

The meeting of bodies in the educational relation between nanny and child: a literature review¹

O corpo a corpo na relação educativa entre babá e criança: uma revisão da literatura²

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Abstract:

This exploratory research on the educational dimension of professional domestic childcare focuses specifically on the building process of bodies-identities that takes place in the interaction between female nannies and the children under their responsibility. For that purpose, it gathers and discusses studies in the fields of education, psychology, sociology and history. This review aims to contribute to the denaturalization of the stereotyped image of childcare as a feminine task and to the valorization of this formative work in the domestic environment. The exposed panorama opens a series of questions to be examined in order to elucidate what is involved in the meeting of bodies peculiar to this interaction.

Keywords: body, identity, informal education, care, early childhood education

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Resumo:

O presente estudo exploratório sobre o caráter educativo do trabalho doméstico de cuidado de crianças focaliza especificamente o processo de construção dos corpos-identidades que se faz presente na interação entre a mulher babá e a criança sob seus cuidados. Para tanto, reúne e coloca em diálogo estudos produzidos nos campos da Educação, Psicologia, Sociologia e História. Tal mapeamento visa contribuir para a desnaturalização da imagem estereotipada do cuidado infantil enquanto tarefa feminina e para a valorização desse trabalho formativo realizado em espaço doméstico. O panorama desenhado abre uma série de questões a serem perscrutadas no sentido de elucidar o que está em jogo no corpo a corpo desse encontro.

Palavras-chave: *corpo, identidade, educação informal, trabalho doméstico, Educação Infantil*

Introduction

The history of each person can be read by the marks, visible and subtle, engraved on their bodies during life. Beyond traces such as scars, wrinkles, skin creases, tattoos, jewelry, and clothes, their singularities are expressed on how they move, speak, act, and express themselves. In both cases, culture, here understood as a field of meaning production, plays an important role. Consequently, if we understand education as a socialization experience in a certain cultural environment, we can give it the same importance to the constitution of a corporeity.

Adults involved in the care and education of young children have a singular way of acting towards them, materialized in aspects such as a look, the tone of voice, the posture used in the interactions, the gestures used or not, emotions and affection, if they laugh or cry, how they hold and cradles the child, the eating and hygiene habits they value, what songs and chants they sing, the stories they tell and how they tell them, if they participate or not of the games, if there are marks of suffering, of mothering, if these was shaped by corporal practices³... In the scope of professional childcare in the domestic space, all these are ways through which the body of the nanny, when dealing with the child's body, can show the marks left by her life. At the same time, new signs are added depending on the place she has in the house, the signs of respect

³ Corporeal practices are the product of systematized gestures with ludic characteristics. Summing up, they correspond to plays, dances, fights, gymnastics, and sports (Neira, 2014).

shown in her presence, the spaces and resources she can use, the tasks under her responsibility, the organization of time between work and rest, how she attends to her own needs and those of others, and her access to comfort and food. It is a whole group of marks that show, at each moment, cultural meanings that make this body more than just a biological organism, transforming it from word to a collective text. Thus, the body that cares and educates was and is, continuously cared and educated. De Certeau (1990) characterizes the body as a cultural inscription, a text that moves. Through a life-long writing that, bodies, as blank pages, become the support for a symbolic system. This is the process that transforms flesh into, in fact, bodies.

Based on this perception, we analyzed works that approach the educational dimension of professional childcare in the domestic environment, focusing specifically on the process of building a body-identity present in the interaction between female nannies and the children under their care. The option to guide our look towards the education outside school, especially nanny work, tries to answer an important gap on educational research. Queries to databases show the almost inexistence of works on the educational character of this work. Paradoxically, the term nanny appears significantly in the acknowledgements of theses and dissertations. Some caretakers are remembered by researchers as part of their stories, during their childhood, while others for caring for their children during the parents' researches. However, these women are not highlighted as a study theme in the field of education.

The lack of systematized work on the theme points to the little relevance given to the relations between educator and child in the domestic environment. To treat the theme responsibly, first it is important to highlight that recognizing the educational role of nannies' work, based on the inseparability between caring and educating, does not intend to approximate them to the status of teachers. On the contrary, to affirm the role of these women means going against the same roots that, supported by a misogynistic culture, support the continuation of depreciation of Early Childhood teachers, as well as other functions traditionally associated to women. Thus, going against the historical construction behind the lack of prestige and invisibility given to this ancestrally feminine profession, we hope to contribute to its value and recognition.

Methodological procedures

Aiming to collect and analyze the knowledge produced on the educational work of nannies, we did an exploratory research, as proposed by Alves-Mazzotti and Gewandszajder (1998), adopting as a procedure a bibliographical research. According to Lima and Mito (2007), this implies a movement of apprehending questions and a critical dialogue with the bibliographic material.

Our sources were *Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações*, *Banco de Teses da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (Capes)*, and the *Banco de Teses e Dissertações da Universidade de São Paulo*, as well as the electronic databases SciELO, Google Scholar, and Cairn. The research was developed in the second semester of 2016 and the first semester of 2017, around the keyword *babá* on titles, abstracts, and keywords, and its translations in English and French (*nanny, au pair, nounou, nourrice, garde d'enfants*), to encompass different modalities of childcare in domestic environment. We analyzed works published between 1995 and the first semester of 2017. Due to our research question, we did not include studies about general domestic work, which did not distinguish *housekeeping* and *childcare*; nor those that approached broader care, not focusing on children, such as the care of elderly and sick people. We found 10 articles, 1 thesis, 7 dissertations, 4 books, and 1 work published in the annals of a congress.

We could see that, though timidly, the universe of nannies is increasing growing in Brazilian and foreign scientific literature, mainly focusing on the work relations established through domestic work and the studies of gender associated to them. The set of materials found led us to divide them into 3 groups. On the first, we assembled researches which offer a general panorama on the historical and social role of these workers. After, the literature on the theme of nannies, which read their bodies as identity signs of gender, race, and class. Finally, we explore studies on their roles in children's education.

The nanny as a domestic worker

In the field of Social Sciences, nannies are the themes of various researches that deal with domestic work, in a broad sense. Such contributions have been showing the contradictions established when houses are workplaces and workplaces are houses: if on one hand, domestic work was and is essential for the development in industrialized societies, on the other it is still invisible and not valued. (Blackett, 2004; McClintock, 1995). In the collective work organized by Fauve-Chamoux (2004), aiming to understand the current globalization of domestic work, researchers discuss these social actors and highlight its marginalization when characterizing them, throughout history, based on data such as origin and place of work, gender, ethnic group, motivation, relations with their own family and employer's family, besides their legal rights and duties. Mostly done by women, such type of work was key to socioeconomical development and to the process of urbanization of Western contemporary society. According to the (male) model of giving sense to existence, in contemporary societies the number of women who organize their lives around mottos such as "build a career" and "search professional success" is growing, assuming the imperative of using a considerable part of time for those endeavors, especially when they are considered young (that is, useful to the job market). The time and energy demanded obliges the attribution of household and family chores to other people. In fact, the work market rejects and undervalues experiences whose management, in the pre-industrial society, were due to women within the family – such as birth, raising children, keeping the house, feeding the family, the care of the ill, and death. The refusal of old functions of the traditional wife created, in a way, a new industry of care.

To Hochschild (2004), the global dynamic of domestic work organizes itself around a new wealth, less tangible, but not less precious than those from the colonies in the past. Contrary to previsions that foresaw its end, this type of job has been growing around the world, and one marks of this globalization movement is the phenomenon of women from poor countries working in houses in developed ones. In a global scale, we can see a flow of immigrant women that leave behind their own houses, families, and children. And, with the money earned, support them at a distance. Domestic work in childcare promotes thus a type of affection displacement: the love and attention that these women would have to offer to their own children are guided towards the children under their care, children of other women.

Similar to the process of extraction of natural resources from the South which led to the enrichment of the North countries, love is the new gold. Considering the innumerable cases in which the women doing this service are also mothers, Hochschild describes a worldwide surgery to transplant affection. Many families gladly see the affection bond between their children and the nannies, without noticing the weight it causes, removing the nannies from their own children. Under the same veil that creates the commodity fetishism, described by Marx, female love, a new good materialized on the work of domestic care, has its history and its human conditions of production hidden from the eyes of the consumer. Following this line of thought, we can say that, as it happened in colonial times, such conjecture is reproduced, in a smaller scale, even in developing countries. However, in this case it is not a mobility between national territories, but between social strata.

In the work entitled “*Você vai me servir*”: *desigualdade, proximidade e agência nos dois lados do Equador*” (“You will serve me”: inequalities, proximity, and agency”), Harris (2007) presents a comparative ethnography of the relations between domestic employees and their employers in Brazil and the United States. By drawing a typology on work arrangements, the researcher observes that, in Brazil, the activity of nanny is merged to other domestic functions. Many housekeepers clean the houses, cook, and take care of children. He sees that the expression “almost a part of the family” is frequently used to express the established relationship, in an attempt to soften the innumerable marks of difference which permeate the everyday life of this professional coexistence. On its turn, in the United States, he highlights the tendency of specialization in the different domestic attributions, thus the frontier limits between housekeepers and nannies are clearer. The author shows the attempt to rationalize work in that country, that has in the specialized companies its maximum expression. Through them, employees become almost invisible, when possible, the work is marked by impersonality. The specialized nanny with her knowledge of first aid, besides knowing how to involve children in make-believe games/plays, works in well-defined schedules, and her domestic attributions are restricted to doing children’s laundry and dishes, as well as organizing their rooms.

However, Romero (2013) shows that the theoretical barriers between housekeeping and childcare are blurred in everyday life, as practices that go against this tendency are common. Thus, getting closer to the multitask model commonly adopted in Brazil, in the United States nannies also accumulate the chores of cleaning the house, cooking, grocery shopping, doing the laundry and ironing, taking care of the children, taking and picking them on different activities,

etc. Therefore, the case of the specialized nanny is only an ideal point in a broad spectrum. Generally, domestic workers are in an extremely low position in the professional ranking. Differently from better paid and more prestigious positions, it is characterized by the lack of a clear definition of its role and the lack of recognition of its demanded abilities, expertise, and experience. Faced by this scenario, Romero (2013) distinguishes it into two categories: bridge-occupation or ghetto-occupation, depending on the role the work plays in the life of who do it. It is understood as a bridge when referring to a transitory occupation, aiming the insertion on a better paid job, as is the case of students- immigrant or not- who temporarily work as nannies while finishing a certain study level. However, when the woman faces barriers to enter in other better-paid sectors of the economy, domestic work has the role of a ghetto-occupation, a work with no perspectives of growth or human development. As a ghetto, it is a social region occupied by a minority, victims of pressures and discrimination. Generally, if, on one hand, domestic work demands little qualification, on the other, it demands a hard manual work, paired with an intense emotional investment, including what Harris (2007) called “servitude affection”. Its oppressive condition comes, in a great measure, on how the work, typical of mothers, in preindustrial society, was changed to be incorporated into new precepts of contemporary society. With its transformation into paid work, the physical demands were increased, while its creative aspect was drastically eliminated (Romero, 2013). The protagonism, the authorship, the power of decision, inventiveness, and innovation are some abilities excluded from those demanded for the job.

As nannies work in the intimacy of the employers’ houses, hidden in the private spaces of homes, little is known about these women, how much they receive and how they are treated. Such invisibility favors scenarios such as those in the United States and Europe in which irregular immigrants represent a great part of this workforce, working with no benefits or legal protections (Ibos, 2012; Romero, 2013; Williams, Tobío, & Gavanoas, 2009; Wrigley, 1995). With no governmental agencies to regularize or even count⁴ their work, nannies and their employers informally organize themselves, with a total lack of rights. Discussing the exploitation of domestic work in Brazilian reality, Harris (2007) highlights common sayings, such as “in Brazil, either you have a maid or you are the maid”. Phrases such as these establish a condition of keeping a domestic employee as a diacritical sign that distances poverty (Brites, 2007). At the

⁴ The high level of informality of domestic work significantly weakens the trustworthiness of official data.

same time, they express a type of veil that hinders the recognition of the humanity of others. As nannies and employers are mothers, we question what the former does with her own children while taking care of the kids of the later. Harris (2007) sees that, ignoring such questions, the employer gets, from paying a salary, the sensation of fulfilling ethical and moral responsibilities, dodging themselves from reflecting on the possible relations between their financial, family, and emotional needs and their purchase power, together with their work conditions- often characterized by long work hours, living on the job in small bedrooms, etc. Silveira (2011) retells the story of a nanny who, one day, had to leave her son by himself, sitting on the sidewalk waiting for a neighbor to take care of him, while she had to go to the house she worked.

In the close contact between nannies and employers, together under the culturally and affectionally environment of raising children, some differences become more visible, such as the color of skin, eyes, and hair, while other escape a superficial look, keeping their importance, such as worldview and previous life history. Positions, conflicts, accommodations tend to obey tacit demarcations of place, variables in a broad array. In a study on the professional childcare in the domestic environment, Wrigley (1995) presents a collection of experience reports that show a great variety on relationships. The author presents, from the nannies' perspectives, cases that range from a Salvadoran woman that was physically assaulted by an employer, while a Guatemalan that was happy over the 17-year-period she lived with her employer's family. However, to notice the existence of more harmonious or humanized arrangements does not mean to be indifferent to the innumerable conflicts. In a research on relationships between Ivorian nannies and their employers in Paris, Ibos (2012) characterizes such meeting as the convergency of two worlds that, if it were not for the reality of domestic work, would be kept apart by an insurmountable distance, the universe of Parisian upper classes and Ivorian families. While for the families in the first group, the house is a comfortable refuge, for the women who travel to France aiming to send money to their families in their home country, it is a workplace. The author points out an apparent blindness of employers that do not show an interest to know who is that woman they hire, what is her history, as well as not establishing relations between their presence at home and the situation of contemporary world. In other words, there is a depolitization of the relations they establish with the nanny, without noticing the tangible expressions of broader factors, such as the flow of international migration, the precarious works, and the results of a recent colonial history.

The diversity of the existing relations between nannies and mothers is focused by Silveira (2011) in an ethnographic study of nannies in Rio de Janeiro. The expression “as if she were part of the family”, frequently used to characterize the nannies’ place in the houses they work, bears subjacent paradoxes to the relationship between nannies and employers. The author reminds us that the formula “as if she were”, at the same approximates and affirms that they are not the same thing. Also, the relationship between the two women (nanny and mother/employer), with the child as an epicenter, oscillates between strangeness and familiarity, simultaneously marked by intimacy and social distance. When investigating nannies’ participation in family dynamics, Silveira notices the existence of affection ambiguities (proximity- distancing, equality-hierarchy, authority-servility, loyalty-treason), which she interprets from the crossing of the concepts of affection, intimacy, work, and money. She observes a coexistence permeated by negotiations between different social strata, whose encounter is allowed by work and affections. For the researcher, these are the two poles that mark such relationships, either reinforcing, or hiding antagonisms of class, gender— including intra-gender relationship which, sometimes, include the roles of grandmother and/or a part-time nanny—, of status categories based on socioeconomic position, race, and age. On the other hand, Silveira blurs the frontiers between affection and professionalism when reminding that both can be experienced in different ways. From the mother’s point of view, for example, to perceive a significant connection between the nanny and child can be a reason for jealousy or even the guarantee that she is a good professional.

Regarding professionalism, while a mother interviewed complained that the nanny only thinks about money, one of the nannies interviewed complained that the mother does not financially value the love she feels for her children, nor the trust relationship she has with the family. Thus, the study brings to the domestic environment categories that are commonly far from it, as if it would contaminate, in some way, the immaculate atmosphere of family relations, that is, money and career. The affection bond with the child becomes a “felling in the process of nanny work” (p.230). Therefore, it analyzes the interface of the nanny profession between feelings and remuneration (which go beyond salary, including the exchange of gifts and favors).

On the employer’s perspective, Wrigley (1995) observes, as a common point on the interviewees’ discourse that the main motivation to hire a nanny is to guarantee that their children will have individualized attention, differently from the collective care on daycares and preschools. Such families believe that, as the nanny is an employee, they can interfere more on

the type of care given to the child. Paradoxically, a significant number of families prefer to hire women with low qualifications and from poor countries (Romero, 2013; Wrigley, 1995). The notion of fragility seems to be associated to the intention of maximizing the control over them. It also allows the agglutination of functions connected to housekeeping and childcare, as a specialized laborer would not accept such accumulation of roles. It also favors a higher control on other spheres of the employee's life. The sense of isolation is recurrent in nannies' experiences, mainly those who live in the job (Romero, 2013). Besides hindering the search for other jobs, the isolation is seen as one of the main reasons for the establishment of a strong affection bond with the children. When they have less formal education these women, with no contacts in the country, no job or life options, are more easily submitted and controlled. Such position is shown by the words of a person responsible for an American nanny agency on the difficulties to find a North-American woman, with excellent qualifications: "If someone is your equal, you can't say 'Clean the dishes, do the laundry.' This is terrible to say, but perhaps [employers] think these other women are beneath them." (Wrigley, 1995, p. 5).

The control attained by employers also find its limits and has a price. For parents, it is easy to see how the house is clean, but can they know how much attention – and quality of attention- is given to the child? As physical appearance is visible and can be extremely valued by such families, a great number of testimonies collected by Wrigley (1995) shows that caretakers mainly focus on children's hygiene, brushing their hairs, showering them and clothing them in clean clothes. These aspects become more important than children's activities, which, consequently, is restricted to keeping the child tidy. Romero (2013) shows another negative result of this type of unequal relationship, whose evil, once again, comes back, as a boomerang. In such circumstances, nannies are less respected by children and have difficulties to impose their authority to establish limits and activities. Therefore, they end up becoming servants, running around to answer the will and demands of their young employers. Believing they are offering the best for their children, these families, in fact, leave them to the tyranny of their own wishes and, at the same time, reproduce and validate relations of disrespect and exploitation. The preference for women with low qualification is also very common in Brazil. Contrary to this, some families are more concerned with the richness of experience and quality of interactions provided to children. This would be the case, for example, of families who hire students as *au pairs*, a type of childcare surrounded by a discourse of cultural exchange, paired with the intention to avoid reproducing socioeconomic inequalities in their houses. One of the

interviewees with this profile justifies her option declaring that she would not bear the idea of her daughter been raised “to think that there was someone that she could talk down to” (Wrigley, 1995, p. 48).

To understand the construction process of bodies from the meeting between children and nannies, it is key to closely look the relations of differences and belongings, latent in the context of informal education in households. Such look invites us to see nannies' bodies as a material support for identity marks. The fact of being an occupation strongly feminine, from a numerical perspective to the meaning the feminine meanings connected to childcare, are added to other belonging marks, such as origin, social class, schooling level, ethnicity, religion, age. In this direction, some studies that focused on the domestic work of child shed a light on identity signs inscribed in their bodies.

Nanny’s body as a support of identity marks

A shadow blurred in the invisibility of the domestic environment, the female body who takes care of the children of others carries, at the same time, inscriptions of belonging and difference. Of course, exercising mothering does not escape conflicts. Segato (2006) defends the existence of a historic continuation between the contemporary underpaid work of nannies and the former non-paid work of female slaves. This author brings important elements to reflect on nannies’ bodies when analyzing the practice of mothering been transferred in Brazilian history and its impacts on national mentality, with an emphasis on racial issue. She describes the process through which the territory, at first undistinguished, of the mother-child body gives space to an opposition and identity differentiation, relating it to the collective movement of denying black ancestry.

Nannies bodies, as well as the legitimate maternal body, represents, to very young children, a part of themselves, an extension of their own existence. In a second moment, starts a separation between the I and the Other, this body starts to be theirs own. It stops being and I to become a Mine. Certainly, the felling of property over the maternal body does not come from a slave – slave owner relation, as it also happens towards the biological mother’s body. Slavery and motherhood, in this sense, are closer when considering the objectification of the maternal body. However, the former gets a new shape when understands a body deprived of

humanity. In the past the humanity of the female caretakers was hidden by her condition of a commodity, as a slave. Currently, this is done through the power of a work contract. For Segato (2006), considering the existence of a seduction bond with the caretaker, also strengthened during a period in which it is impossible to separate the I and the Other, melts both bodies into one.

a child breastfed or simply cared for by a darker-skinned nurse, a nurse with roots on slavery, will incorporate this image as her own. A white child, therefore, will also be black, by an impregnation of this fusional origin with a maternal body perceived as part of her own territory (p. 15).

The connection through the breast, in the past, appears nowadays as a connection through affection and the baby bottle. Segato (2006) talks about this connection as a kinship, reinforcing the meanings of breastfeeding that go beyond the biological dimension. The old presence of a *mãe preta* (literally black mother) is nowadays updated in the shape of a polyvalent *mãe seca* (a “dry mother”, that is, one that does not breastfeed, a dry nurse), which we call nanny. The history of wet nurses, dry nurses, and nannies in Brazilian houses follows the tendencies dictated by Europe (Daudet, 2008). Only in the second half of the 19th century, when the social hygiene discourse started to consider wet nurses as potential disease carriers, biological or moral, that the practice of dry nurses started to spread. The association between inheritance through blood and milk base the concern of social hygiene scientists against the use of black wet nurses.

In parallel, some expression such as “there is only one mother” gains strength, as well as statements, filled with hate, that demanded the end of slavery as the only way to end the pernicious influence of black people in the intimacy of white family homes. Through milk, black women would transmit vicious costumes, habits, and language. Such ideas were formulated into expressions to reject those “black mothers”, probably expressed “by women who, during their childhood, were cradled by these women” (Segato, 2006, p. 5), merged in their female body with slave roots. Later, to separate them, the body of this non-recognized mother will need an aggression proportional to the affection that existed before. Faced by this scenario, Segato defends that, instead of promoting the emergency of a pluri-racial culture, the close inter-racial coexistence between children and nurse in Brazilian history reinforced, through the same psychological gesture, racism, and misogyny.

Sure the movement to refuse this inheritance considered illegitimate however, does not erase cultural memory, made by believes, histories, rhythms and music, recipes and care with the body, passed on by the experience of the close relationship between wet nurses and children (Deiab, 2005). This inheritance survives the attempt to erase it from national memory, materialized in expressions such as the progressive disappearance of the nurses' bodies in photos during the end of the colonial Brazilian period. Analyzing the negatives of a photo studio active between 1860 and 1880, Deiab notices the gradual removal of black nurses from the framing of portraits. The European model, the reference for Brazilian photographers, dictated that babies were supposed to be photographed with their faces close to the mothers', to keep them quiet for the time necessary for the correct exposure. However, as young children were more used to their 'black mothers' than the biological ones, they were the ones together with them, at the center and on the foreground of initial portraits. Even older children appear, in innumerable photos, on the laps of their 'black mother'. So, to showcase the possession of health well-dressed black slaves together with the children was a sign of social status. Following the dissemination of social hygiene and abolitionist discourses, this element starts to be questioned and criticized, which can be seen in the photos in the end of the slave period when they tried to hide the black woman. However, before completing disappearing from the images, their presence still left traces: a shadow, a hand, or a wrist. The imagetic language of these registries shows the attempt of erasing traces that these women existed.

The component of violence is not limited to past times, since, as a historical continuity, it is present in the way the caretaker is inserted into families nowadays (Brites, 2007; Romero, 2013; Williams, Tobío, & Gavanas, 2009). The family context builds a socialization environment to children that reproduces and reinforces the same values that establish the conditions through which these women are inserted in the families. From an ethnographic research, Brites (2007) considers the job of low-income women in middle-classes Brazilian houses as a tool of a didactics of social distance. The presence of these underpaid workers builds for children a socialization environment based on hierarchies of class, gender, ethnicity, and race. Establishing itself with an ambiguity of affections, the undeniable affective bonds between the nanny and the child does not prevent clear hierarchical demarcations limiting the positions of employee and employer. House spaces such as the maid's bathroom and bedroom materialize insurmountable boundaries. Romero (2013) also denounces the role that the underpaid job of immigrant women as maids plays on the social reproduction of a culture "of privilege in the

childhood of future masters and mistresses” (p. 191). She shows how, intending to give children a good social position, the introduction to a universe in which each one has a well-defined place takes place since an early age.

Regarding specifically gender, the study developed by Ibos (2012) shows that, in the distribution of roles between man and women in the couple of employers, the latter is responsible for selecting, guiding, and following the nanny’s job. Though social logic connects the nanny and the mother, when connecting both to caretaking, it distances them by the alterity that distances employees and employers. An alterity expressed, in the case analyzed by the researcher, on the distinction between French and immigrants. Following the same direction, Romero (2013) posits that the presence of nannies in families’ houses defines the place of women through a contradiction. It is the job of women – underpaid, with a socially undervalued work and, often living on the job - which allows the emancipation of the female employer or, in other words, the gender oppression over a woman is a condition for another to scape this same oppression (Romero, 2013). In the competitive race for social placement, the will to provide to their children the best opportunities pass through offering them a continuous care, which is outside the reach of women in the job market. However, this is only a superficial justification because, as shown by Romero, the fact that this care is provided by women of a different social origin, working on an underpaid work, is an extremely efficient way to socialize children in the so-called privilege system, inherent to the wished position. Children quickly learn to be consumers of care. Instead of caring, they learn to be in a space in which someone’s manual work is available to answer to their wills and needs, ultimately, they learn to treat certain people as means, instead of establishing a mutual respect and valuing the human being as an end on itself.

Identification passes through differentiation. From the material collected in interviews with self-declared white men in Rio de Janeiro, Corossacz (2014) analyzes cases in which the statement of whiteness is established through their childhood memories with a black nanny. The interviewees narrate experiences of constructing their identities as white men referencing certain moments of their own biography. They all remember their nannies as someone affectively important during their childhood, with whom they lived a relation of intimacy and affection. They keep an image of a caring and loving woman. However, the biographic narratives presented describe a world in which black people only inhabit subordinate positions, such as nannies, cleaning ladies, gardeners, deliverymen, and janitors. Thus, though they remember

having established affective connections with black people, none of the interviewees talk about experiences of social inequality. Black people appear, in the reports, as references of lower, less valued places and, at the same point, as a counterpoint for their identification as whites.

Based on these biographic narratives, Corossacz also shows the combination between intimacy and inequality as one of the ingredients of Brazilian racism. On her reflection, she presents how identity categories of whiteness and masculinity act as reference points, from which other groups, taken as different, are defined and named. These men's narratives have in common, as a central core, their self-definition as whites by distinguishing them from others- in this case: a woman, black, and poor. By recognizing their own whiteness as something normal, they associate normality and neutrality to the dominant categories of gender, color, race, and class in which they take part- white men from high-middle class. The parallelism of their childhood memories, referring to events lived in Rio de Janeiro in the 1950s, with the history of homes in colonial Brazil shows a historic process of mutual formation between identity categories that, when isolated, would lose their meaning. It only makes sense to affirm oneself as belonging from a race or a context in which different skin tones are recognized and, furthermore, this is considered an important factor to define belonging, to the detriment of other possible characteristics.

In her master's dissertation, Vieira (2014) approaches nannies' bodies as a space in which social relations, crossed by markers of race, gender, and class, are lived and re-signified. She shows how historical, political, and social factors associated to domestic childcare are materialized in female bodies and their individual stories. Thus, the inheritance of slavery, the long work hours, and the low salaries are translated into the pain and tiredness daily suffered by their bodies, erasing the subject who is reduced as an utility, at the same time as a work object and as sexual objectification. This same body, object and abject, is also formed into a deep affective dimension. The testimonies collected by the researcher tell stories of the strong bonds these professionals established when caring for the childhood of other women. Vieira (2014) reminds us that

nannies are the ones that carry them, feed their growth, stimulate their perception, teach the first words, sit on the floor to play, cradle their dreams, dance together, and give their affections to a great part of Brazilian children. When alone – nanny and child- body-affection prevails. When the employers are together, other dimensions- body-object and body-abject- emerge stronger (p. 135).

The group of studies compiled here reinforces the urgency of questioning the corporeal dimension of nannies' identities, as well as the educational role they play from the relations established in the houses they work. The contributions offered mainly point to the existence of a non-declared formative role, funded on the incorporation of a worker in the family. A hidden function, as it is confined to the unsaid and the learnings in course when inserting children- and their children's bodies- in an environment regulated by shared organizing principles. In these cases, more than a formative action played by the nanny, when can say that a corporal education is set into motion through her, from the distinction effects it endures and the identity categories that cross their corporealities. On the researches presented so far, nannies are treated as a passive element in a formative context, as their active role on children's education continues to be little studied.

The nanny as an educator

Almost unexplored, the theme was, until now, marginally approached in the fields of psychology and education. The research held by Baltazar (2011), entitled *Vida de babá* (Nanny life), explores the concept of a professional persona based on Jung's theory. Her focus defends the creation of spaces to professionally train nannies and, at the same time, stimulate their psychological development. The main contribution of this study is to look over the educational role played by the nanny, together with those of caring and following the children. To Baltazar, these professionals work from the encounter of their own repertoire, their personal experiences, and the repertoire of the families to whom they work, their values and ways of being. It is a professional to deal with the consonances and divergences of this juxtaposition.

Fanti (2006) focuses on the educational relationship between the nanny and the child from a semiotic mediation established between them. She is specifically interested on the mediations put into action in moments of meals and plays, always in the domestic environment. Fanti problematizes the quality of the mediations, discussing the issue of the lack of professional formation in this segment. In her analysis she observes a stronger influence of the families regarding children's diet. In the discourse of mothers and nannies, this aspect seems to be more important than the plays/games, and, therefore, are more guided by the employers. It is during playtime that the nanny acts more under her own cultural values. Such study shows the

persistence of a dichotomic view between caring and educating in the representation of nannies' work which is also present in the own perception of these women towards their professional activity, imputing to themselves only the aspect of care and believing that educating is, almost exclusively, a parental task.

Finally, in the educational research, nannies are mentioned in works focused on the school universe, on the background of a great number of studies on Early Childhood Education. Sometimes they are presented as actor involved on the process of children's adaptation at preschool (Elmôr, 2009), other times as examples on the lack of formation of early childhood educators (Mindal, 2004), as well as an inaccessible option of childcare for most mothers (Martins & Guelfi, 2005). The designation "nanny" is also frequently used as a counterpoint to the status of a teacher, as if valuing the later depended on the devaluation of the former (Massucato, 2012). In this sense, nannies are placed, together with grandmothers, as purely negative influencers. In the testimonies given, educators try to affirm themselves from distancing from both influences, when emphasizing "we are professionals" (p. 291), implicitly saying that nannies are not. The merging of nannies and grandmothers in this perspective reinforces the non-recognition of the former as professionals and the lack of prestige of this 'feminine' work. Thus, educators act as if the valuing of their professional status depended on underestimating other traditionally feminine functions of childcare, such as domestic workers. The same happens with mothers seen, in almost half the cases, as careless and absent towards their children and their lives at preschool/nursery. Melchiori and Alves present two possible factors that could be behind those complaints. On one side, they show the persistence of a yet traditional concept of a mother's role, incompatible to the new principles of contemporary Western societies. On the other, they suppose an attempt of self-compensation, from those professionals, who are faced by a lack of social recognition and value of their jobs.

While studies on informal education focus on the mothers' role, ignoring other actors, Sampaio (2008) analyzes the role played by nannies on children's moral formation. She shows the lack of systematic knowledge on the theme and, without questioning the mother's centrality in children's education, she defends the importance of other elements to base this position when positing that, contrary to the employers, children are not impermeable to the cultural repertoire of domestics employees. The amount of time together and the quality of interactions gives time for the children to talk with the nanny, to ask her questions, listen her stories, and the music she listens while working. In this context, nannies could consciously or not transmit their knowledge

and values. Employers normally ignore this aspect, resuming nannies' capacities to offering the basic cares of feeding the children, caring for their hygiene and safety (Sampaio, 2008). Thus, it is common for employers to idealize a separation of roles: they want to hire someone to do the tasks connected to childcare, wishing that education, in the domestic environment, would be the exclusively responsibility of the family.

When recognizing the role of nannies in children's moral formation, Sampaio is faced by the imperative need of a good-quality professional formation. She highlights that the active exercise of an educational role, however, faces the stigma associated to domestic work. Similar to other domestic professions, nannies' activities are marked by negative images, frequently internalized by the workers themselves. It is common for nannies to see their work as a job that does not demand specific competences, that can be done by any woman. Many women interviewed, look down their own job and say they are embarrassed to do it (Sampaio, 2008), sometimes preferring informality to not "mess" with their CVs. The belief that the care and education of young children would be natural to women contributes to this perspective, hindering people to recognize the importance of a specific professional training. Furthermore, the profession in Brazil is regulated by the same laws of general domestic work, such as cooks, housekeepers, watchmen, private drivers, cleaners, gardeners, elderly caregivers, etc., not considering their specificities. Faced by this scenario of work precariousness, Sampaio defends that need for nannies' professionalization, through adequate regulation, adequate work conditions, unionization, and offering specific professional training. Once again, overcoming the separation between caring and education is pointed out by the author as a key challenge on establishing this formation, thus surpassing the feeble care routines mechanically done.

Final remarks

"Where is the nanny?" questions Segato (2006) in the beginning of her review of the academic Brazilian literature on the theme, after noticing that nannies are referenced, when they are referenced, as elements of lists and enumerations, with not subsequent analysis. She observes that, regarding these professionals, aspects related to their subjectivity, their social insertion, as well as their roles under the perspectives of the children and of their employers, women who delegate part of their maternal functions, are ignored. To this questioning other voices are

gradually added to analyze those topics in the area of humanities. Faced by the lack of studies on the theme in the field of education⁵, during the time analyzed, the reflections collected and articulated in this article offer contributions to consolidate the basis of an educational approach on the formative relation into motion in domestic childcare.

The scenario drawn reinforces the importance of researching this theme on the educational field, as well as offering contributions from other areas of humanities. Such contributions point ways to understand the formation of body-identities which take place within homes, in the naturalized space of domestic environment, where there is a meeting of bodies engraved by their stories of life, established positions and status, marks of cultural, ethnic, and religious belonging. While indicating the relevance of the theme, nannies' invisibility on the educational field makes us question the reasons behind this silence. The sociological and historic perspective presented on the first group of studies tries to identify the origins of such invisibility and neglect towards the work done by women in the houses. Talking about nannies necessarily means approaching themes that still carry a tacit silence, such as the conditions of women, relations of race and ethnicity, and the devaluation of domestic work in opposition to those in the public space, due to the industrialization movement that founds contemporary society.

In the second group, there are works that approach more deeply identity issues intertwined in the body which reveal the education processes that take place through the nanny, without her active role. Thus, there are a set of implicit concepts, ideas, and values that, as hidden contents, are part of children's education even if they are not declared or openly wanted. Finally, in the third group, we tried to show how nannies appear as educational agents. The analyzed researches on Education and Psychology only show the first steps of exploratory studies on a universe that demands attention, faced by the broad perspectives open. There are many questions to explore regarding nannies. Among those: who are these women and what baggage do they bring when taking care of children? What is their role on the cognitive, emotional, and corporeal formation of boys and girls? What relations are established between the adult and the child in this encounter? How do the domestic environment and the relationship with the (adult) employers influence their work with the children?

⁵ In an attempt to fill this gap, Kondratiuk and Neira's (2018) study analyzes the informal educational processes involved in the professional domestic childcare in migration contexts, observing how they are experienced in the level of bodies.

Finally, developing a focus on the active role of nannies as childhood educators does not mean to reinforce the commonplaces surrounding identity categories of women, migrants, domestic workers, neither to add to their victimization. On the contrary, the scenario of scientific production on the theme points to the need of undertaking works about nannies which allow us to know their stories, types of knowledge, resources, resistances, their moments of dare, their strategies of adaptation and problem-solving, their abilities of redesign projects and re-guide pathways, their skills and creativity when educating children. Thus, guiding new studies in the area.

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