

EVALUATION CULTURE AND EFFECTS OF SUBJECTIVATION IN HEALTH¹

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this article is to discuss the relationship between evaluation culture and subjectivation processes in the field of health. This is a theoretical study on the subject, which works on historical and conceptual aspects of the rise of the evaluation culture in contemporary societies, particularly in the health sector; we have done an analytical review on the arguments that circumscribe the controversies that the themes of evaluation and subjectivity have raised in public health and beyond, in dialogue with Foucault's contributions. The national literature in the health sector is more receptive than the international literature in the human sciences. The most common interpretation, in general, is that evaluation is one of the instruments of governance or management. The major criticism is that it would lead workers to worry only about what is set by the indicators, giving up a broader interpretation of the activity itself. There is a common understanding that evaluative practices aim to produce subjective changes, but also produce unanticipated subjective effects. As for the design of these effects of subjectivation, there is a wide spectrum of points of view, ranging from the development to subjectivities committed to permanent change, to the constraint of subjectivity and to the production of "calculable selves". Along with Foucault's thinking, we can recognize both subjecting effects and the protagonism effects in the use of evaluation. The later, can lead to the self-improvement of work processes or the creation of strategic spaces in power relations.

Keywords: Process assessment (health care); subjectivity; power.

CULTURA DE AVALIAÇÃO E EFEITOS DE SUBJETIVAÇÃO NA SAÚDE

RESUMO. O objetivo deste artigo é discutir a relação entre cultura da avaliação e processos de subjetivação, no campo da saúde. Trata-se de um estudo teórico sobre o tema, que trabalha aspectos históricos e conceituais da ascensão da cultura de avaliação nas sociedades contemporâneas, particularmente no setor saúde; e faz uma revisão analítica dos argumentos que circunscrevem as controvérsias que os temas da avaliação e subjetividade têm suscitado na saúde pública e fora dela, em diálogo com as contribuições de Foucault. A literatura nacional do setor da saúde é mais receptiva do que a literatura internacional nas ciências humanas. A interpretação mais corrente, em geral, é que a avaliação é um dos instrumentos de governo ou de gestão. A maior crítica é que levaria os trabalhadores a se preocuparem apenas com o que está colocado pelos indicadores, abdicando de uma interpretação mais ampliada da própria atividade. Há uma compreensão comum de que as práticas avaliativas têm por objetivo produzir mudanças subjetivas, mas também produzem efeitos subjetivos não previstos. Quanto ao desenho desses efeitos de subjetivação, há largo espectro de pontos de vista, que vão desde o fomento a subjetivações comprometidas com a mudança permanente, ao constrangimento da subjetividade e à produção dos "eus calculáveis". Acompanhando o pensamento de Foucault, podemos reconhecer tanto efeitos de submetimento, quanto efeitos de protagonismo no uso da avaliação. O segundo caso pode levar ao aperfeiçoamento autogerido dos processos de trabalho ou à criação de espaços estratégicos nas relações de poder.

Palavras-chave: Avaliação de processos (cuidados de saúde); subjetividade; poder.

CULTURA DE LA EVALUACIÓN Y EFECTOS DE SUBJETIVACIÓN SOBRE LA SALUD

RESUMEN. El propósito de este artículo es discutir la relación entre la cultura de la evaluación y los procesos de subjetivación en el campo de la salud. Se trata de un estudio teórico sobre el tema, que investiga aspectos históricos y conceptuales del aumento de la cultura de la evaluación en las sociedades contemporáneas, especialmente en el sector de la salud; y realiza una revisión analítica de los argumentos que circunscriben las controversias que los temas de

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evaluación y subjetividad han planteado a la salud pública y a otras áreas, en diálogo con las contribuciones de Foucault. La literatura nacional del sector es más receptiva que la literatura internacional en las ciencias humanas. La interpretación más común, es que la evaluación es uno de los instrumentos de gobierno o de gestión. La mayor crítica es que los trabajadores sólo se preocupan por lo que establecen los indicadores, renuncian a una interpretación más amplia de la actividad en sí. Hay un entendimiento común de que las prácticas de evaluación pretenden producir cambios subjetivos, pero producen efectos subjetivos que no están previstos. En cuanto al diseño de estos efectos de subjetivación, hay un amplio espectro de puntos de vista, que van desde la promoción hasta las subjetivaciones comprometidas con el cambio permanente, al constreñimiento de la subjetividad y a la producción de los "yos calculables." Siguiendo el pensamiento de Foucault, podemos reconocer tanto los efectos de sometimiento, como los efectos de protagonismo en el uso de la evaluación. El segundo caso puede conducir a la creación de espacios estratégicos en las relaciones de poder.

Palabras-clave: Modernidad; ciudad; modos de subjetivación; subculturas juveniles.

Introduction

We live in a culture of evaluation, in which we are all evaluated and evaluators; evaluated in our professional activities and evaluators when accessing services or buying goods. The fact that there is so much dissemination of this practice does not guarantee its assimilation without conflict. On the contrary, we generally feel uncomfortable. A book written by two French psychoanalysts has as its title the rhetorical question "Do you really want to be evaluated?" (Miller & Milner, 2006). It is not in vain that the literature on the subject brings much controversy.

Michael Power (1997), a professor of Accounting at the London School of Economics, started a research line, of great repercussion, on the "audit firm" and became a key critic of these practices. Audit is defined by the author as the use of financial auditing techniques and principles, aiming at evaluating different practices in government policies, programs and projects, by quantifying the indicators. The distinction between audit and evaluation is not always clear in the literature. Accompanying Melo and Vaistman (2008), we can say that while the audit has a greater concern in verifying the adequacy of programs or policies to the standards and procedures provided, that is, it has a normative emphasis, the evaluation has a more descriptive-analytical character, accompanying the different phases of formulation, implementation and impacts of a program or policy. Dahler-Larsen (2012) considers that it is analytically beneficial to assume under the general heading of evaluation, the practices of audit, accreditation and certification, even recognizing differences in their uses. For the same reason, he prefers to speak of "evaluation society".

The tendency of the international literature in human and social sciences is to maintain a skeptical and critical position regarding the possible gains obtained by the implementation of auditing or evaluation practices in the public sector. A more moderate segment of literature stresses its implementation problems (Triantafillou, 2012; Mennicken, A. & Miller, 2012), while another, more radical, demolishes any value claims of evaluative processes, which are considered totally improper, accusing them of being linked to neoliberalism, sustaining productivist goals and strategies of domination, without actually delivering the improvement they promise (Power, 1997; Miller & Milner, 2006; Martuccelli, 2015). This critical trend led Dujarier (2015, p. 167), who belongs to the group of moderate critics, to point out a paradox: "The devices of evaluation are criticized but proliferate".

In Brazil, the use of the term "evaluation culture" has prevailed in the context of the public sector, and the acceptance of the theme in the health sector has been more welcoming, between managers and workers (Pinto, 2014; Furtado & Vieira-da-Silva, 2014; Carvalho & Shimuzu, 2017). Pacheco (2010, p. 2006) suggests that the health sector in Brazil is more open to dealing with evaluation, than the resistant education sector, according to the SUS remuneration logic, by procedures, that would have paved the "way for the measurement of services provided".

The theme of evaluation in public health gained strength in Brazil during the 1990s (Carvalho & Shimuzu, 2017), but only in the following decade did it achieve institutional consistency, with the creation of the Coordination of Monitoring and Evaluation of Primary Care, in the Department of Primary Care in 2000 (Brazil, 2005).

The beginning of the debate in Brazil occurred through induction by an international body. In 1996, the SUS Reinforcement and Reorganization program (Reforsus) received USD 650 million onlendings

from the World Bank and required the use of evaluation “both for the release of funds and for the appraisal of the impact of the projects” (Furtado & Vieira-da-Silva, 2014, p.2647).

In 2003, the Ministry of Health developed actions to implement the Monitoring and Evaluation of Basic Care, “with the objective of institutionalizing the evaluation” by SUS, thus transforming it into a national policy (Felisberto, Freeze, Bezerra, Alves, Samico, 2010, p. 1080). The institutionalization of evaluation is the main guideline of this effort, understood as the integration of evaluation into an organizational system, associating it with management actions and work processes, permanently. The objective is to foster a culture of evaluation that involves all subjects, from local workers to federal managers, so as to favor all of them “introjecting the evaluating eye” in an organic way, at the different levels of health work (Brazil, 2005, p. 8).

Since the 1990s, the theme of subjectivity has been incisively introduced, in different ways, into the Collective Health agenda, becoming present both in the literature of the area and in government documents (Ferreira Neto; Kind, Pereira; Resende and Fernandes, 2011). The theme of subjectivity appears in two ways in documents of the Ministry of Health. The first, mentioned in the previous paragraph, of Ferenczian psychoanalytic influence, speaks of the “introjection of the evaluating eye” as a component of the subjectivation of the subjects involved in health production. The second, with a poststructuralist influence, associates health production with the production of subjectivity, aiming at the “constitution of autonomous subjects, protagonists and involved in the process of producing their own health”, as we find, for instance, in the text of the National Humanization Policy (Brazil, 2004).

Foucault’s work, influential in Collective Health, has clear connections with this theme, especially in his discussion on governmentality and security societies (Foucault, 2008). In addressing health practices in Europe especially in the 18th century, Foucault addresses the correlation between legal, disciplinary and security technologies, and the latter, although having roots in the past, is the one “of which began to appear fairly early on” (2007, p. 6). It is based on statistics, which, according to Foucault, means etymologically, “the knowledge of the state” (p. 274). He affirms that there is an essential relationship between state governmentality and statistical science, which emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries, consolidating itself in the 20th century as the scientific-technological basis of security societies.

At the same time Foucault anticipates his turn towards the studies of subjectivity, which will consolidate in the 1980s, as the new and final axis of his work. Even in a few remarks, during the course of 1978, in which Foucault introduces the subject of government, he anticipates two meanings for subjectivation in his discussion on pastoral power as a precursor to governmentality. The first sense is the constitution “of a subject “who is subjectified (subjectivé) through the compulsory extraction of truth” (2007, p. 185). The second, derived from the first, points out how this action of power enables an appeal for resistance, a quest for “how to become subject without being subjected?” (p. 231). That is, Foucault presents subjectivation concomitantly as subjection and as resistance, in its relationship with government practices (Ferreira Neto, 2015). There is a relatively extensive literature, inspired by his contributions, which discusses evaluation as technology of government and of subjectivation,

These two senses are present in the possible forms of evaluation described in the documents of the Ministry of Health and in the literature: on the one hand, the promotion of alignment, and on the other, the promotion of autonomy and democratic institutionality (Brazil, 2005).

The objective of this article is to discuss the relationship between evaluation culture and subjectivation processes in the field of health. Initially, we worked on historical and conceptual aspects of the ascension of the culture of evaluation in contemporary societies, particularly in the health sector; secondly, we have reviewed the arguments that circumscribe the controversies that the themes of evaluation and subjectivity have raised in public health and beyond, in dialogue with Michel Foucault’s contributions on security societies.

Method

It is a theoretical study on the theme of evaluation and subjectivity in health, exploring its controversial character, in dialogue with Foucauldian concepts. There was also a concern to learn historically the process of establishing the current “evaluation societies”. We search the CAPES Portal with the descriptors *evaluation*, *evaluation culture*, *accounting*, *health evaluation*, *audit society or culture*, isolated

and combined. In the quest for Foucaultian-based production, we added *governmentality*, *biopolitics*, *subjectivity*, Foucault. The choice of the material used followed the criterion of pertinence in the approach of the theme studied. We identified the central authors in the international and national literature, as well as academics who worked in the MH at the time of the construction of the instruments of evaluation, searching their publications in journals and in books. The criterion was to consider the impact that they had on the critical debate and the construction of the instruments of evaluation constructed in the MH. For 8 months our research group has gathered to read and discuss texts, selected from the relevance they bore. In the investigation, we divided the material into three different categories, associated with the outline of the discussion that we researched, and we did an analysis of the main arguments that supported the different positions present in each one, evidencing their similarities and their differences.

Historical and conceptual aspects

The first controversy surrounding the evaluation stems from differences in its historical genesis. Much of the literature associates evaluation with a set of changes in the public administration that emerged in the 1980s and became known as New Public Management (NPM). These changes would have been led in the United Kingdom by the neoliberal policy of Margaret Thatcher (Power, 1997), initially extending to the Anglo-Saxon countries, and later by several others, including Latin America. The great justification of the evaluation practices would be based on the need for modernization of public administration and its commitment to accountability, to society, initially associated with the notion of efficiency in public spending, "value for money" (Power, 1997). This view is widespread in the international literature and in Brazil, and links NPM and its evaluative processes to Anglo-Saxon neoliberalism.

This interpretation, however, has been criticized by researchers of different political tendencies, based on empirical and comparative studies. Although seductive, the narrative that associates NPM and neoliberalism is not confirmed by the international experience. Hood (1995), a researcher who coined the term *New Public Management*, and critic of that proposal, acknowledges that this view has difficulty sustaining itself. He cites several countries, which implemented NPM at the same time, such as Sweden, Spain and France (during the socialist government of Mitterrand), which cannot be classified as neoliberal. Triantafyllou (2012), in his study of Foucauldian inspiration, moves in the same direction, when analyzing the similarities in the forms of government and management of countries with different political traditions, namely, Great Britain, France and Denmark. In another ideological spectrum, Pacheco (2010), advocate of NPM, presents similar arguments, pointing out that empirical studies have gradually overthrown the thesis of a specific (neoliberal) political orientation in the leadership of these changes, and that party-political alternation in the countries that have implemented it, has not changed the direction of reforms.

Even eliminating a supposed essential link between evaluation and neoliberalism; it is important to recognize that there is a clear link between evaluation culture and the new modes of public management that have driven, since the 1980s, the implementation of evaluative practices. As we discussed earlier, different countries of more liberal or more social-democratic tradition, suffered the impact of the crisis in 1973, which required a redefinition of the role of the bureaucratic state and its strategies. These countries have responded to this crisis in different ways, but having several aspects in common. More recent comparative studies on State management reforms have pointed out that we cannot speak of just one NPM model. The frequently cited study by Pollit and Bouckaert (2011) states that there is no single model of public management, highlighting three different reform models: NPM, New Public Governance and the Neo-Weberian State. Even so, they consider that there are several key concepts shared by the different models, such as governance, networking, partnerships, transparency, trust, among others.

We agree that the intensification of reforms in public management in the 1980s were responsible for the dissemination of evaluative practices in different countries, but we believe that another historical narrative may highlight other elements of this debate

This narrative is presented by Dubois, Champagne and Bilodeau (2011), who consider that the modern history of evaluation begins in the 18th and early 19th centuries, resulting from industrialization and consequent urbanization in Britain and Western Europe. This process encouraged governments to

“elaborate and institutionalize a set of policies of social character” (p. 20). Its apex occurred in Bismarckian Germany in 1883, when welfare policies were adopted, followed by evaluations, measuring possible improvements in the population’s living conditions (Dubois, et al. 2011). That is, there is a historical relationship between evaluation practices and public policies in the context of the emergence of the Welfare States.

This historical narrative is in line with the studies of Foucault, developed in the course on *Security, Territory, population* (2007). The philosopher describes the use of statistics, since the 18th century, as a mechanism for governing populations, from a logic that is no longer exclusively legal or disciplinary, but a logic of security. Security logic works with probabilities. Good government planning is not the control of perfection through statistical studies, but “taking into account what can happen”, anticipating events. A management of open series is worked on, which “can only be controlled by an estimate of probabilities” (p. 27).

We can infer a connection between the security technologies that had their genesis in the 18th century and the contemporary formation of an evaluation society, which uses statistical measurement, as a technology that underlies the social pact of security.

Therefore, in relation to the historical genesis, we have two important anchorages. From the perspective of the contemporary use of evaluation practices, the overall reaction to state reforms in the 1980s was the triggering event of its popularization in the public sector. In this case, some of its strategies were sought in the private sector, which motivated its adjectivation as “public management”, replacing the more traditional name of “public administration”. The evaluation was one of the mechanisms of these new management proposals. On the other hand, going back to the 18th century, we locate a genesis of evaluation directly associated with the construction of state governmentality, the formation of European states. Statistics emerged as “State science”, being a necessary instrument for the sovereign to know the reality of his territory. It is worth noting that in other studies Foucault paid particular attention to the statistical measurement in the field of health, pointing out that the birth, morbidity, mortality and longevity processes were the first objects of knowledge and power in the 18th century.

It is important to emphasize that the possible historical origin of evaluation, if it was imported from the private sector to the public in its contemporary phase, or if it was inherent in the very formation of the state apparatus, is not enough element for a value judgment on evaluation practices. Even so, knowing different aspects of its genesis helps us to better understand what is at stake in health evaluation.

In the context of definitions, we find a new ground of controversies. According to Vieira-da-Silva (2014, p. 16), evaluation is “a judgment that is made about a sanitary intervention (policy, program or practice), aimed at solving problems on health, aiming to gauge the merit, effort or value of the said intervention or its product, for its improvement or modification”. He also notes that evaluation is one of the components of the management process. It is, therefore, a value judgment on practices, aiming at its improvement, which composes the process of health management. These three ingredients are present in various definitions.

The most critical international literature usually accentuates the political dimension of evaluation. Among the researchers inspired by Foucault, there is a tendency to view evaluation as a “rule by numbers”, a rule calculated from life, inserting the investigations in the field of Governmentality Studies (Mennicken & Miller, 2012). Triantafillou (2012) takes into account evaluation in the context of the “new forms of governance”, which also use incentive systems, management contracts and protocols, together as performance improvement strategies.

The emphasis on the political dimension is not absent among authors who advocate evaluation. There is a recognition that the definition of values, portrayed by indicators, has a clear political dimension.

We do not find in the definitions a direct reference to subjectivity, but, as we will see later, the connection between evaluative culture and subjective effects often appears in other government documents and in the literature that discusses the subject.

Controversies in the literature

In this section, we will explore the main opposing and favorable arguments for evaluation practices, discussing their concepts and the conceptions of subjectivity involved in the debate. We organized the exposition dividing literature into three segments: the most critical literature; the literature based on Foucault's contributions; and the national literature of the health sector.

The first segment, the critical literature, in general seeks to counter the justifications that underpin evaluation or auditing culture in the public sector. Power (2000) lists three causes or pressures, which he considers "hypothetical", which triggered the explosion of auditing in the United Kingdom: the rise of New Public Management; the growing demand for accountability and transparency in the use of public resources; changes in the style of regulation aiming at ensuring quality practices. In the course of his article, Power mistrusts the effectiveness of audits as an adequate response to these pressures. In his first argument he affirms that auditing is not a neutral verification process, but "actively shapes the design and interpretation of auditable performance" (2000, p. 114). What is ultimately sought is the managerial control of public organizations and their workers. In other words, "the internal control system was becoming the primary auditable object" (p. 117). A second argument is its inefficiency. In the field of health and education, many practices valued at the local level are not represented in official evaluation systems. Thus, the objective of ensuring best practices ends up being undermined by the instrument itself, which does not capture local differences and may discourage them. Both arguments reappear, with some variations, in much of the literature. As for subjectivity effects, what underlies the argument is that, the audit models a subjectivity, conformed to a way of acting at work, that meets the chosen indicators, but discourages the autonomy of the local agents.

The text by Martucceli (2015) details eight principles that condense the philosophy of evaluation and counter them one by one. According to him, the synthesis of these principles would be: "without evaluation there is, henceforth, neither efficiency nor progress" (Martucceli, 2015, p. 38). Here we will return to some of his strongest arguments. Assuming that "everything is susceptible to be measured" (p. 38), he challenges the statement by noting that not all practices are equally measurable. He considers that the work diffracts in a series of meetings, phone calls, gatherings, whose content and effectiveness is of difficult apprehension. He concludes by stating: "The government of men will never be a government of things" (Martucceli, 2015, p. 40).

His second challenge turns against the supposed democratization of the exercise of power that the evaluation would favor. On the contrary, he says that in many areas, subordinates have no ability to evaluate their superiors – subordinates are who are accountable. Another issue discussed is the dubious capacity of the evaluation to favor effectiveness, by making best practices emerge by comparison. In contrast, Martucceli (2015) suggests that evaluation, when choosing certain indicators, turns them into absolute parameters, confusing the end with the means. The result is that the activity can be organized, with a view to evaluation.

Another criticism worth mentioning is the capacity of the evaluation to legitimize public institutions by promoting transparency. Martucceli (2015) recognizes that the evaluation is sustained as a result of the crisis of legitimacy of public institutions. However, by instituting evaluations of the quality of public services, the State commodifies citizenship, transforming citizens into consumers.

Martucceli (2015) considers that evaluation has a complex role in contemporary life, and therefore cannot be understood as a simple management technique, but as the establishment of a "philosophy of government" (2015, p. 48). According to the author, we would be facing an international political project. For this reason, he rejects the traditional definitions of evaluation, starting from the idea of value judgment based on a cognitive procedure. He considers that it is an action of power, travestied as technical procedure.

With respect to the profile of subjectivity produced by the evaluation practices, Martucceli (2015) insists on the most emphasized aspect in the literature: what is at stake is a government of the man, objectified, by a government based on numbers. However, he also highlights a second dimension involved. Salaried employees become disappointed with the promise of return, which is not received, feeding "a deep sense of distrust towards organizations" (Martucceli, 2015, p. 56). The search for the

involvement of workers in the evaluation practices may end up being reversed in distrust, by the workers, towards the evaluative practices.

Another researcher, Dujarier (2015), with a more moderate profile, attributes to the administrator Peter Drucker the creation of the main strategy of contemporary evaluative practices, the “management by objectives”. This mode of management was initially adopted by private companies and, later, by public companies. Dujarier considers that current practices, in fact, do not evaluate, only measure. In addition, he reaffirms a risk often pointed out in the literature: that of “transforming means into ends” (Dujarier, 2015, p. 165), generating counterproductive situations. This, results in a multiplication of reports, meetings and indicators, generating more work, at times, interpreted by those involved as meaningless. In short, evaluation devices do not deliver what they promise.

In relation to the effects of subjectivation, Dujarier understands that the management by comparison of the results of the evaluation, can instill fear of punishment. As a reaction to this, workers, always the object focused on evaluations, tend, over time, to find strategies to circumvent the process, breaking with adherence to the rules of the game, making “voluntary servitude” to last little. Thus, she indicates that there are two vectors in the ongoing processes of subjectivation. The first would be a servile subjectivation, modeled by fear. The second would be the emergence of strategic and autonomous postures, which can undo the bonds of subjugation.

The second segment, the literature that discusses the evaluation practices, based on the contributions of Michel Foucault, is quite extensive and has more convergent interpretive biases. One common point in this literature is to insert evaluation practices within a broader set of governance technologies. Triantafillou (2012), in his book on research on new forms of government implemented in Britain, Denmark and France, states that in the last decades there has been a range of governance technologies, involving internal or external management contracts and various forms of evaluation. In the evaluations, there are the production of new visibilities and regulatory structures, which allow making comparisons stimulating the constant organizational change and the implementation of changes, in the practices that are measured. Thus, evaluation is not limited to measuring, but aims to transform.

The article by Mennicken and Miller (2012) introduces a thematic issue of the journal *Foucault Studies*, dedicated to the theme Foucault and *accounting*, presenting a general review of this literature. There is much convergence in this theoretical-methodological perspective, within the understanding that evaluation is a mode of government and produces effects of subjectivation.

Through their ability to produce certain forms of visibility and transparency, accounting numbers both create and con-strain subjectivity. [...] By linking decisions to the supposedly impersonal logic of quantification rather than to subjective judgement, accounting numbers configure persons, domains, and actions as objective and comparable. This, in turn, renders them governable (Mennicken & Miller, 2012, p. 7).

The set of articles published in this thematic issue often discusses shared notions such as “governing by numbers” and the making of “calculating selves” (Mennicken & Miller, 2012, p. 8). The link between evaluative practices and subjectivation effects is directly explored in Foucault’s approach to governmentality. However, in most articles, including those that bring field researches (Lambert, 2012), the focus is on a production of subjectivity subjected to the parameters of government by numbers, by the neoliberal management logic that would produce a “controlled autonomy” or a “flexible constraint” (Lambert, 2012, p. 80).

Thus, the counter-face of governmentality thought by Foucault (2008, p. 310), on “how to become subject without being subjected?”, is not explored, which reveals some inconsistency in these studies. This contrasts with some non-Foucaudian critical studies previously addressed (Martucceli, 2015; Dujarier, 2015), which describe the resistance of the governed through the refusal to join the evaluation, or through a strategic use of evaluation tools.

Finally, in the health literature in Brazil, the concepts of evaluative culture and the involvement of subjects appear frequently, both in other government documents, and in the literature that discusses the subject (Brazil, 2005). The guideline to foster an institutionalization of evaluation and an “evaluation culture” was triggered by the influential article by Hartz (1999), in a debate promoted by the journal

Cadernos de Saúde Pública. The national literature has resonances with the discussion of the international literature on evaluation culture, but adopts a more favorable tone, accentuating the potential gains of its implementation, within the institutional democracy horizon advocated by SUS.

We found two essential functions made possible by the evaluation: to support the decision-making process in the health system (management) and provide training to the people involved (Brazil, 2005). It is an instrument to support the management and aims to “foster interested, desiring and committed subjectivities to permanent change” (Pinto, 2014, p. 208). The direction of this desired change is the effectiveness of integral health care.

The dissertation of Hêider Pinto (2014), at the time director of the Primary Care Department of MS, on the Program for Improving Access and Quality in Primary Care (PMAQ-AB), emphasizes the latter aspect, stating the government’s position to implement a management model, “which increasingly values evaluation and uses it for the planning, qualification and financing of its actions” (p. 204).

A peculiarity of the health literature in Brazil is the emphasis given to evaluation as an instrument to favor institutional democracy in the SUS. For this reason, in Brazil many advocate more participatory evaluation processes, in tune with a democratic perspective, and should therefore have a participative character ((Bosi & Mercado-Martínez, 2011; Pinto 2014). Even the foreign researcher, who maintains close dialogue with the subject of evaluation in the SUS, Constandiopoulos (2006), warns against the risk of hypertrophy of the normative-technocratic dimension as an effect of the evaluation procedures. There is a general defense that the evaluation culture must seek democratic processes and generate “institutional and professional improvement” (Felisberto, 2006, p. 554). However, Bosi and Mercado-Martínez (2011) point to the hegemony of normative models in Latin America, which generate hybridisms, which combine the democratic vocabulary and a foundation into methodologies that prioritize values such as “efficiency, effectiveness, among others” (p. 51).

Currently, we find in the literature an increase in the empirical studies on the evaluative practices underway in Brazil, whether in studies on PMAQ (Feitosa, Paulino, Lima Júnior, Oliveira, Freitas & Silva, 2016), or in evaluative researches with own methodological strategies (Furtado & Vieira-Da-Silva, 2014; Carvalho & Shimizu, 2017). As the focus of this article is the arguments surrounding the controversy aroused by the evaluation, we have not done here the analysis of this material. In general, these studies bring an understanding that the evaluation culture is not yet consolidated in the country and that it is important to ensure the continuity of its actions.

The idea of subjectivity present in the discussion in Brazil is focused on a subject who learns, improves his professional performance and collaborates with the advances of SUS. It has affinities with the axes of the discussion about subjectivity in Collective Health, the political construction of subjects committed to sanitary reform, intersubjectivity in care and management and the promotion of autonomy (Ferreira Neto, et al., 2011). That is, it differs from the emphasis on the “government of men” or the “calculable selves”, discussed in the international literature. However, the defense of the democratic participation is made by literature, even in the face of the risks of the hypertrophy of its normative and standardizing character. The balance tips towards the defense of autonomous subjectivities, even though there is a recognition that they are bordered to subjected and bureaucratized subjectivations.

Approximations and differences between the segments of the literature

The critical international debate on evaluation, held by researches in the humanities and social sciences, has little impact on the discussion of health evaluation in Brazil. Two aspects may explain this difference. The first one stems from the fact that most of this critical literature comes from countries that have a consolidated evaluation culture, while our evaluation culture is still in the process of consolidating. Thus, the efforts go in the direction of its strengthening and not of its criticism. The second aspect is the difference of the formative culture in the field of the human sciences, origin of this literature studied here, possess a tradition more markedly critical than that of the health field. Since in the field of Education in Brazil, evaluative practices from elementary to postgraduate education are criticized more strongly than in the field of health. On the other hand, the critical literature on health evaluation also does not dialogue with the literature that welcomes it more positively.

The most present interpretation in the three segments of the literature studied is that the evaluation is one of the instruments of government or management. That is, this is not an isolated action intended exclusively for evaluation, but there is a close link with the management of policies, programs and services. Even so, there are relevant nuances of value in this interpretation. While some texts give a technical character to its use in management, valuing its contribution, others emphasize the political dimension of evaluative practices, denouncing its character of domination. Several studies are done on the perspective of the previous position of the researchers, if they are favorable or contrary to the evaluation and, in this sense, present a little problematizing posture on the theme.

The critical argument to the most recurrent evaluation is the risk of exchanging the ends by means, which would lead workers to worry only about what is placed by the indicators, abdicating a broader interpretation of the activity itself. In addition, the key subject of the evaluation is the worker, not the manager and the user, which reinforces the interpretation that it is about the government of public servants. In the Brazilian context, this would weaken the institutional democracy of the SUS, since it does not bring together all the actors involved in health production. We know that the collaboration between the various institutional actors has implications on the results of health production and therefore, the evaluation restricted to workers has limitations.

Returning to the argument of the literature that work cannot be quantified, we bring the contribution of Schwartz (2015) that there are two types of values at work, quantifiable values and dimensionless values. Quantifiable values can be measured by their results, but dimensionless values cannot be apprehended in an objective definition that allows a comparison. Thus, on the one hand, the efforts to evaluate, using quantitative indicators is a value that can contribute to the improvement of work processes and to decision making by management, as advocated by the MS. On the other hand, it is a mistake to assume that this measure contemplates all the complexity of labor activity. It is only a comparable measure of quantifiable values, but it lacks the apprehension of the dimensionless values present in the health labor activity. Without such consideration, especially by managers, we run the risk of undermining autonomy and innovation at the local level.

The identification of the effects of subjectivation resulting from the evaluation culture varies according to the authors' posture, if more favorable or more contrary to the evaluation. The relation between evaluation and subjectivity is more strongly analyzed in the Foucauldian-based literature, but it has a significant presence in the national literature, and can be inferred from the international critical literature. There is a common understanding that evaluative practices aim to produce subjective changes, in addition to producing unforeseen subjective effects.

As for the design of these effects of subjectivation, there is a broad spectrum of points of view, ranging from the promotion of subjectivities committed to the permanent change, to the constraint of subjectivity and the production of "calculable selves". We understand that this spectrum of effects identified in the literature is not exclusive, but can occur together in a same situation.

Final considerations

As we have seen, there is a segmentation in the literature, especially between the national in the field of health and the international one of more critical bias. By historically circumscribing the conditions for the emergence of evaluation societies and analyzing part of the national and international debate, this article can contribute to qualify a critical and constructive discussion on the theme, since the health sector has initiated, since 2000, the implementation of new forms of government, anchored in evaluation practices. We believe that the main contribution of this study is to identify the main arguments about this controversial issue, and to analyze the consistency and fragility of the different perspectives, as well as to make comparisons between them. Its limitation is fact of being a theoretical study, demanding a field research as a necessary complement to the debate, which is being carried out at the moment by our team.

Power relations are an inherent dimension of governance and evaluation practices. Following the thought of Foucault, we can recognize both subjection effects and the effects of protagonism in the use of evaluation, either for the self-managed improvement of the work processes or in the creation of

strategic spaces in the relations of power. Field research, currently underway, may bring more subsidies in understanding “how”, in what conditions, and to what extent these autonomy processes occur. How, through evaluative processes, can more autonomous subjectivations, engaging in changes and innovations be strengthened?

We consider that it is important for researchers of the human sciences to observe not only the existing practices of domination, which have been object of several studies, but also to pay attention to the strategic games, or the practices of freedom present in the evaluative processes. From the analytical point of view, a non-binary perspective may allow an investigation that does not flatten unilaterally the complexity that this theme bears.

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