs in these idea(l)s as they asked back: What can transform me? What can I transform?

In June 2013, Carla told me about the large-scale protests transpiring in Brazil. (Two months later, she would be admitted to physiotherapy at a federal university in the neighbouring state.) She wrote about her experience taking part in the *manifestação* (manifestation, protest) outside Castelão Football Stadium as the Confederate Cup Games drew near:

Brazil finally woke up. We went to the streets with signs and screams, without political parties, only *o povo lutando* (the people fighting) for their rights because FINALLY no one can handle this corruption anymore. On that day we went to Castelão, there were 80,000 people... Still, even with the heat of the sun, it was really good to be able to yell together with the nation.

Carla described a powerful communion with the nation, without politicians and other elites. On that day⁶⁵, Carla felt compelled to participate in a different *luta*. She believed in the possibility that this *luta* could help to transform Brazil: giving her and the country a better future.

⁶⁵ As I finish my thesis in late September 2015, there is further unrest. Though economic domestic policies sustained Brazil through the worst of the world financial crisis, the country is now suffering its own economic downturn. "Classe C leaves paradise" (Barrocal 2015) is the new headline.

Appendix I

Class Groupings

INCOME GROUPS OF THE BRAZILIAN POPULATION				
SAE Classifications			CPS/FGV Classifications	
Group	Monthly Income	Family Income	Group	Family Income
Extremely Poor	Up to R\$81	Up to R\$ 324	E	Up to R\$ 1.085
Poor, but not extremely poor	Up to R\$ 162	Up to R\$ 648	D	Up to R\$ 1.734
Vulnerable	Up to R\$ 291	Up to R\$ 1.164		
Low middle class	Up to R\$ 441	Up to R\$ 1.764	C	Up to R\$ 7.475
Middle middle class	Up to R\$ 641	Up to R\$ 2.564		
High middle class	Up to R\$ 1.019	Up to R\$ 4.076		
Low upper class	Up to R\$ 2.480	Up to R\$ 9.920	B	Up to R\$ 9.745
High upper class	Above R\$ 2.480	Above R\$ 9.920	A	Above R\$ 9.745

Source: <http://g1.globo.com/economia/seu-dinheiro/noticia/2012/06/com-renda-de-classe-media-trabalhador-diz-que-so-faz-o-basico.html>

Minimum Salary in 2012:

Hourly minimum rate	R\$2.83
Daily minimum salary	R\$20.73
Monthly minimum salary	R\$622.00

Pound to Real Exchange Rate Throughout 2012

Month	£1 equals
2 January	R\$ 2.90
3 February	R\$ 2.71
3 March	R\$ 2.74
1 April	R\$ 2.92
1 May	R\$ 3.09
2 June	R\$ 3.13
1 July	R\$ 3.15
2 August	R\$ 3.17
1 September	R\$ 3.22
3 October	R\$ 3.25
1 November	R\$ 3.27
3 December	R\$ 3.41

Appendix II

Competencies for Human Sciences & Technologies

Competency Area 1 – Understand the cultural elements that make up identities.

H1 – Interpret historically and/or geographically documentary sources about aspects of culture.

H2 – Analyse the production of memory by human societies.

H3 – Associate cultural manifestations of the present with their historical processes.

H4 – Compare points of view expressed in different sources about determined aspect of culture.

H5 – Identify the manifestations or representations of diversity from cultural and artistic patrimony in different societies

Competency Area 2 – Understand the transformations of geographical spaces as a product of socioeconomic and cultural relations of power.

H6 – Interpret different map and graphic representations of geographic spaces.

H7 – Identify the historical-geographical significance of power relations between nations.

H8 – Analyse the action of national states with regard to the dynamics of population flows and in facing problems of socio-economic order.

H9 – Compare the historic-geographic of political and socioeconomic organizations on local, regional and world scale.

H10 – Recognize the dynamics of the organization of social movements and the importance of participation of the collectivity in the transformation of historical-geographical reality.

Competency Area 3 – Understand the production and the historical role of social, political and economic institutions, association them with different groups, conflicts and social movements.

H11 – Identify records of social groups' practices in time and space.

H12 – Analyse the role of justice as an institution in the organization of societies.

H13 – Analyse the performance of social movements that contributed to changes or disruptions in processes of dispute for power.

H14 – Compare different points of view, present in analytic and interpretive texts, on situations or facts of historical-geographical nature about the social, political and economic.

H15 – Evaluate critically cultural, social, political economic and environmental conflicts throughout history.

Competency Area 4 – Understand technical and technological transformations and their impact on production processes, on the development of knowledge and on social life.

H16 – Identify registers about the role of techniques and technologies in the organization of work and/or of social life.

H17 – Analyse factors that explain the impact of new technologies in the process of territorialization of production.

H18 – Analyse different processes of production or circulation of riches and their socio-spatial implications.

H19 – Recognize the technical and technological transformations that determine the various forms of use and ownership of rural and urban spaces.
H20 – Select arguments for and against modifications imposed by new technologies to social life and the world of work.

Competency Area 5 – Use historical knowledge to understand and valorize the fundamentals of citizenship and of democracy, favoring conscious action of the individual in society.

H21 – Identify the role of the media in the construction of social life.

H22 – Analyse social struggles and obtained achievements with regard to changes in legislation or public policies.

H23 – Analyse the importance of ethical values in political structure of societies.

H24 – Relate citizenship and democracy in the organization of societies.

H25 – Identify strategies that promote forms of social inclusion.

Competency Area 6 – Understand society and nature, recognizing their interactions in space through different historic and geographic contexts.

H26 – Identify in different sources the occupation process of physical means and relations of human life with the landscape.

H27 – Analyze critically the interactions between society and the physical environment, taking into account historical and geographical aspects.

H28 – Relate the use of technologies with the socio-environmental impacts in different historical-geographical contexts.

H29 – Recognize the function of natural resources in the production of geographic space, relating it to the changes brought by human actions.

H30 – Evaluate the relationships between preservation and degradation in the life of the planet on different scales.

(INEP 2012: 39–41, my translation)

Objects of Knowledge Associated with Competencies

Cultural diversity, conflicts and life in society – material and immaterial culture; patrimony and cultural diversity in Brazil. The conquest of America. Conflicts between Europeans and Indigenous people in colonial America. Slavery and indigenous and African forms of resistance in America. Cultural history of African peoples. The struggle of *negros* in Brazil and the *negro* in shaping Brazilian society. History of indigenous people and the shaping of Brazilian socio-culture. Cultural movements in the western world and its impacts on political and social life.

Forms of social organization, social movements, political thinking and action of the State – Citizenship and democracy in antiquity; State and rights of the citizen from the Modern Ages; direct, indirect and representative democracy. Social and political revolutions in Modern Europe. Brazilian territorial formation; the Brazilian regions; politics of territorial reordering. The struggles for independence in the American colonies. Social groups in conflict in imperial Brazil and the construction of the nation. The development of liberal thinking in capitalist society and its critiques in the 19th and 20th centuries. Politics of colonization, migration, immigration and emigration in Brazil in the 19th and 20th centuries. The role of social groups and the great revolutionary processes

of the 20th Century: the Bolshevik Revolution, Chinese Revolution, Cuban Revolution. Geopolitics and conflicts between the 19th and 20th centuries: Imperialism, the occupation of Asia and of Africa, the World Wars and the Cold War. The totalitarian systems of Europe in the 20th Century: nazi-fascist, Franco-ism, Salazar-ism, Stalinism. Political dictatorships in Latin America: *Estado Novo* in Brazil and dictatorships in America. Post-Cold War political-cultural conflicts, international political reorganization and the multilateral bodies in the 20th and 21st centuries. The struggle for the rights of citizens: civil, human, political and social rights. Social rights in the Brazilian constitutions. Affirmative action policies. Urban life: networks and hierarchy in cities, poverty and spatial segregation.

Characteristics and transformations of production structures – Different forms of the organization of production: ancient slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism and their different experiences. Brazilian agro-export economy: the sugar complex; mining in the colonial period; the coffee economy; rubber in Amazonia. Industrial Revolution: creation of the factory system in Europe and transformations in the production process. Creation of the urban-industrial space. Transformations in the production sphere in the 20th century: Fordism, Toyota-ism, the new techniques of production and their impacts. Brazilian industrialization, urbanization and its social and worker transformations. Globalization and its new telecommunications technologies and their economic, political and social consequences. Production and transformation and agrarian spaces. Modernization of agriculture and traditional agrarian structures. Agro-business, family farms, wage earners of the countryside and social struggles in the countryside. The countryside-city relationship.

(INEP 2012: 47-48, my translation)

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