

## Children's literature and Racial Relations: study on research with children

### Literatura infantil e Relações Raciais: estudo sobre pesquisas com crianças

### Literatura infantil y relaciones raciales: un estudio sobre la investigación con niños

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**Abstract:** The aim of the present reflection is to analyze the use of children's literature as methodological instrument in research conducted with children, mainly in studies concerning children and racial relationships. A qualitative, bibliographical study was carried out based on BDTD/ibict theses and dissertations' analysis. The adopted framework regards the Sociology of Childhood and Racial Relationships fields. It was possible observing how important it is to conduct studies aimed at reaching children, listening to them and taking into consideration their perspectives and emotions related to the 'ethnic-racial relationships' topic based on the analyzed research, which focused studies carried out with children and children's literature as mediating instrument for performed workshops and interventions.

**Keywords:** Children's Literature. Racial Relations. Research with Children.

**Resumo:** O objetivo desta reflexão é analisar o uso da literatura infantil como instrumento metodológico em pesquisas realizadas com crianças, mais especificamente, estudos envolvendo crianças e relações raciais. Realizou-se uma pesquisa qualitativa, de base bibliográfica, a partir da análise de teses e dissertações da BDTD/ibict. O referencial adotado envolve campos da Sociologia da Infância e das Relações Raciais. A partir das investigações analisadas, as quais produziram pesquisas com crianças, tendo a literatura infantil como instrumento mediador de oficinas e das intervenções realizadas, pudemos perceber o quão importante é a realização de estudos que visam alcançar as crianças, ouvi-las, considerar suas perspectivas e emoções relacionadas à temática das relações raciais.

**Palavras-Chave:** Literatura Infantil. Relações Raciais. Pesquisa com Crianças.

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**Resumen:** El objetivo de esta reflexión es analizar la forma en que la literatura infantil ha sido utilizada como instrumento metodológico en la realización de investigaciones con niños, específicamente, investigaciones que involucran a la infancia y las relaciones raciales. Se realizó una investigación bibliográfica cualitativa a partir del análisis de tesis y disertaciones de la BDTD/ibict. El marco adoptado involucra los campos de la Sociología de la Infancia y las Relaciones Raciales. A partir de las investigaciones analizadas que produjeron investigaciones con niños utilizando la literatura infantil como instrumento mediador para los talleres e intervenciones realizadas, pudimos ver lo importante que es realizar estudios que tengan como objetivo llegar a los niños, escucharlos, considerar sus perspectivas, sus emociones relacionadas con el tema de las relaciones étnico-raciales.

**Palabras clave:** Literatura Infantil. Relaciones Raciales. Investigación con niños.

## Introduction

The aim of the present reflection is to analyze the use of children's literature as methodological instrument to conduct research carried out with children, mainly in studies concerning children and racial relationships.

Thinking about research carried out with children allowed going back to the dossier called: "Sociology of Childhood: research with children" [*Sociologia da Infância: pesquisas com crianças*], which was published in the Journal 'Educação & Sociedade', in 2005. It was presented by the publication's organizers, Ana Cristina Coll Delgado and Fernanda Müller.

The organizers highlighted the relevance of the Sociology of Childhood field to take children as social actors by understanding a horizontal and interactive socialization model adopted by children to socialize with each other and to deal with adults. Accordingly, the authors pointed out that

“(...) If children interact in the adult world because they negotiate, share and create cultures, we need to think about methodologies that really focus their voices, perspectives, experiences and viewpoints (Coll; Müller, 2005, p. 353).

The dossier calls attention and triggers the reasoning about the theoretical-methodological challenge faced by research based on taking children as social actors. Thus, the study by Corsaro (2005) goes from research on children to research with children.

Conducting research with children means taking them out of their former role of passive beings and turn them into research objects. According to Alderson (2005, p. 420), “children are researchers and oftentimes data co-producers”.

The shift in emphasis on methodological issues opened room for the movement aimed at listening to children's voices and to acknowledge their statements as valid. This process helped to “rescue them from silence and exclusion, and from being implicitly represented as passive objects.” (Alderson, 2005, p. 423).

Therefore, according to Campos (2008), having children in research is not new, but a recent trend aimed at “introducing a radical change in adult researcher's approach to children: the aim at giving voice to the children and shaping the research to the possibilities of capturing this voice” (p. 36).

Assumingly, children experience their childhood in different ways, which are permeated by social markers of difference, such as social class, race, gender, age, religion, among others. This scenario encouraged the use of research conducted with children and focused on using children's literature as methodological instrument to understand the meanings children give to both the world and to themselves from an ethnic-racial perspective.

### **Some reasoning about children's literature**

The first books aimed at children were published between late 17th century and early 18th century. According to Zilberman (2003), before this time, there was no concern with childhood. Adults and children occupied the same spaces and attended the same events, without any emotional bonds among them. Soon, by middle Modern Age, these bonds were broken and, according to Ariès (1987), childhood features started to be taken into consideration. The need for specific contents targeting different age groups started to emerge. Thus, concern with children became real, as well as childhood intellectual control development and the manipulation of children's emotions. Thus, literature and schools were entrusted with this function.

According to Zilberman (2003), one of children's literature foundations lies on ordering the experiences children are not able to carry out themselves. Thus,

“If a child — not only due to its social circumstances, but also to existential reasons — finds itself deprived of internal means for experiencing the world, it will need external support to help it. This is the place children's literature fills, in a particular way, unlike pedagogy or school teachings” (Zilberman 2003, p. 45).

The read literature depends on two elements to achieve its understanding of reality: (1) stories that systematically present themselves with reality, based on the linguistic process of communication and on actors' social relationships; (2) language as child/world mediator, so that the literature fulfills the function of knowledge.

Social changes that taking place in society have allowed schools' rise as cultural modality organizers. Thus, the literature gains strength as genre aimed at children and young people. Zilberman (2003) highlights that the goal was to introduce the social values of the time, such as domestic life and marriage; to highlight to parents the need for affection to and solidarity with their children in order to build an intimate family identity. Children are seen as weak individuals who require specific care. Family and school are responsible for them. In the future, they will become healthy, intellectually mature adults.

Childhood should embody ideals of adults who, according to the author, should preserve their good nature by strictly following the pedagogical manuscripts of the time. He also points out his

concern with appropriate spaces for education that must be provided to children who, in their turn, must preserve their natural goodness. Such education should follow principles outlined in the book “Émile”, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. His book aimed at distancing children from society, which, in its turn, is seen as evil. It must be done in order to avoid children from being contaminated by it. This process would allow children's naivety to last longer, and it reinforces the sense of their unproductiveness.

According to Zilberman (2003), the consequences of such a perspective for children include marginalizing the economic production sector because children were seen as useless beings, since they could not work, but only consume, so they were depended on others. In addition, it led to the broader superiority of adults over children, which kept an unquestionable judgment about such superiority. Emphasis was given on the fact that children did not have pragmatic knowledge to turn their skills into labor power. Consequently, this profile “turns ignorance of factors that could make them [children] socially productive and, therefore, emancipated, a condition for the permanence of children’s naturalness and original innocence” (Zilberman, 2003, p. 19).

Therefore, the literature played the role of instrument to help broadening the social standard in force, because these teachings are often based on the adult worldview. According to Zilberman (2003), the literature committed to “filling the gap that arises on occasions when adults are not allowed to interfere, which happens when boys resort to fantasy and leisure” (Zilberman, 2003, p. 23). Thus, its role was to outspread social standards and, at the same time, to be of interest to youngsters, themselves.

Thus, the literature can reproduce the adult world through the actions of a narrator who blocks or censors the actions of its infant characters, or even by transmitting concepts of behavioral patterns that comply with premeditated social values. According to her, the children's literature lives a duplicity of its own. On the one hand, it is seen as dominating the youngsters through the eyes of adults, besides embodying the pedagogical goals of transmitting standards and forming the moral. On the other hand, whenever the literature focuses children’s interests, it becomes a path to reality, because “it makes the ordering of existential experiences easier through the awareness of stories and the broadening of their [children’s] linguistic mastery” (Zilberman, 2003, p. 46).

The children's literature is not determined by a given formula, and it can be organized into verses, prose, novels, short stories, among others. Thus, according to Zilberman (2003), the literature freely addresses the reality of wonder, which is featured by incorporating illustrations to the text in order to allow its own modalities, such as fairy tales and magic tales. This literature is permeated by everything and flexible, besides providing a huge margin for readers’ creativity.

This literary pieces emerge from oral tales that, in their turn, are transmitted by adults to children. They used to give us a moral to educate children through magic and wonder. According to Zilberman (2003), based on Charles Perrault, initially, in the 17th century, the literature (fairy tales) was printed on paper, later on, in the early 19th century, it was adapted by the Grimm brothers.

These stories are mainly based on an action of magical origin that resulted from the presence of an assistant holding extraordinary properties who puts itself at the hero's service: a fairy, a goblin, an enchanted animal. This voluntary collaboration allows the main character to overcome the conflict that triggered the fictional event; and its help is essential due to the always precarious or needy condition of the main figure. (Zilberman, 2003, p. 48)

Thus, characters only solve conflicts through supernatural and magical intervention. According to the author, fantasy becomes the configuration of the dream. This is the meaning of 'marvelous', which embodies the representation of an omnipotent, good adult who solves a major problem of the protagonist. Accordingly, children submit themselves to adults' domination, without questioning. It is a powerless protagonist who, by extension, affects the child. Coelho (2000) adds:

In literature, this ideal valuing of the individual is observed in the features of romantic heroes or characters: all of them, [are] exceptional beings, models of the qualities and virtues set by Society, as ideal standards to be mimicked (Coelho, 2000, p. 20).

According to Zilberman (2003), adult authors who write children's books seek communication with their readers. The writer sympathizes with the reader by adapting linguistic, cognitive and social situations that break the distance between them.

In addition to offering fantasy as fiction, the children's literature efficiently reproduces confrontations between children and adults' realities, as it reaches the very core of the children's universe. This process takes place because the literature allows achieving intimacy with the reader. According to Zilberman (2003), this phenomenon creates the habit of reading due to ones' own interest in it.

The literature spread across different social classes and age groups in the 18th century. This popularity broadened the publishing market, school networks and literacy among different social classes. This process was seen by Zilberman (2003) as time favoring culture industrialization and introducing readers to adults' reality and consumer values.

Zilberman (2003) states that the children's literature faced two main difficulties, namely: (a) the reader's transience, because the children's literature is produced for children in the age group under 12-13 years. Therefore, it needs to follow readers' evolution until it is completely "lost", when readers seek books that are better adapted to their new age group; (b) 'unidirectional' profile, since it is only produced by adults for children, not the other way around.

According to Coelho (2000), currently, values are transformed based on arguments used for children's literature. These arguments comply with the contemporary world, although they are still linked to the dominant ideology. Thus, new topics and languages emerge, and they perceive children as beings under formation who have the potential to freely guide themselves and reach full development.

Therefore, the literature allows children to fill gaps emerging from experiences they have not yet had the opportunity to live by accessing a symbolic language. According to Coelho (2000), the space provided by the book should be guiding, rather than dogmatic. It should allow children to achieve self-knowledge and to access the multiple cultures featuring the society they belong to, as well as other social realities worldwide.

Coelho (2000) introduces the anti-racism perspective by turning his attention to ethnic-racial issues. This perspective is seen in literary pieces from the perspective of transforming social values over the centuries. If, in the past, there was the justification for slavery, given the existence of a race supposedly 'superior' to the other, currently, there is the fight against racial hatred. The goal is to value different ethnic cultures to find and preserve their authenticity. Therefore, characters belonging to different ethnicities are observed in the literature "facing the racism issue, [which is] considered one of the greatest human and social injustices" (Coelho, 2000, p. 27).

From this perspective, Lima (2005) triggers the thinking about the invisibility of black characters playing protagonist roles in adventures addressed in children's universe. According to him, "image acts as instrument of real domination through coding embedded in racist plots" (Lima, 2005, p. 103). Books become important documental sources for analyses applied to the racial relationships topic in Brazil, since they rearticulate a past and present ideology.

Thus, the literature can help children to reorganize and develop new concepts on this topic. Therefore, according to Silva (2005), books are an important source of knowledge, that, in its turn, can be used to generate critical awareness and help fighting racism in our society.

## **The study**

Qualitative-bibliographical research to help better understanding the paths, changes and contributions made by other researchers about the herein addressed topic of interest. Based on Ferreira (2002), this method also leads to academic productions that are not limited to shelves in university libraries, but that inform the scientific community about what has been scientifically produced in a given field of interest.

Therefore, the BDTD/ibict website (Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations of the Brazilian Institute of Information in Science and Technology) was chosen for the research because it meets all needs addressed by Ferreira (2002). It also provides doctoral theses and master's dissertations published at different decades.

Four descriptors were used in the search, namely: 'children's literature', 'children's literature - 5-year-old children' and 'children's literature - ethnic-racial - 5-year-old children'.

Research whose titles and abstracts did not match the present dissertation's object of study was the adopted as exclusion criterion. Thus, the following productions were excluded: (a) research that did not address children as the main subjects of investigation, (b) research that did not use methodological contributions from the Sociology of Childhood, (c) research that was not linked to the Education field and (d) research that did not address the ethnic-racial relationships topic.

After selecting the research and reading their abstracts, the selected ones were subjected to in-depth reading to be better understood. The in-depth reading of the 72 selected publications led to the final number of 16 selected publications.

TABLE I: Selected works

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ORDER	TITLE	AUTHOR	TYPE	YEAR	INSTITUTION	PROGRAM'S FIELD
D-1	A <i>literatura infantil de temática da cultura africana e afro-brasileira, com a palavra as crianças: "eu so peta, tenho cacho, so linda, ô!"</i>	Sara da Silva Pereira	Dissertation	2019	Federal University of Parana	Post-Graduation in Education, Education Sector
T-2	A <i>literatura infantil pelo olhar da criança</i>	Maria Elisa de Araújo Grossi	Thesis	2018	Federal University of Minas Gerais	Post-Graduation Program in Education: knowledge and social inclusion – Education School
D-3	As <i>estórias infantis como contexto de estudo da exclusão/inclusão com crianças</i>	Magne Cibele Medeiros da Costa Londero	Dissertation	2008	University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos – Minter Urisan	Post-Graduation Program in Education

(continues)

D-4	<i>Educação, Infância e Literaturas: ouvindo meninas negras a partir de algumas leituras (E.M.E.I.E.F. Oswaldo Hülse, Criciúma-SC)</i>	Ivana Beatriz dos Santos	Dissertation	2017	University of Extremo Sul Catarinense - UNESC	Post-Graduation Program in Education
D-5	<i>“Hoje posso ser eu, tia?”: leitura fruição pela voz e mãos de crianças da educação infantil</i>	Héllen Cristina Machado	Dissertation	2018	Pontifical Catholic University of Campinas – PUC-Campinas	Post-Graduation Program in Education
T-6	<i>Identificação étnico-racial na voz de crianças em espaços de educação infantil</i>	Cristina Teodoro Trinidad	Thesis	2011	Pontifical Catholic University of Sao Paulo – PUC-SP	Post-Graduation Program in Doctorate in Education – Psychology in Education
D-7	<i>Infância e literatura infantil: o que pensam, dizem e fazem as crianças a partir da leitura de histórias? A produção de culturas infantis no 1º ano do Ensino Fundamental</i>	Débora Perillo Samori	Dissertation	2011	University of São Paulo	Post-Graduation Program of the Education School
D-8	<i>Leitura literária e protagonismo negro na escola: problematizando os conflitos étnico-raciais</i>	Meire Helen Ferreira Silva	Dissertation	2016	Federal University of Goiás	Post-Graduation Program in Teaching for Basic Education of the Center for Teaching and Research Applied to Education
D-9	<i>Literatura Afro-brasileira: práticas antirracistas no Ensino Fundamental</i>	André Luiz Amancio de Sousa	Dissertation	2016	Federal University of Minas Gerais	Post-Graduation Program – Professional Master's Degree in Letters (PROFLETRAS) – Language and Literature School
D-10	<i>Literatura e infância: ouvindo e dando voz as crianças</i>	Simone Leite da Silva Peixoto	Dissertation	2012	Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte	Post-Graduation Program in Education of the Center for Applied Social Sciences



(conclusion)

D-11	<i>Minha cor e a cor do outro: qual a cor dessa mistura? Olhares sobre racialidade a partir da pesquisa com crianças na Educação Infantil</i>	Daniela Lemmert z Bischoff	Dissertation	2013	Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul	Post-Graduation Program in Education
D-12	<i>O processo de aquisição da leitura na escola: as contribuições da literatura infantil</i>	Maria Rosinéia Dias de Santana	Dissertation	2015	Federal University of Paraíba	Post-Graduation Program in Linguistics and Teaching – PGLE – Professional Master's Degree in Linguistics and Teaching – MPLE – Center for Human Sciences, Language and Arts
D-13	<i>Os griôs aportam na escola: por uma abordagem metodológica da literatura infantil negra nos Anos Iniciais do Ensino Fundamental</i>	Wagner Ramos Campos	Dissertation	2016	Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte	Post-Graduation Program in Education of the Education Center
D-14	<i>Quando a questão racial se torna conversa com uma turma de educação infantil</i>	Ilka Monique da Costa Lima	Dissertation	2017	Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro	Post-Graduation Program in Education, Contemporary Contexts and Popular Demands - Multidisciplinary Institute/Education Institute
D-15	<i>Quem conta um conto aumenta um ponto? Literatura Infantil e Oralidade</i>	Maria Socorro Silva	Dissertation	2007	Federal University of Ceara - UFC	Pro-Rector of Research and Post-Graduation Studies Education School – FACED – Post-Graduation Program in Brazilian Education
D-16	<i>Relações Étnico-raciais e práticas pedagógicas com literaturas infantil-juvenil Afro-brasileira</i>	Missilene Maria Silva Costa	Dissertation	2019	Federal Rural University of Pernambuco and Joaquim Nabuco Foundation	Post-Graduation Program in Education, Cultures and Identities

Source: Elaborated by the authors, based on the selected research.

## What do research carried out with children, based on Children's Literature and Ethnic-Racial Relationships, tell us?

The study starts from introducing data found in Table 2 about the 73 children's literature books used by researchers in Table 1. They form the *corpus* of the present research. Sixteen research studies were introduced: 14 dissertations and 2 theses.

TABLE 2: Children's Literature Books mentioned in the analyzed documents

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RESEARCH	BOOKS	AUTHORS	ILLUSTRATORS	EDITOR	YEAR
D15	<i>A Bela e a Fera – Contos por imagens</i>	Rui de Oliveira		FTD	1999
D5	<i>A casa sonolenta</i>	Audrey Wood	Don Wood	Ática	1999
T6 and D9	<i>A cor da vida</i>	Semíramis Paterno		Lê	1998
D10	<i>Adivinha o quanto eu te amo</i>	Sam McBratney	Anita Jeram	WMF Martins Fontes	2011
D12	<i>A galinha que criava um ratinho</i>	Ana Maria Machado	Mariana Massarani	Ática	1995
D15	<i>A guardadora de Gansos (Contos de Grimm)</i>	Maria Heloísa Penteado	Anastassija Archipowa	Ática	1996
D5	<i>A incrível caixa dos animais da fazenda: os animais da cocheira</i>	Auzou	Cristophe Bonces	PubliFolhinha	2014
D11	<i>A menina e o tambor</i>	Sonia Junqueira	Mariangela Haddad	Autêntica	2009
D4	<i>Ana e Ana</i>	Celia Godoy	Fe	DCL	2007
D1 and D13	<i>Anansi, o velho sábio</i>	Kaleki	Jean- Claude Götting	Companhia das letrinhas	2007
D3	<i>A princesa dos cabelos azuis e o horroroso homem dos pântanos</i>	Fernanda Lopes de Almeida	Carlos Veiga	Ática	2008
D3	<i>Aranha, a dor de cabeça e outros males que assolam o mundo</i>	Fernanda Lopes de Almeida	Elisabeth Teixeira	Ática	2005
T2	<i>As cores dos pássaros</i>	Lúcia Hiratsuka		Rovelle	2014
D13	<i>As panquecas de Mama Panya</i>	Richard Chamberlin e Mary Chamberlin	Julia Cairns	Edições SM	2005
D8 and D14	<i>As tranças de Bintou</i>	Sylviane Diouf	Shane Evans	Cosac Naif	2010
D5	<i>Até as princesas soltam pum</i>	Ilan Brenman	Ionit Zilberman	Brinque-book	2008
D1; D13 and D14	<i>Bruna e a galinha d'Angola</i>	Gercilga de Almeida	Valéria Saraiva	Pallas	2009
D5 and D7	<i>Bruxa, bruxa, venha à minha festa</i>	Arden Druce	Patrícia Ludlow	Brinque-book	1995

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D11	<i>Cadê?</i>	Graça Lima		Lacerda Editores	2009
T2	<i>Cartas a povos distantes</i>	Fábio Monteiro	André Neves	Paulinas	2015
D15	<i>Chapeuzinho vermelho (Contos dos Grimm)</i>	Maria Heloísa Penteado	Anastassija Archipowa	Ática	1996
T2	<i>Coisa de gente grande</i>	Patrícia Auerbach		SESI-SP	2015
D14	<i>Contos Africanos para crianças</i>	Rogério Andrade Barbosa	Maurício Veneza	Paulinas	2008
T2	<i>Contos ortográficos</i>	Marilda Castanha		Abacatte	2015
T2	<i>De noite no bosque</i>	Ana Maria Machado	Bruno Nunes	Ática	2011
D5	<i>Dorme, menino, dorme</i>	Laura Herrera	July Macuada	Livro Matriz	2015
D14	<i>Dudu Calunga</i>	Joel Rufino dos Santos	Zéflávio Teixeira	Ática	1986
D11	<i>Fuzarca</i>	Sonia Rosa	Tatiana Paiva	Brinque-book	2011
D5	<i>Gato pra cá, rato pra lá</i>	Sylvia Orthof	Graça Lima	Rovelle	2012
T2	<i>Hortência das tranças</i>	Lelis		Abacatte	2015
D4	<i>Iguais, mas diferentes</i>	Hardy Guedes	Reinaldo Rosa	Terra Sul	2011
T2	<i>Inês</i>	Roger Mello	Mariana Massarani	Companhia das Letrinhas	2015
D14	<i>Irmã-estrela</i>	Alain Mabane Kou	Judith Gueyfier	FTD	2013
D13	<i>Kofi e o menino de fogo</i>	Nei Lopes	Helene Moreau	Pallas	2008
T2	<i>Lá e aqui</i>	Carolina Moreyra	Odilon Moraes	Companhia das letrinhas	2015
D11	<i>Lila e o segredo da chuva</i>	David Conway	Jude Daly	Biruta	2010
D14	<i>Luana: a menina que viu o Brasil neném</i>	Aroldo Macedo e Oscaldo Fautino	Arthur Garcia	FTD	2000
D12	<i>Marcelo, marmelo, martelo</i>	Ruth Rocha	Adalberto Cornavaca	Salamandra	1976
D1, D4, D5, D9, D11 and D12	<i>Menina bonita do laço de fita</i>	Ana Maria Machado	Claudius	Ática	2003; 2004; 2005; 2011
D13	<i>Mitologia dos Orixás</i>	Reginaldo Prandi	Pedro Rafael	Companhia das letrinhas	2001
D7	<i>Mitos – o folclore do mestre André</i>	Marcelo Xavier	Gustavo Campos	Formato	2007
T2	<i>Nino, o menino de Saturno</i>	Ziraldo		Melhoramentos	2015
D9 and D12	<i>O amigo do rei</i>	Ruth Rocha	Eva Funari	Ática	2005
D8 and D11	<i>Obax</i>	André Neves		Brinque-book	2010

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D4, D8, D11 and D14	<i>O cabelo de Lelê</i>	Valéria Belém	Adriana Mendonça	Companhia Editora Nacional	2006
T2	<i>O caixão rastejante e outras assombrações de família</i>	Angela Lago		Companhia das Letrinhas	2015
D11	<i>O colecionador de pedras</i>	Prisca Agustoni	André Neves	Paulinas	2006
T2	<i>O guardião da bola</i>	Lúcia Hiratsuka		Moderna	2015
T2	<i>O livro das casas</i>	Ricardo Azevedo		Moderna	2015
D9	<i>O menino Nito: então homem chora ou não?</i>	Sonia Rosa	Victor Tavares	Pallas	2002
D4	<i>Omo-Oba: histórias de princesas</i>	Kiusam de Oliveira	Josias Marinho	Mazza Edições	2009
D9 and D13	<i>O presente de Ossanha</i>	Joel Rufino dos Santos	Maurício Veneza	Global	2006
T2	<i>O que é liberdade?</i>	Renata Bueno		Companhia das Letrinhas	2015
D5	<i>O ratinho, o morango velho e o maduro, e o grande urso esfomeado</i>	Audrey Wood	Don Wood	Brinque-book	2012
D5	<i>O rato da estrada</i>	Julia Donaldson	Axel Scheffler	Fundamento Educacional	2016
D5	<i>O rei Bigodeira e sua banheira</i>	Audrey Wood	Don Wood	Ática	1996
T2	<i>Os nada-a-ver</i>	Jean-Claude R. Alphen	Juliana Bollini	Companhia das Letrinhas	2015
T2	<i>O sonho de Borum</i>	Edson Krenak	Maurício Negro	Autêntica	2015
D14	<i>Os reizinhas do Congo</i>	Edmilson Pereira	Graça Lima	Paulinas	2012
T2	<i>O trompetista na tempestade</i>	Alexandre Azevedo	Lelis	Abacatte	2015
D5	<i>Grandes clássicos e suas virtudes: Peter Pan</i>	Cristina Klein	Marlon Bachman e Tharson Duarte	Blu Editora	2016
D3	<i>Pinote, o fracote e o Janjão, o fortão</i>	Fernanda Lopes de Almeida	Alcy Linares	Ática	2008
D10	<i>Piquenique do Catapimba</i>	Ruth Rocha	Mariana Massarani	Salamandra	2010
D8	<i>Preta-pretinha</i>	Rose Chiappa	Luca Risi	Sulinha	2002
D11	<i>Pretinha de neve e os sete gigantes</i>	Rubem Filho		Paulinas	2009
D14	<i>Pretinho, meu boneco querido</i>	Maria Cristina Furtado	Ellen Pestili	Editora do Brasil	2008
D1	<i>Princesa Arabela, mimada que só ela</i>	Mylo Freeman		Ática	2005
D14	<i>Rainha Quiximbi</i>	Joel Rufino dos Santos	Zeflavio Teixeira	Ática	1997

(conclusion)

D8	<i>Rapunzel e o Quibungo</i>	Christina Agostinho e Ronaldo Simões Coelho	Walter Lara	Mazza Edições	2012
T2	<i>Receita para fazer dragão</i>	Simone Saueressing	Janaina Tokitaka	Cortez	2015
T2	<i>Tabuleiro da Baiana</i>	Elma		Paulinas	2015
T2	<i>Tenório, um artista iniciante</i>	Carcamo Gonzalo		Berlendis & Vertecchia	2015
D13	<i>Um safari na Tanzânia</i>	Laurie Krebs	Julia Cairns	Edições SM	2007
<b>TOTAL OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS :</b>			<b>73</b>		

Source: Elaborated by the authors, based on the selected research.

The main book used in the research was: “Menina bonita do laço de fita” (Ana Maria Machado), as it was used in six master’s dissertations. The second most read book was: “O cabelo de Lelê” (Valéria Belém), which was referenced in four dissertations. Three dissertations used the work “Bruna e a galinha d’angola” (Gercilga de Almeida). Each of the following works were cited in two dissertations: “Anansi, o velho velho velho” (Kaleki), “As tranças de Bintou” (Sylviane Diouf), “Bruxa, bruxa, vem à minha festa” (Arden Druce), “Obax” (André Neves), “O amigo do rei” (Ruth Rocha) and “O presente de Ossanha” (Joel Rufino dos Santos). The book “A cor da Vida” (Semíramis Paterno) was cited in one thesis and in one dissertation. The other books were used, separately, in dissertations and theses.

In total, 79% of the 73 children's books listed here are national, i.e., 58 books were written, adapted and published by Brazilians. The other 15 books (21% of the selected literary books) are international, i.e., books written by foreigners, translated and published in Brazil.

With respect to the increased production of children's literature, it is possible observing constant growth in productions launched between the late 1980s and the early 1990s. However, this market consolidated itself from the 2000s onwards; 2015 was the year recording the largest number of productions: 18, in total. The year of 2008 ranked the second position with 6 books. The years of 2005, 2009 and 2011 ranked the third position with 5 productions in each of the mentioned years.

It is important highlighting that the book “Menina bonita do laço de fita”, by Ana Maria Machado, was the only one, among the herein analyzed ones, to be referenced and cited in the documents by more than one edition. One edition was published in 2003, and the others were published in 2004, 2005 and 2011.

Table 3 shows the comparison made to find out the number of main characters in the stories, in the 73 listed books. Most of the books showed black characters as protagonists: 33 characters, in total.

TABLE 3: Comparison of publishers and their protagonists

EDITORS	NUMBER OF BLACK PROTAGONISTS	NUMBER OF WHITE PROTAGONISTS	NUMBER OF INDIGENOUS PROTAGONISTS	NUMBER OF SYMBOLIC PROTAGONISTS <sup>3</sup>	YEAR OF PUBLICATION
Abacatte	1	1	-	1	2015
Ática	4	9	-	1	1986 to 2011
Autêntica	1	-	1		2009 to 2015
Berlendis & Vertecchia	-	-	-	1	2015
Biruta	1	-	-	-	2010
Blu	-	1	-	-	2016
Brinque-Book	2	2	-	1	1995 to 2012
Companhia Editora Nacional	1	-	-	-	2006
Companhia das Letrinhas	2	1	-	4	2001 to 2015
Cortez	-	-	-	1	2015
Cosac Naif	1	-	-	-	2010
DCL	1	-	-	-	2007
Editora do Brasil	1	-	-	-	2008
Edições SM	2	-	-	-	2005 to 2007
Formato	-	1	-	-	2007
FTD	2	1	-	-	1999 to 2013
Fundamento Educacional	-	-	-	1	2016
Global	1	-	-	-	2006
Lacerda Editores	1	-	-	-	2009
Lê	1	-	-	-	1998
Livro Matriz	-	1	-	-	2015
Mazza Edições	2	-	-	-	2009 to 2012
Melhoramentos	-	1	-	-	2015
Moderna	-	1	-	1	2015
Pallas	3	-	-	-	2002 to 2009
Paulinas	5	-	-	1	2006 to 2015
PubliFolhinha	-	-	-	1	2014
Rovelle	-	-	-	2	2012 to 2014
Salamandra	1	1	-	-	1976 to 2010
SESI-SP	-	1	-	-	2015
Sulinha	-	-	-	1	2002
Terra Sul	-	-	-	1	2011
WMF Martins Fontes	-	-	-	1	2011
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the selected research.

<sup>3</sup> Symbolic protagonists were herein understood as non-human characters, such as animals, talking objects, spelling symbols, monsters, ghosts, houses, plants, among others, who have attitudes and actions of human beings.

The 33 characters who appeared as protagonists made up the plot of 35 children's literature books focused on ethnic-racial relationships (Table 4).

TABLE 4: The Ethnic-Racial Relationship topic in books

			(continues)
BOOK	AUTHOUR	ILLUSTRATOR	TOTAL
Anansi, o velho sábio	Kaleki	Jean-Claude Götting	15
As panquecas de Mama Panya	Richard Chamberlin e Mary Chamberlin	Julia Cairns	
As tranças de Bintou	Sylviane Diouf	Shane Evans	
Bruna e galinha d'Angola	Gercilga de Almeida	Valéria Saraiva	
Contos africanos para crianças	Rogério Andrade Barbosa	Maurício Veneza	
Irmã-estrela	Alain Mabanekou	Judith Gueyfier	
Kofi e o menino de fogo	Nei Lopes	Helene Moreau	
Lila e o segredo da chuva	David Conway	Jude Daly	
Mitologia dos orixás	Reginaldo Prandi	Pedro Rafael	
Obax	André Neves		
O colecionador de pedras	Prisca Agustoni	André Neves	
Omo-Oba: histórias de princesas	Kiusam de Oliveira	Josias Marinho	
Pretinha de neve e os sete gigantes	Rubem Filho		
Rainha Quiximbi	Joel Rufino dos Santos	Zeflávio Teixeira	
Um safari na Tanzânia	Laurie Krebs	Julia Cairns	
Dudu Calunga	Joel Rufino dos Santos	Zeflávio Teixeira	4
Os reizinhos do Congo	Edmilson Pereira	Graça Lima	
Rapunzel e o Quibungo	Christina Agostinho e Ronaldo Simões Coelho	Walter Lara	
Tabuleiro da Baiana	Elma		
Menina bonita do laço de fita	Ana Maria Machado	Claudius	2
O cabelo de Lelê	Valéria Belém	Adriana Mendonça	
A menina e o tambor	Sônia Junqueira	Mariangela Haddad	8
Cadê?	Graça Lima		
Cartas a povos distantes	Fábio Monteiro	André Neves	
Fuzarca	Sônia Rosa	Tatiana Paiva	
Hortência das tranças	Lelis		
O menino Nito: então homem chora ou não?	Sônia Rosa	Victor Tavares	
Piquenique do Catapimba	Ruth Rocha	Mariana Massarani	
Princesa Arabela, mimada que só ela	Mylo Freeman		
A cor da vida	Sam McBratney	Anita Jeram	3
Pretinho, meu boneco querido	Maria Cristina Furtado	Ellen Pestili	
Ana e Ana	Célia Gody	Fe	

			(conclusion)
<i>Luana: a menina que viu o Brasil neném</i>	Aroldo Macedo and Oscaldo Fautino	Arthur Garcia	3
<i>O amigo do rei</i>	Ruth Rocha	Eva Fumari	
<i>O presente de Ossanha</i>	Joel Rufino dos Santos	Maurício Veneza	
			35

Source: Elaborated by the authors, based on the selected research.

All the analyzed 16 studies (theses and dissertations) were substantiated by field research in educational institutions and developed projects or workshops with children through meetings used to carry out activities such as conversation circles. These activities were followed by storytelling from one or more children's literature books to help introducing the topic related to ethnic-racial relationships. There were also games, theater plays, group and/or collective interviews with the children, drawings to depict the characters and self-portraying, representation (by the children) of the books made with modeling clay, making rag dolls and retelling the stories by using puppets. The researchers adopted participatory observation, audio and video recordings, photographic records and field diaries.

Overall, resources and procedures adopted to carry out the research aimed at listening to the children, opening room for their narratives and understanding of the world around them. It was done by bearing in mind that, according to Francischini and Campos (2008, p. 108), they “can produce discourses about themselves, about others and about events, so that they can exist based on their own discourse, [on] their own way of seeing and thinking”.

Procedures and instruments used in research with children led to what Leite (2008) calls “narrative spaces”, which are based on a language that presents itself in different ways, whether verbal, corporal, graphic, theatrical, among others. So, according to this author,

Favoring a narrative space means understanding the role of others in meaning's construction; it means understanding language as a “two-way street, i.e., it both forms and communicates countless objectified feelings and abilities” (Palangana, 2000, p. 29) [by] acting as “mediating instrument, basic and decisive, in consciousness elaboration” (p. 20). By taking Benjamin's words (1994a, p. 201), “the narrator takes what he tells from experience: its own experience or that reported by others. And it incorporates the narrated things into the experience of its listeners”. And “the more the listener forgets itself, the more deeply what is heard is engraved in it” (idem, p. 205). It is not a matter of seeking explanations based on a single meaning in the children's various expressions of the basis of *monological* information, but rather diverse versions, perspectives, meanings” (Leite, 2008, P. 129).



Given the impossibility of introducing the research forming the *corpus* of the current study in details, option was made to present three studies that have used the same methodological resources in research carried out with children to hear and capture their voices. In order to do so, the research by Lima (2017), Londero (2008) and Santos (2017) was used.

Lima (2017) refers to changes in children's behavior that have allowed her pedagogical intervention. She reported her experience with children who made pejorative statements about black people. According to her, these statements were the response to lack of representation in the materials they had access to, such as books and toys.

According to her, these statements disclosed black children's discomfort with themselves, since they wanted to change their looks in order to be better accepted by their classmates. Therefore, her solution lied on taking a black-skinned doll to the classroom. According to her, the school environment, which lacked representation, became a world of discoveries for children to play in. Without any prior discussion, the doll was simply taken to the classroom as attempt to cause strangeness.

At first, Lima (2017) reported children's amazement at the new doll. However, it did not take long for it to become the target of disputes among children, including the boys, who did not think it was appropriate to play with artifacts seen as "girls' objects". Everybody wanted to spend most of their time with the doll they called Sofia. They included her in all their daily activities, such as going to the playground and playing make-believe. According to the author, the doll helped some black children to feel more welcomed by their classmates, since they now had a well-accepted doll similar to them, Sofia.

Based on Lima (2017), the change in the pedagogical practice was essential to achieve an anti-racist education in that school. However, this is an ongoing process, i.e., it does not end with its practice. It is necessary for the environment to periodically have practices aimed at saying 'no' to prejudice and 'yes' to ethnic and cultural pluralism. Consequently, once again, the sense of not having neutrality in the education field stands out. Lack of dolls and figures with different bodies, hair and skin colors communicates a standard of beauty to children, which is taken as reference. Panel decorations that only mention Christian holidays send a subliminal message about the religious belief accepted by the educational institution. Books that only address a specific profile for protagonist characters states the relevant places for each type of person. The delivered message is clear: people are not the same and these differences will determine who they can, or cannot, be in society.

Santos (2017) used the literary books "O cabelo da Lelê", by Valéria Belém; "Omo-Oba: histórias de princesas", by Kiusam de Oliveira; "Menina bonita do laço de fita", by Ana Maria Machado; "Iguais, mas diferentes", by Hardy Guedes; and "Ana e Ana", by Célia Cristina Silva, to introduce her

conversation circles. Thus, the girls participating in the research were able to identify and report prejudice situations caused by their physical looks they had experienced throughout life.

Santos (2017), after hearing reports by black girls in elementary school, concluded that, from a very young age, black children understand the practical meaning of the word 'racism', even if they are not familiar with the term 'racism'. The researcher mentions the difficulties presented by these girls to value their phenotypic traits due to the experiences of contempt they have already experienced. The author mentions how they are bothered by their skin color and, most of all, by their curly hair, when they state that they wish for a straight and "prettier" hair (SANTOS, 2017, p. 105), as if their locks were "ugly".

The representation of what it means to be "beautiful" and to be "ugly" shows how these aspects have been socially constructed since the colonization times. According to Santos (2017), white supremacy means that the individual does not fit into this 'beauty' standard. Thus, the individual needs to be forced to get the closest possible to this ideal of 'beauty', so as not to live on the fringes of the society it finds itself in.

According to Santos (2017), the stigma, according to which, one ethnicity is superior to another and, therefore, "prettier" than the other, has been inserted in spaces where children go. It happens in such a fashion that they renounce their own image in order to get a new one. The researcher used the example of analysis made by children about the cover of the book "O cabelo de Lelê" (Lelê's Hair).

According to the interviewed girls, the wide eyes of the character Lelê caused disgust, because "our eyes are not that wide. And I think it's ugly because I'm not like that!" (SANTOS, 2017, p. 100) explained one of them. This debate made children conclude that the character was depicted that way because she was created by white people (SANTOS, 2017, p. 102). The children have shown the critical sense of a stereotypical look, of an ethnicity acknowledged as "superior", and it determines the identity of another "inferior" one, the 'devalued ethnicities'.

Londero (2008) carried out a pedagogical intervention practice aimed at deconstructing popular pejorative images in the private school the research was conducted at. Students who made friends based on physical looks and economic standards of living excluded children who did not fit this "acceptable" checklist.

Five of the seventeen observed children even showed aggressive behavior and bullying practices against their peers. The reading of the book "Aranha, a dor de cabeça e outros males que assolam o mundo", "Pinote, o fracote and Janjão, o fortão" and "A princesa dos cabelos azuis e o horrioso homem dos pântanos" (three books by Fernanda Lopes de Almeida) was used to create theater plays and discussion groups for children to reason on their attitudes. The problematic issues

crossed the behavior of the main characters and their consequences for the other characters in the story told.

According to Londero (2008), most children were receptive to the literary proposal, and it allowed them to explore the books and to start spontaneous dialogues with the other children. They correlated the narrated facts to situations they have experienced at school, such as the criteria they used to exclude or include classmates in games. The chatting was timely; they expressed their emotions about being sad for not being able make friends with certain students.

Londero (2008) observed a change in these students' behavior after the pedagogical intervention because the number of conflicting events among them have significantly decreased. This author believes that the delicate way the exclusion issue was addressed - through the "make-believe" observed in the read books, triggered the collective understanding of why they should change their attitudes.

Therefore, the cultural environment influence experienced by the children was blamed as the reason why each one had a discriminatory attitude towards their peers. Consequently, the reflection moments gave the children the opportunity to highlight their anxieties about the labels placed on them, and it added greater value and meaning to the topic (LONDERO, 2008, p. 91). Thus, according to the researcher, it was possible to peacefully deconstruct the stigmas on both conflicting parties, in addition to highlighting the relevance of respecting the social, economic and ethnic differences of each student.

Thus, it was possible agreeing with Silva (2016) when the author takes children's literature as important mediator to support social issues in the school environment, mainly if children see themselves in a positive way. She believes that books open up a whole range of opportunities for children to feel curious and to be willing to know more about their ethnic differences, as well as to express their desire to open up their hypotheses.

Consequently, the teacher plays the role of being a bridge between the children and the literary books by filling the gaps that the school 'standardizing' system leaves open. According to Silva (2016), "at school, there is a space between the text and the reader, as this encounter does not happen spontaneously. Thus, there is the need for reflecting on the role of the teacher as literary reading mediator in the classroom" (SILVA, 2016, p. 28). Therefore, it is necessary to understand how the access to reading will be promoted by the teacher in early childhood education institutions.

Accordingly, the analysis carried out by Peixoto (2012) shows that giving children the opportunity to read and to express their emotions transforms them from infants (infans – those who do not speak) into speaking beings. Thus, children, from Early Childhood Education onwards, have broad capacity to understand different topics in books, since they allow them to relate to "different

real and imaginary spaces and times” (PEIXOTO, 2012, p. 75) that are essential for them to feel like protagonists of their own social stories.

Based on Silva (2016), it is necessary to consider the meaning of the book in face of children's experiences, the teacher's aim at using the book and how it will be delivered to the children within the educational space.

### **Final considerations**

The analyzed studies focused on making research with children and used children's literature as mediating instrument for workshops and interventions. They allowed observing the relevance of carrying out studies aimed at reaching children, listening to them, and taking into consideration their perspectives and emotions related to the racial relationships topic.

The challenge faced by educational institutions in developing activities that meet recommendations in Law 10.639, from 2003, is well known. This law made Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture teaching mandatory in basic education and higher education institutions, as well as the National Curricular Guidelines for Education on Ethnic-Racial Relationships and Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture, from 2004. According to these guidelines, educational activities focused on the ethnic-racial issue are necessary from early childhood education provide to children at their earliest age.

The children's literature allows telling and retelling narratives about African and Afro-Brazilian communities. According to Araújo (2019), this process represents the possibility of given a sense of safety, so that several cultural groups do not have their historical roots erased and masked by stories society deems “superior” or “more important”, for such a scenario would prevent racist narratives.

Thus, assumingly, black children can sense identification and self-acceptance because the children's literature comprises elements regarding ethnic-racial relationships and Afro-Brazilian and African culture. At the same time, it presents white children with a cultural background that can give them new knowledge, such as respect for differences. Therefore, the present reflection aimed at showing the windows of possibilities opened by children's literature as tool to help teaching ethnic-racial relationships, whether through research or through their presence in the daily lives of educational institutions, from early childhood education, onwards.

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