

History of Childhoods and Youths in Latin America: Experiences, Discourses, and Social Policies

*História das infâncias e juventudes na América
Latina: experiências, discursos e políticas sociais*

*Historia de las infancias y juventudes en América
Latina: experiencias, discursos y políticas Sociales*

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The dossier History of Childhoods and Youths in Latin America: Experiences, Discourses, and Social Policies is a tribute to the activities developed over the last decade by the Group of Work on the History of Childhoods and Youths of the Associação Nacional de História (Anpuh-Nacional) [National History Association] and the *Red de Estudios de Historia de las Infancias en América Latina* (REHIAL) [Network of studies on the History of Childhoods in Latin America]. Gathering national and international investigations, the articles published here confirm the vitality and consolidation of a research field that has been dedicated to the understanding of multiple life experiences of Latin American children, adolescents and Young individuals in different times and spaces.

The contributions presented address issues and problems experienced by children and youth populations from different theoretical, methodological and documental perspectives, integrating five fundamental axes in the field, namely, Education, Cultural Practices and Experiences; Protection and Rights of Childhoods and Youths; Socio-education; and Ethnic-Racial Relations within their territories and regional contexts. Organized around aggregating themes, the articles discuss education processes, cultural practices and life experiences, protection and rights, ethnic-racial relations and socio-education revealing a

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plurality of subjects, experiences and types of governance of childhoods and youths in Latin America.

The themes approached range from discussions about care of minors in a period from the late 19th to the early 20th century but mainly encompass the debate on childhoods and youths. Initially developed within the scope of History of Education, History of Family and History of Public Policies, such discussions gained new dimensions following transformations occurred in the field of human rights, such as the promulgation of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in the Brazilian case, the Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente (ECA) [Statute of the Child and the Adolescent]. These milestones contributed to the recognition of children, adolescents and young individuals as historical subjects with rights, thus fostering the consolidation of the History of Childhoods and Youths as a specific field of investigation, of which this dossier is a part.

In the Latin American context, this process was marked by intense debate around the similarities and differences between discourses and social policies aimed at children and young individuals, as well as by the problematization of narratives that traditionally represented them exclusively as victims. Therefore, the articles gathered here recognize the existing convergences between different national contexts, without neglecting sociocultural, political and territorial specificities that shape the experiences of children, adolescents and young individuals.

It is not a coincidence that the concepts of *childhood* and *youth* are used in the plural form, recognizing the diversity of trajectories and experiences crossed by social markers such as race and ethnicity, gender, social class, generation, religion, territory and regionality. At the same time, the research conducted emphasizes the agency, protagonism and social participation of children, adolescents and young individuals, thus shifting perspectives exclusively centered on guardianship, vulnerability or victimization of such subjects.

The articles engage with contemporary epistemological and methodological approaches, incorporating intersectional perspectives, debates on biopolitics and governability, analyses of the circulation and appropriation of discourses at different levels and investigations based on life experiences and interpretations provided by the children and adolescents. To this end, they draw upon a broad documentary repertoire, containing legal

processes, press items, institutional documents, letters, diaries, audiovisual records, oral reports and other historical sources.

By bringing together contributions from different knowledge areas – such as History, Education, Law, Social Work, Psychology and Social Sciences -, this dossier confirms the importance of studies on childhoods and youths to understand Latin American societies. In a context marked by the circulation of conservative discourses and the persistence of structural inequalities, the reflections put forward here contribute not only to broadening the historiographic context, but also to informing public debates and strengthening the creation and defense of social policies and rights aimed at the multiple childhoods, adolescences and youths of the region.

The dossier benefitted from significant participation of researchers from different areas, knowledge fields, levels of education and fields of work. Dozens of texts were submitted and evaluated. The result is 34 published texts, an unusual number that reveals the importance of the field, the density of the publications and the broad academic and scientific reach of discussions on childhoods and youths in Brazil and Latin America.

The texts focus on different time periods. Regarding temporal dynamics, the predominance of the 20th and 21st centuries is observed, some texts, such as the study entitled *Childhood, exploration and regulation: child work as a field of disputes in the First Republic (1890-1917)* and the text *From caring to civilizing: the Childhood issue at the dawn of the Republic: a historical-social analysis*, focus on the 19th century. Studies focusing the 20th century reproduce dynamics of the History of Childhoods and Youths field, which is mainly concentrated in this period. In terms of geographical scope, there is a predominance of studies dedicated to the analysis of Brazil and its different spatialities. In addition to the Brazilian context, there are texts addressing dynamics in Colombia: "Differentiated Education by Gender in Colombia (19th century): Discourses and Policies"; Bolivia: "Pedagogy of Adobe: Agency and Leadership of Bolivian Indigenous Youth in the Warisata Ayllu School 1931-1940"; And finally, Chile with "Chile: the stubborn memory : memory and youth in post-dictatorship Chile." We realize the importance of discussions on the History of Childhood and Youth that transcend the Brazilian context, demonstrating the strength they possess in Latin America and, according to the texts presented, in our South American neighbors.

The texts are rich in diversity and specificities in their research objects and problems. Regarding the themes addressed, we can see that the original proposal of the dossier has generally consolidated into the publication of texts within 5 transversal thematic axes: Education; Cultural practices and experiences; Protection and rights of children and youth; Socio-education; and Ethnic-racial relations. Despite the specificities of each research project, we believe it is important to value the dialogue between them. Therefore, we present the texts within this thematic transversality.

One of the most recurring dimensions in research on childhoods and youths is education. From different perspectives, mainly from the 18th and 19th centuries onwards, the state – but also diverse groups and social institutions – started to act upon and, sometimes, deal with children and adolescents by means of creating, regulating and disseminating formal and informal education practices, thus impacting their historical constitution and, at the same time, structuring their social organization in different temporalities. The studies gathered in this thematic axis are within this horizon. The seven texts highlight the centrality of education in the historical production of Latin American childhoods and youths, understanding it as a privileged space of creation of discourses, state intervention and disputes of society projects. In a historical perspective, the articles *From caring to civilizing: the Childhood issue at the dawn of the Republic: a historical-social analysis (19th century): discourses and politics*; *Imperial Military School of Brazil: education, policies and institutional practices for the childhood*; and *Workshop, discipline and social control: the Delfim Moreira Professional School for “disadvantaged children” in Pouso Alegre/MG (1917-1947)*; *Education and “Life Project” under neoliberalism: between history, sociology and psychoanalysis*; allow the readers to notice the different ways in which education institutions were used to discipline bodies, shape behaviors, and define social roles, integrating conceptions of childhood, gender, work, nationality and social order. Taken together, these studies reveal that education policies aimed at children and young individuals were deeply linked to social hierarchization processes, marked by differences in class, gender and social conditions.

At the same time, the collection of texts broadens the understanding of education beyond its normative devices, emphasizing experiences of agency, resistance and alternative pedagogical production. The article *Pedagogy of Adobe: Agency and Leadership of Bolivian Indigenous Youth in the Warisata Ayllu School 1931-1940* reports the protagonism of

indigenous youth in the construction of education practices rooted in community knowledge, while Deaf childhoods and bilingual education policies in Brazil: discourses, experiences and resistances (1990-2020) highlights the disputes surrounding inclusive education policies and the role of deaf individuals in the claim for rights. Thus, the texts enable the understanding of education as a field of tensions between control and emancipation, regulation and protagonism, social reproduction and the construction of new possibilities for existence.

Another thematic focus concerns the discussions of Cultural Practices and Child and Youth Experiences. These texts explore multiple experiences of childhoods and Youths beyond institutional spaces, revealing how memory, culture, technology and territory constitute fundamental dimensions in the production of subjectivities and in the construction of rights in Latin America. In different historical and social contexts, the studies demonstrate how children and young individuals are not only affected by political, cultural and technological transformations, but they also act as subjects ascribing meaning to their experiences, elaborating memories and producing their own forms of belonging and resisting.

In this sense, “Enjoyment and Resistance: countercultural festivals and Brazilian Youth in the 1970s”, and “The stubborn memory: memory and youth in post-dictatorship Chile” analyze the relations between youth, memory and political participation emphasizing the role of new generations in the re-elaboration of authoritarian experiences and in the construction of resistance practices. Likewise, “Arcades and Adolescence: When Computer Technology Became Play” reveals the transformations of adolescent cultures in face of the expansion of technologies in the 1970s, their appropriation by children and young individuals and the constitution of new spaces for playful sociability. Regarding the article “The childhood of Bolivian children on the Brazil-Bolivia border: experiences, territorialities and rights in cross-border contexts”, it broadens the debate by addressing children’s experiences in border territories, emphasizing the challenges and potentialities involved in the guarantee of rights in contexts marked by mobility, cultural plurality and daily negotiation of belonging. Taken together, these texts discuss the diversity of Latin American children’s and young individuals’ cultural practices and experiences, highlighting the importance of understanding them from their cultural, political, technological and territorial dimensions.

Next, we introduce the discussions with a greater number of texts highlighting the centrality of these themes to the field. There are 15 texts that address, in different ways, the

protection, rights, and violation of the rights of children, adolescents, and young people. The first set of texts analyzes the historical and contemporary construction of legal, institutional, and political frameworks focused on childhood, adolescence, and youth in Latin America. Across different time periods, the studies show how social protection was constituted through disputes surrounding the meanings of care, citizenship, participation, and rights, indicating continuities and ruptures between welfare, hygiene, and philanthropic models, and perspectives grounded in the comprehensive guarantee of rights.

Considering this focus, “Brazilian legal changes in favor of childhoods, adolescences and youths and current issues”; “From comprehensive protection to algorithmic protection: childhoods and youths under life governance in contemporary Brazil”; “Adultcentrism as a structure of political exclusion: where are the adolescent voices?” reflect upon contemporary challenges of political participation and the realization of rights of those groups. In a historical perspective “From hygienism to scientific philanthropy: infant mortality and the creation of the *Instituto de Proteção e Assistência à Infância do Ceará (1913)*; *Intervining in the future of the nation: discursive practices in the Hygiene Post of the city of Novo Hamburgo (1939-1960)*; and “*Whoever welcomes the minor, welcomes me*”: *CNBB, social rights and structural minorism (Brazil, 1987)*” address the disputes surrounding the conceptions of social protection. Likewise, “Are we going to accept it silently?” the current debate on health policies for transgender children and adolescents”; “Educational practices of foster families in Rio Grande do Sul: a thematic analysis”; and “An analysis of public policies for adolescents and their families in situations of social risk” broaden the debate for problematizing welcoming, diversity and inclusion policies. Together, these texts demonstrate that the protection of childhoods and youths constitutes a field in permanent transformation, crossed by tensions between guardianship, participation, surveillance and guarantee of rights.

As regards the theme of Protection, Rights and Violation of rights, there are studies investigating different forms of violence and exploitation that marked and still mark children’s, adolescents’ and young individuals’ experiences. When addressing sexual violence, forced disappearance, police violence and child work exploitation, these texts reveal historical limits of institutional protection and expose how intersectional inequalities of class, gender and race result in specific vulnerabilities for populations of children and young individuals.

The articles *Infanticide, sexual violence and justice in a criminal process in Lagoa Vermelha, RS (1914)* and *Male violence and the children's rape crime in Catú – BA after abolition, 1920* analyze sexual violence against children based on legal processes, thus evidencing gender, power and justice relations. Aligned with these issues, *“Between agency and exploitation: historiographic reflections upon children and adolescents explored in the world of adult work in Brazil* and *Childhood, exploitation and regulation: children's work in the field of disputes of the First Republic (1890–1917)* address the exploitation of children's and young individuals' work. The articles *“From awe to hope, or between Plinio Marcos and Clarice Lispector: police violence in two contemporary scenes”* and *“On the memory wall, this memory is the most painful picture”: parental absence and the subjective consequences of forced disappearance”* highlight from distinct contexts and sources the subjective and collective impacts of multiple forms of State violence and rupture of family bonds. Taken together, these texts confirm that the history of rights of childhoods and youths is inseparable from the analysis of violations that persist and continuous efforts of denouncement, memory and reparation.

Dialoguing with debates surrounding protection, rights and violations, the texts gathered in this thematic axis confirm that childhoods' and youths' experiences cannot be understood dissociated from ethnic-racial relations that structure Latin American societies. By considering together race and class, the studies demonstrate how racism operates historically in the production of inequalities, in the conformation of public policies and in the definition of forms of care, control and access to rights destined to children and adolescents.

Considering this perspective, *“Childhood Education, structural racism and capitalism”* emphasizes the relations between racial inequality, economic dynamics and education processes since early childhood. Aligned to this approach, *“Brazilian social formation and structural racism in the institutionalization of children and adolescents”* evidences how care and institutionalization practices were historically crossed by racial hierarchies and the reproduction of social inequalities. The text *“When race interpellates childhood: historical and political perspectives of black childhoods”* broadens the debate by placing black children's experiences in the center of the analysis, emphasizing disputes surrounding recognition, citizenship and guarantee of rights. This collection of texts confirm the need for understanding childhoods and youths from an antiracist perspective, able to reveal the

impacts of structural racism and to recognize the historical and social specificities of black children's and young individuals' experiences.

Continuing the reflections upon ethnic-racial relations and structural inequalities, the texts gathered in this thematic axis address Socio-education as a field permeated by historical disputes surrounding projects that range from control, punishment, protection and guarantee of rights of adolescents in conflict with the law. By highlighting continuities and ruptures between the minor care logic and the paradigm of integral protection, the studies problematize the institutional, legal, and discursive mechanisms that produce categories, classifications, and intervention practices on certain segments of youth, marked by inequalities of class, race, and territory.

Taking that into account, "The legal construction of Abnormal Minor in the interior of Paraná/Brazil in the 1930s and "The little prisoner": journalistic discourses about "juvenile offenders" in the 1970s in Chapecó – Santa Catarina" analyze the historical production of stigmatizing representations of children and adolescents indicating the social construction of categories of deviation and dangerousness. Aligned with these discussions, "Between the ECA and Minorism: intersectionality and selectivity in the Brazilian socio-educational system" problematizes the persistence of selective practices in the contemporary context. The article "Listening in hearings of adolescents in conflict with the law: agency and the right to participate", in turn, highlights the importance of recognizing adolescents as subjects of rights, while "Where they didn't fit, they now exist: musical training of adolescents in socio-educational measures at CASE" exposes the potentialities of education and cultural practices in the construction of experiences of belonging, expression and social reintegration. Together, these texts stress the need for understanding socio-education as a space of tension between institutional control and guarantee of rights, where distinct projects of justice, citizenship and juvenile participation battle.

Thus, the dossier *History of childhoods and youths in Latin America: experiences, discourses and social policies* is a significant milestone in the consolidation of this research field in the continent. By gathering 34 articles that span different temporalities, spatialities and theoretical-methodological perspectives, the collection reveals the academic vitality and complexity of discussions about Latin American children, adolescents and young individuals. By integrating dimensions that range from local to transnational, in a historical moment

marked by the circulation of conservative discourses and the persistence of structural vulnerabilities, this dossier reaffirms the political-epistemological commitment of historiographical production to the defense of the rights of multiple childhoods, adolescences, and youths.

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