

The Methodology Dwells on the Topic: childhood and culture in research

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ABSTRACT – The Methodology Dwells on the Topic: childhood and culture in research¹. The following text discusses the relevance of the subject in the research activity, specifically when the construction of a methodology is concerned considering that Human and Social Studies are indeed discursive science and the interlocutors' voices – researcher and child – have been central to methodological construction. The text purpose is to broaden such debate, shifting the focus to a third crucial element in this otherness constitution that, very often, is considered apart from the methodology: the topic. The discussion is made from the analysis of five researches in the interdisciplinary field of childhood studies and based on philosophy of the language by Walter Benjamin and also Mikhail Bakhtin and Valentin Volochnov's circle.

Keywords: Childhood. Culture. Researcher. Topic. Methodology.

RESUMO – A Metodologia Mora no Tema: infância e cultura em pesquisa. Este texto tem por objetivo problematizar a relevância do tema na atividade de pesquisa, mais especificamente, na construção da metodologia. As Ciências Humanas e Sociais são ciências discursivas e a voz dos interlocutores – o pesquisador e a criança – têm ocupado a centralidade na construção metodológica. A proposta deste texto é ampliar esse debate deslocando o foco para um terceiro elemento crucial na constituição dessa alteridade e que, muitas vezes, é pensado de forma apartada da metodologia: o tema. A problematização é feita a partir da análise de cinco pesquisas do campo interdisciplinar dos estudos da infância e assenta-se na filosofia da Linguagem de Walter Benjamin e do círculo de Mikhail Bakhtin e Valentin Volochnov. **Palavras-chave: Infância. Cultura. Pesquisa. Tema. Metodologia.**

The centrality of theme in the research activity, specifically in the construction of its methodology, is the focal point of the present text as an element that many times is considered secondary or even disregarded. We present, briefly, five dissertation and thesis projects developed in the *Childhood and Contemporary Culture Research Group* in order to cast a sensitive look at the place occupied by the theme in the construction of such methodology, considering that these researches were produced in the interdisciplinary field of childhood studies and part of the debate about the specificity of research *with* children.

The proposed analysis is based on the philosophy of language which understands the research as a discursive production, especially in Human and Social Sciences, whose *object* is also a subject that has a voice and places itself in the dialogue. In such dialogue, the interlocutors' voices – the researcher and his others, are children – has played a significant role in debates about the methodological production of research and the ethical principles that support it. The research records what specifically has been said or done by the children, reporting the dialogues among researchers and children in a relational and dialogical way. Usually, it is around this *me-you* otherness that methodological strategies are designed to organize and systematize verbal communication, sometimes using a palette of strategies that have already become classic in scientific initiation manuals – observation, questionnaires, interviews – on the other hand, building strategies that suit the specificity of the interlocutor – games, workshops, drawings.

It is common that the theme and the methodology end up developing separately in the research work, leaving the study of the theme as a strictly theoretical work, that is placed in parallel with the methodological construction. It is recurrent to reserve in theses dissertations or scientific articles, a chapter or section dedicated specifically to the researcher's relationship with the theme, to a literature review or even to a state of the art about the theme in the context of knowledge production. In spite of the importance and the work that such studies demand, what we are calling into question is that it is possible that the research theme, in this separate approach, is expropriated of its fertility in methodological terms since it is reserved to methodology another section and/or a different kind of approach.

The purpose of this text is to question the centrality of the theme in the theoretical-methodological research options, conceiving the theme as a third crucial element in the constitution of the relationship of otherness between the researcher and his 'double', who here specifically happens to be the researcher and the child. If the researcher and the child are the *me-you* of the interlocution relationship, the theme is the *he* who has been talked about. The theme is the *he* who creates the *me-you* relationship. The theme has an active – not a passive – part in the dialogue. Changing the theme changes the whole relationship. It puts, (in) disposes, makes speak or silence. Vertigo-theme. Theme-desire. Theme-fashion. Theme-duty. Taboo theme. The theme is for those who put themselves in dialogue with it. There is no dialogue without a

theme. Our intention, in bringing it to a central condition in this debate is neither to separate it aseptically from the living relationship it maintains with the interlocutors; nor to weave any hierarchy among them. Rather would be to draw attention to the theme as an element that actively establishes and disputes the conditions of the discourse.

Such conception is based on Bakhtinian's philosophy of the language circle, which asserts that all discursive production necessarily implies the presence of a speaker, a listener and the theme around which they take turns in the dialogue (Bakhtin; Volochinov, 2006). It is the theme that underlies the dialogue and also the subjects; in the dialogue, value themselves on the theme, on themselves and on each other. In the present text we will research with children, which shows that this triad in the ensuing discussion, consists on researcher, child(ren) and the theme that sets them in conversation. Also implying that this dialogue, in its base, produces and disputes conceptions of childhood and adulthood. What childhoods are produced by scientific discourse? How does this theme become relevant in scientific knowledge? What place does the child occupy in this knowledge?

The theme is a component of verbal communication and the speech organizer, therefore, of the dialogue. It is the enunciation raw material, the content that mobilizes the dialogue amalgamated in the discourse forms; thus, articulating structure and superstructure it is formed by social reality fragments materialized in language. In one hand it is a condition for interlocution; on the other, its unstable permanence and ephemeral significance are fundamental to the flow of language (Bakhtin; Volochinov, 2006; Boenavides, 2015). The theme is linked to the semantic perspective and also to the verbal and non-verbal meanings of language, eminently evaluative and ideological, since it is determined by the linguistic forms and also by the extra-verbal context, including whatever is said or not.

If the theme establishes dialogue, the interlocutors are the ones who ensure the theme's permanence or evanescence, and even each other, alternating in the dialogue or directing its end. Here the idea of a methodology in its embryonic sense seems to take shape, as the art of establishing and maintaining a conversation. By the way, what is the methodology in the research activity if not that?

This discursive condition marks both the simplest daily encounters, such as a greeting, a huff or information, and the most complex and specialized debates, such as the theory of relativity or the polyphony in Dostoevsky's work. Bakhtin and Volochinov use terms such as *theme and thematic content* in order to point out a distinction among discursive genres. Although the authors avoid making any hierarchy on these concepts striving to maintain tension between them, it is clear that the concept of *thematic content* receives some criticism as it appears referred to a type of scientific activity that tends to turn its back on the world of everyday life.

Bakhtin/Volochinov's concern (2006) is similar to what Walter Benjamin (2009) addresses on colonial pedagogy: in his eagerness

to prepare children for adulthood he selects in culture, themes that he considers essential to present them properly in the form of school content. In this adaptation process, ponders Benjamin, an artificiality results preventing a theme from being recognized as culture. In this perspective, culture is annihilated while the school process is void of meaning. An education that considers the context is a necessary political counterpoint pointed out by the author.

It is the same motto as the classic text *Art and Responsibility*, written by Bakhtin (2003): life and art or life and science, can maintain an ethical relationship of mutual responsiveness or just a mechanical relationship. If science (or art) distances itself from life, its increasingly abstract statements fade and weaken communication. The same is true if everyday life gives up systematically elaborating its problems. To paraphrase Bakhtin, the scientist must know that (his) science is responsible for the triviality of life, just as men and women in their daily life, with their demands or abdicating them, are responsible for science's power or sterility.

Perhaps the Bakhtin (2003)/Benjamin's (2009) ethical challenge lies not only in the task of keeping the dialogue/tension between life and science fresh, but also to highlight that life is not just a *problematic to be solved* or a *content to be abstracted*. A closer look at the theme shows that among the statements it evokes, there is an extensive palette of conceptions of the world, science, relationships and methodologies. The theme is always the world, *the vast world*, the subject which one speaks or is silent; the theme is even who speaks and who is silent. A theme is not born in a void, but in a context of individuals located in time and space. It is born in the social and cultural world and to which is directed.

The Theme and the Birth of a Research

If the reader accepts an invitation to think for a moment on how a topic of his research was chosen – the first one, current one, the one to come – he may have difficulty saying, for sure, whether he actually chose the topic, or if was chosen by it. The same applies to a research that has just ended as the researcher remains marked by her/his theme. It may happen that one wants to say goodbye or even break free from it, in order to launch yourself into new horizons and there follows the theme, amalgamated with the researcher, as a kind of second skin, an identity. In situations like these, it becomes possible to perceive that although treated as an object by the researcher, the theme shows that it is also a very active, willful, even a revanchist subject.

The birth of a research is an event that takes place within the discursive order and establishes flows of language. The theme *appears* in the eyes of the researcher as sight or phantasmagoria, to use Benjamin's terms (Benjamin, 2006). It is this phantasmagoria condition that appears to be obscure, the immensity of what remains to be known that gives rise to the researcher; and, once hooked by the theme, starts to

stalk him, amalgamate him until he is enslaved by it. It is the theme that gives rise to the dialogue. The theme itself has neither author nor authorship. Authorship is designed in the way of dealing with the theme and in the argumentation exercise. It is like someone who argues about a topic that the researcher establishes his research and becomes its author, authorship that he can share and even lose if he gives up the place of answering the theme to keep him alive in the flow of language.

If the theme establishes the dialogue, we must pay attention to it, not to dominate or colonize it, to be touched in a sensitive way by how it presents itself in life. Walter Benjamin (1970) has long asserted that modernity tried to subdue the simplicity of direct relationship with things, to the extent that it guided knowledge under an eminently epistemic and supposedly timeless subject. In his *Program for a Coming Philosophy*, the author drew attention to the urgency of putting the problem of knowledge on new bases, taking into account the uniqueness of the experience. He directed his criticism to knowledge theories of an eminently explanatory character, also on the field of education, which with its eagerness to transform culture into school content removes culture from the relationship with everyday life and artificially re-presents it to children, already disfigured, as a prototype of instrumental knowledge.

The simplicity of the immediate relationship with the physical and social world is the motto that leads us to think/live it, the theme, as the home of the methodology in a research project that aims to deepen the human experience of social reality. It is a thinking/living the theme inside the theme, glued to it, into it, an experience of an aesthetic character that guides a different posture of research. This does not imply denying an epistemology, on the contrary, it expands it, insofar as compares it in the dialogue with the ethical and aesthetic dimensions, involving knowledge, an essential relationship for a science that protects itself humanly and does not turn its back on everyday life.

There is no theme that is not within culture and social reality. When the theme affects us it requires to build a sensitivity in the wake of what Benjamin (2006) says, is more like allowing ourselves to be touched by the theme than throwing ourselves into it, surrounding it to make it talk to us, it is at stake to put in check the limits of an empirical conscience, that is based on the idea of a psychological subject that organizes knowledge produced in an externality field. A theme emerges as a greatness in the face of which it is necessary, first, to be silent, feel it, understand the times and languages in which it communicates; which requires giving up an armed and anxiously explanatory stance, engaging in an almost mimetic activity of understanding its internal laws.

Walter Benjamin (2005, p. 80) deals with it in the fragment *Hunting Butterflies*, where he presents the game that takes place between a boy and a butterfly, a ballet and dispute game offered as a metaphor to understand the laws of the foreign language in which butterfly and flowers communicate before your eyes, a primordial language and with its own semantics. The author says:

Except for occasional summer trips, we settled in annually, before I went to school, in nearby summer houses. For a long time, what reminded me of them was the spacious box on the wall of my room, with the beginnings of a collection of butterflies, whose oldest specimens were captured in the Brauhausberg Garden. Sulfur-colored moths with worn edges and very shiny wings, reminded me of the ardent hunts that so often attracted me from the well-kept paths of the garden to remote places, where I faced helplessly with the conjuring of the wind and the scents, the foliage and the sun, which possibly commanded the flight of the butterflies. They fluttered towards a flower, hovered over it. With the net raised, he hoped only that the charm that seemed to operate from the flower for that pair of wings would do its job; then that fragile body escaped to the side with gentle impulses to immediately shade, immobile, another flower and, almost instantly, abandon it without having touched it. If a sphinx that could comfortably have reached, mocked me with hesitations, oscillations and fluctuations, then I would have wanted to dissolve myself in light and air in order to approach the prey without being noticed and to be able to dominate it. And that desire was so real that it blew over me, that irrigated me, every flap and every flutter of wings, with which I fell in love. Among us, the old hunting statute began to impose itself: the closer I got to the insect with all the fibers, the more it took on the essence of the butterfly, the more it adopted the nuance of human decision in every action, and, finally, it was as if his capture was the only price at which my condition as a man could be revived. However, even when I had fully recovered it, it was hard for me to walk the path between the stage of my happy hunt and my base, where, from a herbalist's drum, ether, colored head pins and tongs were emerging. And in what state was that territory behind me: the bent grass, the trampled flowers; on top of that, the hunter had thrown his own body behind the net. And despite so much damage, so much inelegance and violence, the frightened butterfly remained trembling and yet, full of grace, in a fold of the net. It was in this painful way that the spirit of that being condemned to death penetrated the hunter. The language in which he had witnessed the communication between the butterfly and the flowers - only now did he understand some of its laws. His bloody lust lessened as his confidence grew. However, the air in which that butterfly moved is now impregnated by a word that I have never heard or pronounced for dozens of years. She has retained the unfathomable words of childhood with adults. The long state of silence transfigured them. Thus, in that air filled with butterflies, the word Brauhausberg vibrates. At Brauhausberg, near Potsdam, we had our summer house. But the name has lost all its gravity, it no longer contains traces of the brewery and is, in any case, a hill surrounded by blue, which appeared in the summer to shelter me and my parents. And that is why my childhood Potsdam lies in such a blue air, as if moths and ad-

mirals butterflies, those with peacock eyes and those of dawn were scattered on the glazed surface of Limoges porcelain, on which the battlements stand out on the blue background the walls of Jerusalem.

The long literary citation in an academic text is, in itself, a portal through which the laws of the foreign language are peered. Boys and butterflies draw their own laws of time, space and displacement with their hunting and flight ballet that have more to do with the intensity of perception than extension and its metrics. Some points interest us more often in the fragment of Benjamin: the relationship between the boy and the butterfly, the language of childhood as primordial and knowledge as an enchantment exercise.

In his hunt, the boy is increasingly assuming the movements and ways of being of the butterfly, almost becoming it, the butterfly itself, to escape adopting the boy's cunning. What is at stake is to understand the laws of the foreign language, in which the butterfly and the flowers communicate before your eyes. An exercise in the production of similarities from which, in an extremely sensitive way, the internal laws of a primordial language with its own semantics are entered:

Mocking the child, the insect swayed, floating. As it flew before a flower and hovered over it, the boy, with the net lifted, expected only that 'the charm, which seemed to operate from the flower for that pair of wings, would do its job'. But, in its 'fragile body, the butterfly escaped with 'soft impulses' and soon went to 'immobile shade' another flower, quickly abandoning it without having touched it. The child longed to 'dissolve in light and air' to approach its prey without being noticed. A desire so real that every flutter of wings blew over her, irrigating her and making her passionate (Castro, 2009, p. 206).

Highlighting the mimetic character that draws this ballet, Cláudia Maria Castro (2009, p. 206-207) reminds us that for Benjamin

[...] perhaps there is no superior function of the human that is not decisively codetermined by this mimetic faculty that children play in their school. In children's games, imbued with mimetic behavior, children imitate people, but they also imitate things. [...] As this imitation power is not limited to a passive reproduction of the reality already given, but constitutes a true interchange activity between the world and the man who expresses himself, the similarity that this faculty produces is immaterial.

In Benjamin's perspective, the concept of mimesis based on the knowledge of the ancient world, is also based on the idea that nature and the extensive physical world are also subjects of action. This perspective, of an ontological character, faded with the advent of modernity and the emergence of a hegemonic science, whose center is an eminently epistemic subject that unilaterally aims to transform the world (physical, social, cultural) into an object, explaining it with his analyti-

cal reason. In this context, the mimetic faculty tends to migrate to language, where the sign seeks to assume it as a task, especially in writing.

The mimetic faculty, however, is a human faculty that resists as a childhood language, with internal laws that can be seen in children's games where children, nature and things inhabit an ontological community. So, this remains the basis of many cultures in their diverse cosmologies and epistemologies, coexisting and/or disputing social recognition even today in face of the unequal hegemony of modern science. Benjamin for example, builds his theory of knowledge transiting between elements of Jewish culture, Goethe's delicate empiricism and what Michel Löwi (2005, p. 26) calls a *Gothic Marxism*, that is, a "[...] historical materialism sensitive to the magical dimension of the cultures of the past".

The child also moves between different types and forms of knowledge, without weaving hierarchy and recognizing them in their social and cultural contexts. An example of this is brought by Benjamin (2009, p. 107-108) in his fragment *Hidden Child*, where the flirtation with animism and anthropomorphism takes turns with the logic of engineering:

The child already knows all hiding places in the house and returns to them as a home where one is sure to find everything as before. The heart flutters, holds the breath. Here is enclosed in the material world. This world becomes extraordinarily clear, approaches the children in silence. Thus, only someone who is to be hanged realizes what rope and wood mean. Behind the curtain, the child turns into something undulating and white, becomes a ghost. The dining table under which squatted turns into a wooden idol in a temple, where the carved legs are four columns. Behind a door, becomes a door; has incorporated it as a heavy mask and like a priest-magician will bewitch all people who enter with no warning. For no price should it be found. When make faces, is told that just as the clock strikes the hours, the face will stay forever. What the truth is in all this, the children know it in their hiding place. Whoever finds them out can make them petrify like an idol under the table, entertain them forever as a ghost in the curtain, banishing for the rest of their life in the heavy door. That is why, when touched by the ones looking for them, the children let the demon out that would transform their escape with a strong cry, so that is not found - in fact, does not even wait for that moment, anticipate themselves with a cry of self-liberation. That is why they never tires of fighting with devil. In this fight, the house is the masks arsenal. However, once a year, gifts [are left to them] in mysterious places, in the empty eye sockets, in the severe mouth of the house. The magical experience becomes science. Like his engineer, the child disenchant the dark house of their parents and looks for Easter eggs.

In its mimicry, the child retains the face of the world (Castro, 2009) and perhaps this is the researcher's challenge: to retain from the

theme its face. This requires understanding the theme as being also an active subject in the construction of knowledge, not just an obedient object to the researcher's protocols. When a theme establishes a dialogue in the form of a research rather than surrounding the theme, like a daring engineer who draws a map on his worksheet in search of Easter eggs, the call made to the researcher is to first enter the game that turns his/her theme into a district with its own languages and laws. It is here, precisely here, that the birth of a research methodology is shown, the babbling of a childhood language, a condition for the production of a sensitive science, without which, as Benjamin (2009) asserts, we run the risk of petrifying caricatures when the *hours strike*.

The methodology is shaped in the researcher's action, to produce similarities between his research and the theme, as it appears in everyday life. This task is not different from that in which human beings, looking up at the sky in a cluster of stars, produced immaterial aesthetic similarities amongst them, creating what they call constellations. The same thing happened with the boy and the butterfly who, at the time of the hunt, take turns on their similarities. It is the production of a type of similarity proper to the mimetic faculty, which Benjamin (1985), in his text *The Doctrine of Similarities*, conceptualizes as an *extra-sensitive similarity*, of an immaterial and invisible character, which "[...] is not limited to a passive reproduction of the reality already given, but it constitutes a true activity of exchange between man and the world that expresses itself" (Castro, 2009, p. 207).

Benjamin (1985, p. 110) considers that, being the extra-sensitive similarity of the field of perceptions that are not fixed, as they are shown in a flash, it has its own time in which it can be perceived *in action*, or, as Castro facilitates us (2009), when it *can be grabbed*, like what happened to the boy and the butterfly: the similarity produced has the exclusive duration of the clash and, after that, can even be evoked as memory, but only there, in the clash, where it took place as a likeness. There is a game of enchantment and disenchantment, where, sometimes, the time is one of evasion and surrender and, at other times, the time is the eagerness of capturing lightning while it is not yet fading. What is at stake is the retention of its physiognomy - the way it shows itself and under which it allows itself to be looked at.

These considerations seem important to draw the research methodology. What kind of relationship does the researcher build with the theme? On what bases does she/he build hers/his perception? What extra-sensitive similarities are possible for the researcher at the time of his/her research? What is the time to apprehend them, if they do not last more than a flash? More than *getting to the theme*, a research stage that has already been extensively explored in the reports, it is urgent to experience *being with the theme*, *to be with the theme*, enunciating from *within it*. Occupying his/her research as someone who morphs into a hidden child, who dominates his/her hiding places at home, but who in search of Easter gifts acts like an engineer, that seems to be the hidden lesson that Benjamin bequeaths us in his fragments. Play hide and seek to let the theme show itself.

To mimic the theme, to metamorphose into it, to feel part of it, or, to put it another way, to relate to the theme from the perspective of simplicity:

[...] let him communicate, let him show how he touches and is touched by time and the space of saying, the conditions in which he reveals himself, in which he affects, in which he puts his sensuality at stake. The first hearing of a research is for your theme, because it keeps the secrets of time and space that draw the meeting. It is necessary to let him show the languages in which he allows himself to be approached, the proper rhythm he has in the flow of life (Schubski et al., 2018).

It is in the theme that the otherness between the researcher and his other is woven. In this case, the research in the interdisciplinary field of childhood studies, the other-child has a lot to teach the researcher – both the children who may be the interlocutors of the research and the childhood, that inhabits the researcher as experience and memory. The language of childhood, therefore, is not foreign to him, even though it may only sound exteriorized to him.

Childhood as a Theme, Childhood in a Theme

There is always a conception of childhood that permeates the choice of the theme, as well as a conception about what research with children should be. This conception is shown in the choice of childhood as a theme and in the justification for its realization. Even before creating a specific project, researching childhood – in its condition of experience – and/or researching with children in its condition of social and generational category – implies taking childhood as a primary theme. Along with this, there is an ethics that is drawn in what we assume or intend to be childhood, which changes in the research field, reaffirmed in the dissemination of results. How does childhood affect the researcher so that it becomes a theme for him? Why do you choose this theme and not others? Why do you choose childhood as a theme?

Understanding that childhood is a primary theme, a founding theme for all research involving children and childhoods, it is worth mentioning that any other theme taken for study relationally relates to the theme of childhood. When childhood, as a theme, establishes a research, to what themes is it approaching, from which does it move away? What themes gain hegemony? Which ones are silenced? What themes in research with children have been discussed? Which of these themes emerge proposed by the researcher? What themes emerge through children? What themes do they demand? What themes do they avoid? There are so many emerging questions when the theme is brought to the center of the dialogue.

In our research trajectory, we have noticed that it is an unconditional and almost mimetic opening that shows that each theme, in its uniqueness, calls for its own form of treatment, a methodology, inso-

far as it has its own way of being, fertilizing the research or evading it. In this sense, it becomes artificial to think a priori methodologies like someone who draws on a hollow stencil that allows the application of different paints, on different walls. It is the sensitivity to the theme, the surrender to it and its languages that makes each research one, unique, unrepeatable in its methodology (Schubski et al., 2018) and conception.

To dialogue with the theme language, to inhabit its spaces, feel its rhythm and retain its physiognomy are essential experiences for the realization of a methodology. The necessary theorizing and authorial character of the research are extracted from them. It is not, however, an easy task and a first difficulty, may be to be touched by the theme with simplicity. Where and when is the research born? This is exactly where the topic offers itself as a hiding place and calls for conversation. In what language does he call it? What time pace do you require? What kind of attention does it require? What is its dynamics? What, from this dynamic, is shown as a prototype for a methodological strategy?

Below we present some research developed by the *Research Group on Childhood and Contemporary Culture*. The intention is to present them giving visibility to the centrality of the theme in the construction of the methodology. They are brought as exemplars from the perspective of simplicity, which is common when an example is used to give materiality to what is being talked about. They do not pretend to offer themselves as a model, and the theoretical argument of the present text makes it impossible. These are reports resulting from studies, dialogues and the confrontation of dilemmas that the researcher faces in the research process. Observing the preponderance of the theme's role in the methodology construction or, being aware of the nuances of the researcher's relationship with his/her theme, are not always possible experiences to be perceived by the researcher while immersed in the research process. It is sometimes often when the finished text obtains otherness in the reading, that such theme centrality comes to the fore – and often, to show that there were other, more fruitful paths.

We are here reaffirming the importance of exercising a dialogue based upon otherness about research processes, still in their procedural condition, in action. Here, it is worth highlighting the formative character of research groups that can provide such critical otherness to their members throughout the process. It is this otherness that transforms small particular dilemmas into deep research questions that form and educate the group as well, to build epistemologies averse to a colonial thinking. It is in this perspective that the present text is written in *plural*. And it is in this tone that we want to bring you some examples of what we are talking about particular research situations that, in the dialogue, magnify themselves as collective issues. Studies whose central themes are: children and online social networks, children in viral videos, children's birthdays, musical creation of children and children in the samba circles.

The first research is based on social networks, more specifically, Orkut and Facebook, and it is the Doctoral Thesis authored by Nélia

Mara Rezende Macedo (2014). The theme emerges in the school context with children in the literacy phase talking about posts they shared on Orkut. The teacher struggles to get into the conversation and what she receives in response is a direct question “Do you have Orkut?” Such a question sounds like a request for a password, signaling that the subject they were dealing with would not be understood from the *outside*. The theme, which emerges by raising the teacher to the condition of researcher, indicates having its own environment and language: the online social network. Aiming to talk to the children about the uses they made of social networks, the researcher, attentive to this subtle truth, started to design her research methodology *in* the use. She created private *chats* with children who were already her *friends* and developed her research – now on Facebook – under two work fronts: observing the children’s profiles – whatever they post, like, or comment and share – and a conversation more often through these *chats*.

Occasionally, the children returned to signal the uses of language which are typical of this environment. If the researcher used the chat space to comment on any post made by them, they complained about the fact that the researcher did not make such a comment in the place that the social network reserves for *comments* – as the name indicates. To the longest conversations, they warned that in Face, conversations are literally more abbreviated. The researcher was alternating her movements mobilized by the children’s indications with provocations that she made with the intention of knowing and provoking a critical use – comments, for example, about the criteria for making friends online, if the posts were public or seen only by online friends, photo posts, what they used to say when they commented and how they dealt with what was said to them in the comments of their posts.

The reader’s greater or lesser familiarity with the language of the previous paragraphs shows that the theme of this research (the theme of all research), already offered paths for its exploration and that they were showing themselves to the researcher as she allowed herself to approach it (the theme), not in the desire to dominate it, but to accompany it in its flow, that it could show itself to her in its intimacy - its time, space, language and secrets. It is in this delicate area that the theme brings the ethical issues of research to the table. In this case, the central question was the creation of a research survey with children *on* Facebook, when this social network was supposedly not intended for them. The normative game that is established between the social network and children helps us to better understand what we are calling a theme (the one whose researcher and children deal with in the research condition): children adulterate the age to make their profiles in social network; the social network, which, according to this criterion, is not aimed at children, internally offers a series of childish games and celebrates Children’s Day. The topic calls for research. Offers paths. Invites you to read the Thesis.

It was by asking for research that the theme of viral videos came into existence in Perseu Pereira da Silva’s (2018) Master Dissertation. Vi-

ral videos are those that circulate exponentially on social networks and that in a short time add up to millions of views - a rate of contamination, a term now common in times of pandemic. Among the most viral videos are those that print the image of children. Childish, funny, conflicting, violent situations. Intimacy. Exposures. What makes childhood image becoming viral? In what terms does the childhood in videos becoming viral contrast with the prescriptions for Internet's use by children, as mentioned in the research previously cited? When does childhood evoke admiration, exposure, commotion, protection, carelessness, indifference?

Accustomed to the logic and complexity of video production, Perseu structures his research work by organizing a collection of these videos that circulate and aiming to contact children whose images became viral and the authors of said videos, those who originally filmed and/or posted these productions. Perseus' starting point is that all media, as discursive production, are authored and addressed. But social networks, as an environment for the circulation of these videos, sets this thesis into question. Paradoxically, the collection grew exponentially and the attempt to contact / dialogue with the authors of these videos or with the children who starred them was increasingly showing an endless work, even when searched through the channel where the video had been posted. A close look at the comments that the platforms make available in the videos shows that these, in large part, are made more to mark other people to see the videos rather than questioning the content they deal with. The videos were replicated in memes, remixes and a series of recreations, transiting and replicating between different platforms – Youtube, Facebook, WhatsApp – making sure that the image of children does not stop multiplying.

Here, it is worth paralyzing the viral flow and to resume the discussion over the research theme. Let us note that, while the previous research invited an immersion without limits in the environment of the social network Facebook, the logic of viral videos, in contrast, is averse to any immersion. The *original post* may not only be technically inaccessible, but in the flow of this viral practice, it has become socially unnecessary. The theme demanded that the researcher become a *voyeur* of an infinite number of videos, be those he accessed as a researcher who organizes his field material, or also the videos that started to be shared with him as the his research topic became public. Indications that do not cease even after the research is finished.

There are two different researches that have technologies – and, more specifically, social networks – as support for their event. However, in the field of their different themes and with their internal laws, they guide the methodological construction in a unique way. It is necessary to be attentive to extract its political dimension at the heart of technical issues: if it is necessary to be a user to be able to dialogue with the theme, *from within*, the same theme that establishes the research, paradoxically, also feeds the market, and calls for different languages. The researcher who is not aware of this may not politically overcome his/

her condition as user in the dialogue, naturalizing the slogan that social networks are, by their nature, dialogical. It is necessary to inquire – *from within* – what is being called dialogue and its real possibilities, when, under the internal laws of the subject, it flourishes, or when it simply does not fit in.

Relationships between intimacy and exposure are also present in Núbia de Oliveira Santos (2013) doctoral thesis, whose theme is children's birthdays. Initially conceiving the birthday as marking the time in relation to their date of birth, it aimed to talk with children about the meaning that this date has for them. When the theme is shown to children, however, it is redrawn: birthday is party. It is the party that signals the birthday. Researching children's birthdays, therefore, involved researching birthday parties. Theme with its own space, time, language. To mimic the theme, in this case, implied being at parties. How does a researcher enter a birthday party, a private environment? Limit yourself to invitations that might arrive? To crash the parties uninvited? What does the theme ask for?

According to the laws of an etiquette designed by the theme, the researcher built a path that aimed on expanding her social world limits. She went to children's parties that were already part of her friendship or kinship network and, in these parties, started talking about her research and looking for ways *to offer herself to be invited* to the parties of this network that was formed from the children's circle with which the researcher already lived with. Thus, adopted by this network, she started to attend different parties, some in which the invitation was justified solely by research and others in which, due to the recurrence of her presence, she became a friend joining the list of guests. Here, it is worth noting, both the surprise of the hosts with the unusualness of the theme in a survey, and the research concepts that have permeated the invitations. Gradually the researcher became someone that no one cannot forget to call. Also she is the one who is expected to say something about the party, since she is a researcher. And what to say about a party for those who are making the party? How do speakers and listeners take valuable turns on the topic? How do extra verbal contexts redraw the theme and the relationship between the interlocutors? If we have already dealt with the ethical issues that imply that the researcher has the condition of being a guest, now it is worth asking how the condition of the guest affects the researcher? What does the theme ask?

A child's birthday party is not just a party since it involves preparations, realization and its developments, and, more recently, a theme. The party also has its theme. Invitations, party theme, cake, congratulations, animation, gift exchange and souvenirs. Each item mentioned opens a portal for research. Verbally made invitations. Tickets. Printed material for decorations. Personalized manuscripts. Intimate parties. Party performances. Party at the child's home, at a party-house, at school, in the park, at the zoo, on the beauty salon, in the limo. Themes inspired by media, school content, professions. Children organizing their games, animators organizing their games and children. Sponta-

neous or *animated* games to involve adults. Hand-delivered gifts for the birthday boy/girl, gifts kept by the family or party house organizers for delivery to the child after the party ends. Congratulations. Poses for photos. Souvenirs for the guests. In this extensive activity, which is a party, the research methodology outlined by the theme, included observing parties, talking to children, analyzing the chosen themes, invitations, photographs, souvenirs.

It is difficult to perceive in this infinity of items, the affection that mobilized each one. From the homemade cake *because this year there will be no party* to the most elaborate cake, from the nonexistent table to the table that boasts the most, from the imaginary party to the market party, there is a family – someone – telling the child how important he/she is. It is difficult to perceive, in the subtlety of these limits, the ethical one that is drawn for the researcher. What can the guest say about the party she/he was at? And the researcher, can you leave quiet? Between the smallness of affection and the culture of the show, the theme becomes an *aporia*, a minefield, as she was once told. The theme demanded ethically a delicacy of treatment that, without neglecting the contradictions that went through the process, marked the form of writing and the results of the research

A similar delicacy was also required of João Lanzillotti da Silva (2015), whose thesis dealt with musical creation with children. The study gained research status when it emerged in the music classes in which he works as a teacher. How does the musical creation process take place among children? It is worth noting that this question has nothing to do with the question that would ask how children are taught music. In this case, the theme requires that conditions be put in place for children to live creative processes with the musical language – which implies space, time, specific material conditions. And also some challenges: how to recognize a creation? How to say what is not? How to register these processes?

Listening to themes demands the researcher adopted the methodology of organizing a workshop, offered during school hours. The call for participation proposed to *set up a band* and put as an initial criterion that interested parties *knew how to play an instrument*; but a theme, is never offered in the same way to the variety of its interlocutors and the metric of *knowing how* to play was restricted to self-declaration, forming a band with children at different levels of musical knowledge. The theme of creation gave the direction when the researcher presented the project, saying that they would be free to organize the workshop and the band, but that at the end of the semester would be nice for them to take something along, produced there to participate in a school event.

Musician and teacher, the now researcher heard that the theme required time and not directivity. Then, as the days gone by, let the children try out instruments searching for music, exchanging lyrics and musical figures, meeting elsewhere. In one crack or another of this routine, he preferred to remain quieter and observing, sometimes caught some children commenting on arrangements, suggesting a touch or the

other. Months later, the workshops continued as a group of friends who met to play together the music they liked. The researcher tried *to be one of them* so as not to hinder their processes. The band was doing very well. But the research was beginning to worry João

This feeling of watching time go by and, apparently, the research does not happen is a recurring feeling and causes a lot of distress to researchers. It's hard to live a process and, at the same time, think about it. Life and art. Life and Science. There are different rhythms of time and intensities of action. But, anyway, what happened while *nothing* is supposed to have happened? To rethink his action on the field, João listened and transcribed all the band's rehearsals so far. He heard it as if it were another, because now he could *hear himself* too. It was then that he realized that his voice barely appeared, aware that he was for the children's freedom when the creation was concerned – an ethical care that he prioritized, in a world so eager to tell them everything in the form of teaching. He realized that children repeatedly played songs they liked, but that in this repetition they risked changing an arrangement, a phrase here, another there. They included instruments not thought of in the original arrangement. They considered that some *errors* made the music better. He also realized that creation is not something spontaneous that appeared under the impetus of sporadic genius. The children agreed with Vygotsky! It was necessary to first know various songs and only then create as some of them predicted. Others have always felt comfortable in their authorial condition when they tell *look what I did*, with the same resourcefulness with which they once said they knew how to play.

Returning to the band - already listening to the children, himself and the theme – what did João do? *He played by ear*, together, as in some moments he had already done and intensified the conversation and, above all, listened. For what he had learned with the theme was that it is in the tiny and almost imperceptible sound interval, that an exchange of looks recognizes a creative outburst – and the research questions, if amalgamated with the theme, are the music questions, demands of the band. They do not respond in a foreign language. The methodology lives on the theme. Fragments of this process were selected from the many hours of recording and saved in media files, made available on the internet and referenced in a footnote in the thesis written text, so that the reader can follow the researcher's narrative about the musical creation processes of this band, being able to hear them in the language in which the music is structured – the sound.

Music is also present in the fifth, and last, research that we present here. Children in samba circles is the theme of Raíza Venas' (2019) master dissertation. A frequent visitor to the samba circles, one of the many black resistance movements and currently debased by Rio de Janeiro officials, the children presence in these circles drew the attention of the researcher, interested in furthering a study on the ways in which children participate in these popular culture environments. As in Nélia's thesis on Facebook's uses, we are not considering the relevance or

not of children's presence in the most diverse forms of cultural production. We have as a theoretical assumption that the child's place is in the culture and by their simple presence in the world, they already establish their participation. Once part of the social and cultural world, we are interested in dialoguing with their point of view and how they share meanings with the world.

At first, more than looking at the topic – so familiar – methodological possibilities, that appeared to her eyes were the impossibilities. How to search in a crowded place with relatively loud sound? Who would stop to dance the *samba* to participate in a research? The theme definitely rejected the researcher's imagination with her clipboard. On the contrary, he asked for swing and methodologies for not playing the *samba out of tune*.

In the institutional project, we rehearsed observing ways in everyday life that dispensed a direct dialogue with the children and that turned more towards the scenario of the situations experienced by them. If until then, the researcher-child verbal interlocution had been a central approach in the group's research and around what we dedicated almost fifteen years of theoretical elaboration, our intention in the new project was to build a displacement of the researcher's place in relation to the children. A posture that aimed more to quiet down, to substantiate the attention than properly engage in conversation, directive and purposefully. Let children, in their daily lives, come to affect us in different situations. It was projected to observe these situations carefully, to register them and to finish these records in the form of chronicles, in order to expand the discursive genres of scientific knowledge and to contribute politically to the popularization of science.

The flow of scientific initiation scholarship holders, master and doctoral students in a research group takes place in dialogue with the schedule of the group's institutional project. Sometimes, the student-researcher benefits from the fact that upon arriving at the group, she/he finds a theoretical framework or methodological arrangements already consolidated which offer her/him a certain security, albeit relative. When the group rehearses a new project he/she is the one who often open publicly in the academic debate, with his/her work, while theoretical or methodological options are still in gestation in the group. This was the case of Raíza, who started her master's project challenged to evaluate the possibility of observing the field and recording what she experienced in the literary form of a chronicle.

If, in one hand, the proposal was in tune with the rhythm of the *samba* circles; on the other, instigated the researcher to think that if in her graduation monographic work it was the children's voices with whom she had dialogued that attested to the truth of her research, under which bases now would this criterion of truth be based? Raíza's simple question calls into questioning the complexity of Human and Social Sciences, with its fields and methodologies, as well as the place of authority of its researchers in face of political disputes over knowledge hegemony. When does the researcher authorize himself to enun-

ate anything based on his theoretical and methodological coherence? When the researcher only feels authorized to speak under the voice of another – be the child’s voice or that of a reference author? How does the fact that Raíza being a master’s student change the conditions of her speech? There are many subtleties between what the researcher authorizes himself/herself and the authorship of his work.

The metrics of hegemonic science – which is hegemonic precisely because it internalizes itself in us as a single discourse – as well as in that Benjamin’s fragment (2009), are about to strike the hour and catch us in a frightened grimace in the form of questions: can the researcher create their methods and criteria for interpretation? Can the researcher refuse the idea of a confined truth and assume it as a search and a compass? We must learn from the children, in their hiding places, the game of wanting to be found – which we take here as a metaphor for active participation in the academic debate with our different research statements. It is also necessary to learn from the children to anticipate the fateful capture – a good metaphor for silencing and erasing non-hegemonic epistemologies. Anticipate with a loud cry of self-liberation. Here an ethics is established between the researchers, their research and the social reality: it is through the argument that they affirm authorship, defend choices and publicly submit themselves to the sieve of social recognition.

Raíza built his argument *without changing the samba that much*, as Paulinho da Viola’s music says. On the contrary, realizing that the methodology was offered in the theme itself she arrived, now as a researcher, in tune with the primordial elements of the samba circles. What is the samba made of? ‘It belongs to people! It belongs to young and old people who make the samba circle themselves! Hail the children! Leave it to the elderly’. Noting information or other on the cell phone without stopping to dance the samba, taking panoramic photographs to help the memory that sometimes shakes after a night in the samba circle, resorting to the help of the people of the samba for some information or interpretation that she deemed incomplete, noticed the children in different forms of participation: those who samba in the tiny spaces that were left for them, the disaffected ones who went without wanting to go, the daughters of workers who helped their parents or slept in some corner while their parents worked, the child workers selling candies amid the tight and paced crowd, children who bullied the samba musicians so much wanting to play their instruments, children who played together, children who were already celebrities in the world of samba. Writing with *swing* was the way Raíza found her cry of self-liberation.

Final Considerations

From the diversity of themes and paths that are insinuated in each study that we extract the thesis that entitles this text: the methodology lives in the theme. But it does not surrender immediately. There is a time to perceive it, a sensitivity, an ethics that is drawn more in the

respectful displacement of the researcher towards the theme, than in trying to bring it strategically close to you. Theme and researcher need to build a game of similarities among themselves, just like the butterfly with its boy – or would it be the boy with his butterfly? The boy to catch the butterfly? The butterfly to capture the boy? It is the enchantment and the desire for capture, it is this otherness drawn from within the theme, polished by the theme, that secrets the researcher the most fertile methodology for dialogue, the spaces and times necessary for the type of dialogue that the theme demands or requires. The methodology is born when the researcher retains the theme's physiognomy and already dialogues with it in a common language.

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