

Editorial

Introduction to Volume 9 Number 2 of July-December 2011, monographic issue on research studies on childhood and rearing practices in Latin America.

The collection of unpublished academic texts that this new edition of the Latin American Review on Social Sciences Childhood and Youth, are offering becomes an opportunity to exercise ourselves in our expression possibilities. The collection is offered jointly with the research line on public policies on childhood and youth programs, the research line on child rearing, family and child development of the Doctoral Program on Social Sciences Childhood and Youth, and the Work Group on Childhood: Ciranda latinoamericana (Latin American Ciranda).

As a matter of fact, a journal, be it printed or digital, is always an expression channel and, as such, it expands and amplifies the voices that struggle and articulate in the social life polyphony. We as Latin Americans are in big need of such spaces in order to visualize the thought produced in our continent. It is a fundamental condition for the construction of an alternative thought to the “universalistic view” promoted by modern science, which is in conflict with a new comprehension determined by diversity and complexity. The purpose is not to defend the loss of already-built references or of classical texts, but to appreciate a new place of expression. And the place of expression of the authors here stated is an important sign that leads us to understand the significant place that we have in the frame of the international debate on social and human sciences.

Another aspect we consider crucial is: the reduction of reflection dedicated to look at, problematize, criticize and struggle for the children and youths’ rights. The debate on the children and youths’ social situation all over the world requires our creative contribution. Accordingly, if we are heirs of a “universalist model” which, at the same time, was promoted by modern science, it turns out to be a reality to affirm that the hegemonic scientific work was structured largely by the dominant positivist vision, the theoretical methodological functionalism and by the “scientist’s” determined way to dominate the “other”. Therefore, to define the social presence of children and youth implies to make the link with other social and human sciences peers who want to build a new scientific work with dialogic characteristics. Today more than ever, we are in need of a new scientific work in the field of social and human sciences which will give both youths and children the opportunity to express themselves, to be heard more radically so that humanity turns to them as a condition to think about a future and “about another possible world”.

Theory, identity and struggle

It is difficult to define any Latin-American *identity*. The fact, for example, that Brazil was not colonized by Spaniards and that it does not share the same language with the majority of Latin-American countries is, by itself, a basic fact which would not allow us to make any attempt to define a totality around the concept of identity. Our continent is also a scenario with a great ethnic diversity in terms of different indigenous groups and black that coexist with the different groups of European immigrants who arrived in it in the XIX century, a matter which according to García-Canclini (1998), we are a social ground where a *hybrid culture* is brewing. This translation, of cultural reality by hybridism appears to offer an excellent concept to think about any form of identity for Latin America. If there is any identity, it must be thought in terms of differences, inequalities, discontinuities and intertransculturalities.

On the other hand, the Latin American people share some identity if we think about the *social struggle* processes that determine their socio-cultural trajectories. Those struggles were, in various senses (although very different in their contexts) a result of colonization processes from the XVI century. Struggles also took place in the recent past (especially from the decade of the 60s in the last century) and with attempts to construct socialist democracies that were strongly massacred by the Cold War, though the imposition of military dictatorships supported by the United States, by the use of authoritarianism and violence. In the course of this trajectory, it is worth noting the responses to popular movements and social actions that characterize resistance actions to the multiple social exclusion processes triggered by the neoliberal model in order to manage the economy all over the continent, especially in the mid 80 decade during the in the last century.

One of the great contributions of this Latin American Review on Social Sciences, Childhood and Youth consists on the articulation of an emergent thought which, by itself, is a real sign of the change we are undergoing in our continent.

At the end, the creative intellectual production in Latin America has been a resistance focus which deserves attention as it results from past moments both belonging to the social theory or to cultural or artistic productions.

With this purpose, it may be useful to briefly recover this trajectory so that we can localize more effectively the present moment in our intellectual and academic production.

How to establish possible connections between some of the most recent political events (such as the political experiences from military dictatorships and the repression situations following their implementation) and the production of social theory? Especially the critical theories that were developed in our countries, mainly in Colombia, Argentina, Chile and Brazil? A brief look at the political history in our social scenario may be of interest at this moment because it is always useful to narrate the social struggle in search of democracy.

The *critical theory* under the strong wind of dictatorships

The violent atmosphere that spread through most of Latin American countries at the beginning of the 1960s, and more intensely during the decade of the 70s, silenced a large part of the cultural and academic production that had been flourishing in that period. In Brazil, for example, the political-intellectual arena characterized itself by the effervescence of movements in various fields concerning cultural production which can be easily identified when we recall Paulo Freire's work with the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the progressive tendencies of the Church with *The Liberation Theology*; the sociological reflection with *Dependency Theory*, music with *Tropicália* and *Bossa Nova*, as well as theater with the *Theater of the Oppressed* and the *New Cinema*, etc., etc. Not only in Brazil, but also in various parts of the continent, a true intellectual cannibalism exploited the choruses, rhythms and tones, thus leaving the traces of Latin American creative imagination in the historical registers. The Latin American literature (mainly with Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez) challenges modern reason, the so-called techno-instrumental, with magic realism allegories that subvert the various dominants forms of hegemonic thought.

Nevertheless, history would do its job. In Brazil, the implementation of the authoritarian regime takes place on March 31, 1964, which will extend itself to various Latin American countries in the following years, so that: "in 1976, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and all Central America (except Costa Rica) were under "dictatorial regimes" (Fox, 1997, p. 186), which would result in prosecution, prison and exile of critical scholars with the following attempt to silence their productions.

It is worth noting here that the functionalist perspectives became dominant when researching on social aspects, specifically on the influence of American sociology (Talcott Parsons & Robert Merton). This epistemological orientation remained hegemonic until the end of the 80s, when the democratic aperture became viable.

From the decade of the 80s, an intense re-democratization process spread in the majority of the Latin American territory. Despite all the coercion strategies implemented by military regimes, the academic voices did not silence. Similarly, the voices corresponding to other spheres of cultural production remained in vogue.

In different cities of the American continent, the people went out to the streets to claim for political aperture and for Presidential elections. In Argentina, The Mothers of the May Square claim the return of their sons and daughters that had disappeared. The action of new social movements became stronger and gained visibility, especially the ecologic and feminist movements as well as the movement for ethnic and racial identities. The social critical studies dialogue with this cultural and political fervor, thus redirecting the focus of analysis towards popular movements and towards the resistance mechanisms that local cultures generate through the re-articulation of domination structures. With reference to this period, Lopes (1993) states that at the beginning of the 80s, when the emergence of new theoretical-methodological approaches took place in Latin America, the presence of a strong theoretical-critical movement which tried to make an alternative reflection was evident. It was mainly in the popular cultures frame that a complex social and cultural theory started to develop.

According to Matelart (1995), the 70s decade the characterized by the development of critical studies with emphasis on the de-territorialization processes (with emphasis on the strategies that the macro-subjects, that is, the state-nations, international bodies and multinational corporations); the 80s, on the other hand, emphasize on the territorialization processes. That is, the emphasis falls on the negotiation processes, the resistances and the mediations between the external factors and particular realities. When discussing the production of the critical theory at international level, the authors identify the displacement that takes place in Latin America.

They state:

“The fact that the essentialist conception from the universal and from the international logos has been questioned attracted other authors to the production of new concepts and theories. This is testified by the anthropological studies about the transnational cultures and the identities confronted with the flows of global modernity, that both in Asia and in Latin America, question the complex processes on appropriation and re-appropriation, of resistance and of mimesis. The new concepts express this desire for a better approach of those fine articulations: creolization, hybridizing or alternative modernity [Martin-Barbero, 1987; Ortiz, 1988; García-Canclini, 1990; Appadurai, 1990]. The same desire inspires the research studies on the genealogy of the gender of the local audiovisual industries that promote adhesion to the great public in specific territories” (Mattelart, 1995, p. 143).

In the field of contemporary social theory we witness the emergence of new studies which characterized by ethnographic and qualitative methodology strategies whose main goal is to understand how the social subjects narrate and translate their particular experience contexts. They are also characterized as an intellectual movement, especially a theoretical methodological one which became the most effective in various Latin American countries.

Accordingly, the edition of this journal is always appropriate and constitutes a resistance space where the silenced subjects from their hegemonic issues narrate their social historicity.

This edition

The set of texts presented in this edition is polyphony, in its best sense. They are 29 articles written by authors from different Latin American countries, who describe their particular contexts and, broadly, who engage with methodologies that problematize the instrumental work concerning knowledge production.

The first part of this edition is a compilation of theoretical and meta-theoretical texts which refer to the dialogic referent to criticize the “various research methods and the constraints generated by a reductionist view” and, at the same time, they present some reflections about the care, protection and the orientation in the children’s development.

The second part, dedicated to studies and researches, compiles articles that deal with various topics concerning social and cultural practices related to children and youths, in particular situations and in different places all around the continent. A more centered discussion on the structural dimensions of society involves studies referring to the State's duties, the formulation of new public policies and the strengthening of the school space through the promotion of integral education from the perspective of the struggle for the children and adolescents' rights.

Dimensions concerning everyday life, the already-lived experiences, identities and subjectivities are also considered. Here the main emphasis is on the struggle for "the integral development of children, in its full capacity and with its maximal balance". Nevertheless, the richness of this set of articles lies exactly in the diversity of contexts as the qualitative research studies were carried out in the most different Latin American scenarios. It is as if we consider reality as a prism, as a multifaceted fractal to observe exclusion, poverty, oppression, inequalities, which are so diverse and pluralistic and, at the same time, so "equal" in terms of social sense and meaning, no matter how different the contexts may be. And no matter how different the social senses of exploration of child's workforce, of sexual abuse, of famine, suffering, pollution, the pre-concept and exclusion may be, they are very near among themselves.

Our Latin America is a territory where hybridizing of the archaic and the ultramodern take place. It is a place of huge metropolis and farmers and indigenous populations' corners. Of rich artisans and high technology. How to capture the displacements "promoted by technology by means of subjectivation: learning, concentration, time/space and effort/pleasure"? How to advance in terms of ethical relations in the scientific work?

Apart from all these reflections directed to the questioning of structures and readings of particular experiential contexts, this edition also offers a set of articles that deal with cultural production. From the reflections on educational support for sports, this edition delivers studies on social representations and on the hegemonic codes in the field of photography, on the social uses of the sign languages used to communicate with non-hearing people, on the development of musical education, on the dietary habits as well as on the reflection about the comprehension of the time concept by both boys and girls.

The gathering of these articles, besides being a contribution to our research studies, is also an invitation to devote ourselves to new practices in the field of education in its different contexts. And above all, in practices with demographic and participative character that include children and youths' social participation as a signal of change for the construction of a better education for the future.

In this issue, the author indices and themes of the Third Section are updated until Volume 9 N° 1 of January-June 2011. We can also read, in this Section, the Bulletin N° 29 on the Decade for Sustainability Education, with interesting topics about the environment; then there is some information about the V International Symposium on Youth in Brazil, to be held in Recife, at the Federal University of Pernambuco from September 4-6, 2012. At the same time, we are announcing the IV Latin American and Caribbean Congress on Human Development and Human Capabilities to be held in Lomas de Zamora, Argentina, in May 2012.

In the Fourth Section, we keep on publishing interviews with important personalities of the world. In this case, Valeria Llobet answers a questionnaire, on the topic concerning early childhood. Finally, two essays are included in this Fourth Section which reflects ideological, political and historical viewpoints on significant topics that sensibly affect Latin America and the Caribbean. Firstly, Áurea Verónica Rodríguez and Yurama Cardet Chaveco, from Cuba, make a critical analysis on the question: ¿Is there non-capitalistic neoliberalism?, while Chilean Professor José Alberto de la Fuente Arancibia retakes an important figure of contemporary socialism in "Salvador Allende, for democracy and socialism".

We end our reports for this semester with the presentation of the journal for re-indexation by Publindex, of Colciencias, Colombia, which will let us position it at category A2.

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