

Foreword

Dossier on Childhood and Ethnic-Racial Relations

The purpose of the Dossier on **Childhood and Ethnic-racial Relations** is to discuss the intersection between childhood and ethnic-racial relations. The concept of childhood is complex, and is both defined and disputed by various Human Sciences theoretical perspectives. Sometimes there are different approaches even within the same view. If we take, for example, the sociology of childhood, childhood is conceptually formulated in different ways: from some perspectives it is a social structure; from others, a unique event, or a device, or a discursive order, etc. That is, the concept of childhood aggregates a series of knowledge whose effort moves towards understanding the various children and the several ways of living as a child, to socialize them and to be socialized by them as well.

We can also mention the poets, who may speak of childhood in a melancholic/sad/nostalgic way, or sometimes as a time full of happiness/lucidity/freedom/purity. Either way, childhood is gone; that period will never come back for adults. In their books, Mia Couto and João Cabral de Melo Neto, for example, describe scenes of children being buried, as a metaphor for a society without children or one who kills its childhood. There are authors who say that childhood no longer helps understand the several kinds of children: soldiers, workers, drugged children, children who kill. They say that childhood is totally insufficient as an analytical tool for understanding these children.

This Dossier, which was awarded the first prize in Contest n. 001/2014-FUNAPE/UFG/MEC/SECADI, consecrates a theme

that has long been neglected in social research and in public research funding: black children and childhood.

In this Dossier, when we chose to use “childhood” in the singular in the title, we did not intend to give the word a universal character. On the contrary. By writing “childhood and ethnic-racial relations”, we intend to give back to the concept of childhood the plural meaning it entails. That means there is no way to think and configure childhood without the ethnic-racial relations that build it. When we use the word “childhood”, we share the view expressed by Italian philosopher and semiologist Paolo Virno (2012, p. 34): “It is not possible to conceive a form of critical thinking that is not also, in its every fold, a meditation on childhood”¹. He also states:

From Rousseau to the antiauthoritarian communes in 1968, the attention of reformers and revolutionaries to the newborn human being has resulted in pedagogy, that is, in the attempt to make the infant’s training conform to the ideal of a more just society. Thus, the authentic issue has been misperceived: to draw criteria and concepts from the childhood experience that are able to shed an ulterior light on the social and production relations, but also inform their criticism. Reversing the pedagogical perspective, we ought to expect instructions from childhood. (Idem, *ibid.*)²

Socialization, education, history, sociology, geography, psychic constitution, the child’s representation, the child’s culture,

1 Translated from the paper in Portuguese: “Não é concebível um pensamento crítico que não seja também, em quaisquer de suas facetas, uma meditação sobre a infância”.

2 Translated from the paper in Portuguese: “De Rousseau às comunas antiautoritárias de 1968, a atenção dos reformadores e revolucionários para com o ser humano principiante resultou em pedagogia. Isto é, na tentativa de colocar a formação da criança de acordo com o ideal de uma sociedade mais justa. Deste modo, menosprezou-se a autêntica questão: extrair da própria experiência infantil critérios e conceitos capazes de iluminar ulteriormente as relações sociais e de produção, mas também esboçar a crítica. Invertendo a perspectiva pedagógica, é da infância que é necessário esperar instruções”.

discrimination, racism, the identity construction of children (and) black children in Brazil and in some countries of the world are some of the themes that the Dossier addresses.

The Dossier includes several researchers from every region in Brazil, from Brazilian and foreign universities, in order to join forces to produce a society in which the difference is, as stated in Barbosa and Richter's article, citing Mia Couto (2011), the "magic of being us, being others", a conception that reaffirms the African saying "I am *because* we are". In other words: "I am everybody else" (COUTO, 2011).

The Dossier is a collective production that dares to eliminate rooted concepts in the educational area. It confirms our ethic responsibility towards school, children and childhood, every moment and every instant. As Antonio Negri (2011) says, everyone is responsible for their singularity, their present and their life intensity, their childhood (we might add), youth and old age.

In the Dossier, Silvério formulates a hypothesis according to which our nation is changing from a place whose diversity, which used to be in the center of the Brazilian identity, "has been read as the absence of deeply conflicting relations between races during and after slavery, mainly in writings based on Freyre"³, to a society that seeks to recognize distinct ethnic and racial identities that have been erased in the Brazilian social formation. It is also by/with/from childhood that we should begin to build the difference between/in ethnic-racial relations, as a central scenario in the national reconfiguration.

The Dossier comes with a Letter to the Reader, written by childhood researcher Ana Lucia Goulart de Faria, invited by the journal's editors. The 14 articles are gathered under the wide

3 Translated from the paper in Portuguese: "tem sido lido como ausência de relações profundamente conflituosas entre as raças durante e após a escravidão, principalmente, na leitura freyriana".

spectrum of such themes as children, childhoods and ethnic-racial relations. There is an unpublished article by researcher Véronique Francis, on the representation of black children in French children's and young people's books. There are four essays, a debate, an experience account and a reproduction of part of an interview with Professor Joice King on schools for children and young people in the USA and the black studies.

For eight years, REVEDUC has been making an effort to be included as a journal of choice in the scenario of qualified scientific journals in education. We are grateful for the recognition obtained by the contest sponsored by FUNAPE in an agreement with the Department of Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion (Secadi) of the Ministry of Education (MEC), Federal University of Goiás (UFG) and Research Support Foundation (FUNAPE), in partnership with the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Education (ANPEd).

Enjoy your reading!

Anete Abramowicz
Editor

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