

ARTICLE

DECOLONIAL THOUGHT IN CHILDHOOD STUDIES: CRITICAL AND POST-CRITICAL  
EPISTEMOLOGIES<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** The paper discusses how decolonial thinking appears in the database of childhood studies composed of dissertations, theses, and complete works of the Working Groups (GTs) presented at ANPEd National Meetings and scientific papers in Qualis A1 journals. This study is characterized as meta-research, that is, research on research in a field and/or area of study, and aims to indicate approaches, focuses, perspectives, and analytical models. The debate on the decolonization of research is followed by the presentation of 11 authors (0.48% of the production) who deal with decolonial thinking in a total of 2,246 cataloged works. As a result, the low presence of decolonial thinking in childhood studies is indicated and three thematic fields emerge for further research at the interface with critical and post-critical epistemologies: 1) critical decolonial thinking, childhoods and inequalities; 2) decolonial thinking, multiculturalism, childhoods and diversities; and 3) postcolonial thinking, post-critical paradigms and contemporary childhoods.

**Keywords:** childhood studies, decolonial thinking, epistemologies.

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## O PENSAMENTO DECOLONIAL NOS ESTUDOS DA INFÂNCIA: EPISTEMOLOGIAS CRÍTICAS E PÓS-CRÍTICAS

**RESUMO:** No presente artigo, discutimos como o pensamento decolonial aparece na base de dados dos estudos da infância no campo da educação, base essa composta por dissertações, teses, trabalhos completos apresentados nos Grupos de Trabalho (GTs) em Reuniões Nacionais da ANPEd e artigos científicos publicados em revistas *qualis* A1. O estudo é caracterizado como metapesquisa, ou seja, uma pesquisa sobre as pesquisas de um campo e/ou área – no caso deste artigo, os estudos da infância no campo da educação, tendo como objetivo indicar abordagens, enfoques, perspectivas e modelos analíticos. O debate sobre a descolonização das pesquisas é seguido pela apresentação de 11 autores (0,48% da produção) que tematizam o pensamento decolonial num total de 2.246 trabalhos catalogados. Como resultado, indicamos a pouca presença do pensamento decolonial nos estudos da infância no campo da educação, emergindo três campos temáticos para novas pesquisas na interface com as epistemologias críticas e pós-críticas: 1) pensamento decolonial crítico, infâncias e desigualdades; 2) pensamento decolonial, multiculturalismo, infâncias e diversidades; e 3) pensamento pós-colonial, paradigmas pós-críticos e infâncias contemporâneas.

**Palavras-chave:** estudos da infância, pensamento decolonial, epistemologias.

## EL PENSAMIENTO DECOLONIAL EN LOS ESTUDIOS DE LA INFANCIA: EPISTEMOLOGÍAS CRÍTICAS Y POS-CRÍTICAS

**RESUMEN:** El artículo discute como el pensamiento decolonial parece en la base de datos de los estudios de la infancia en el campo de la educación composta por disertaciones, tesis y trabajos completos en los Grupos de Trabajo (GTs) en Reuniones Nacionales de la ANPEd y artículos científicos publicados en periódicos *Qualis* A1. El estudio es caracterizado como metainvestigación, o sea, una investigación sobre investigaciones de un campo y/o área – en lo caso de eso artículo, los estudios da infancia en lo campo de la educación, y tiene como objetivo indicar abordajes, enfoques, perspectivas y modelos analíticos. El debate acerca de la decolonización de las investigaciones es seguido por la presentación de 11 autores (0,48 de la producción) que tematizan el pensamiento decolonial en un total de 2.246 trabajos catalogados. Como resultado resta indicada la poca presencia del pensamiento decolonial en los estudios de la infancia en el campo de la educación y emergen tres campos temáticos para novas investigaciones en la interface con las epistemologías crítica y pos-crítica: 1) pensamiento decolonial crítico, infancias y desigualdades; 2) pensamiento decolonial, multiculturalismo, infancias y diversidades; y 3) pensamiento pos-colonial, paradigmas pos-críticos y infancias contemporâneas.

**Palabras clave:** estudios de la infancia, pensamiento decolonial, epistemologias.

## INTRODUCTION

With this study, we intend to analyze the presence of decolonial thinking in childhood studies. Throughout the article, we chose the expression “decolonial thinking”, even though we know that this field articulates different epistemologies and perspectives of criticism of colonization processes. In other words, the decolonial paradigm founds and supports a set of analytical categories whose function is to criticize the modern/colonial model that is not restricted to the problematization of the theoretical basis but expands to a range of possibilities for practical interventions without the categories that guide it. During this debate, we ask: why to decolonize?

Decolonization means ceasing to be a colony or replacing the authorities of European countries with authorities from previously colonized territories. Decolonizing implies the dissolution of structures of domination and exploitation. Therefore, “decolonial” thinking starts from the critique and deconstruction of the logic of coloniality that maintains power at the service of domination (Mignolo, 2005; Quijano, 2005). Decoloniality, on the other hand, means an open fight against racism – a legacy left among us in the colonization process of Latin America and the Caribbean – arising from the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality triad, which marked us in the past and which still marks us in the present. From this perspective, “decolonial” thinking presupposes the dissolution of structures of domination and exploitation. Coloniality reproduces in being, power, and knowledge in which decolonial operates as a movement simultaneously ontological, political, ethical and epistemic (Mignolo, 2005; Quijano, 2005). The arguments in this text seek to dialogue with this second perspective to highlight the presence of decolonial thinking in childhood studies to decolonize education and pedagogy.

Our main objective is to show how approaches and analyses appear based on decolonial thinking in dissertations, theses, ANPED works, and papers in the field of childhood studies. In a total of 2,246 cataloged works, the researches of 11 authors were selected because they assume a sense of decolonization in their studies, with three thematic fields being evident in the interface with critical and post-critical epistemologies for examination: 1) experienced inequalities for children; 2) the diversity and multiculturalism of childhood; and 3) contemporary childhoods based on the dialogue between decolonial and post-colonial thinking.

The paper assumes that absences and emergencies in educational research point to a correlation of forces in the context of Brazilian scientific production (CGEE, 2020; Oliveira, 2019). Thus, the need for studies on the particularities of children in Latin America and the Caribbean is evident, following the path of anti-racist and decolonial thinkers (Reis, 2021) and reconstructing the matrix sources of Latin American decolonial education (Streck, 2010). In this movement, it is essential to recognize the contributions of Quijano, Fanon, Cesaire, Freire, Mignolo, Dussel, Mbembe, Gonzales, Nascimento, and Munanga, among others. Does research on children, childhood, and Early Childhood Education address decolonial thinking? This is what we seek, in part, to answer through dialogue with critical and post-critical epistemologies.

In the research, we produced a database with all dissertations and theses available in the CAPES catalog; with papers published in 12 education journals; and with complete works presented at national ANPED meetings. Chart 1 shows texts that in some way thematize decolonial thinking in this database.

**Chart 1 – Studies that focus on decolonial thinking**

Database	Total	Author(s)	Title	Keywords
Dissertations	1	Paz (2017)	Pesquisa com crianças em teses de doutorado no Brasil	(De)coloniality; child participation; education; child.
Theses	3	López (2012)	A voz inaudita: notas para uma filosofia-poética da educação	Voice; word; poetics; education; colonialism.
		Santos (2014)	As crianças (in)visíveis nos discursos políticos da Educação Infantil	Nursery; differences; childhoods; decolonizing pedagogies.
		A. Santos (2018)	Educação das relações étnico-raciais na creche	Space-environment; coloniality of power.
ANPED works	4	Richter and Barbosa (2013)	Entre Mía Couto e Vandenbroeck	Other childhoods; decolonization.
		Correa (2021)	Entre o rio e a mata: um mergulho decolonial	Decolonial ethnography; childhoods; school practices.
		Silva (2021)	Mães manauaras, crianças pequenininhas e colonialidade	Coloniality; Manaus mothers; right to daycare.
		Macedo and Alencar (2021)	Por uma Educação Infantil pública: uma abordagem descolonizadora	Popular education; child education; decolonial studies.

Articles	2	Abramowics and Rodrigues (2014)	Descolonizando as pesquisas com crianças e três obstáculos	Critical thinking; postcolonial studies.
		Basso and Alcanfor (2019)	Infância, etnia e Conhecimentos de Matriz Africana	Infancy; children's and youth literature; decolonial education.
Review	1	Pereira (2019)	Infância e pesquisa: pedagogias descolonizadoras	Decolonizing pedagogies and emancipation.
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>11</b>	

Source: Database organized by the authors (2022).

This is a meta-research in the field of childhood studies. The research mapping revealed that only 11 (0.48% of the total production) of the total 2,246 works in the database specifically address the contributions of decolonial thinking in this field of study. This shows that the appropriation of key concepts from this matrix of thought, such as Eurocentrism, coloniality, and decoloniality of being, knowledge, and power to understand the reality of children and their childhoods is still incipient.

It was possible with meta-research: to understand the field; to point out other ways of researching and getting to know children and their childhoods, and to produce reflective texts in addition to descriptive empirical research. When researchers raise questions and explore horizons, they can develop rigorous thinking and present ethically engaged texts. A reflective text produced from empirical data can generate new research problems. Research problems require new problematizations and formulations that express interpretations of social existence beyond disciplinary boundaries when they are artificial and reductionist. The intellectual exercise in this perspective enables us to articulate theoretical reflections, data, and information that allow us to conceptually think about the facts and analyze facticity through a perspective theoretically anchored in both critical and post-critical epistemologies.

In the present time, a time of fractured vertebrae (Agamben, 2009), which tends to deny and combat systematically elaborated and scientifically based thinking, it is urgent to rehearse interpretations, but without universal and absolute pretensions. The defense of rigor and method cannot mean an intransigent stance that imagines science as a self-enclosed fetish. Reflective academic work follows a path taken calmly, back and forth, with twists and turns that interrogate, examine, and deepen questions and constructed and reconstructed data, which is observed from different points of view and translated into words, revealing dimensions of the real that remained hidden by the very conditions of writing possibility (Germaná, 2020).

Therefore, we organize this article into introduction, three parts, and conclusion. In the first part, we present some aspects of the so-called “decolonial turn” that make it possible, in some way, to decolonize ways of thinking and acting in research and education. In the second, we highlight analytical axes that guide ANPED's dissertations, theses, papers, and works that depart from decolonial thinking and investigate the concrete Brazilian child. Finally, in the third part, we seek to articulate and propose a roadmap to expand and strengthen research *for, with, and about* children, childhood, and Early Childhood Education in dialogue with the matrices of anti-colonial thought from the sources of Latin American education, as Streck (2010) points out.

Paraphrasing Streck, Adams, and Moretti (2010), it is necessary to overcome the gap between the reality experienced by children in Latin America and the concepts used to understand how they live their childhoods. It seems that something is always missing and that time lived is fleeting. The task is “[...] to look into this complex and multifaceted reality and listen to it” (Streck; Adams; Moretti, 2010, p. 29). Listen to populations, listen to children, create and recreate paths and perspectives to do this, observe and ask about our common history, intimate places, and the soul of the people that inhabit our inner life, thinking practically and practicing thinking with theoretical vigilance and ethics, as libertarian rhetoric can no longer be transformed into innovative devices of domination and violence.

According to Aguiar (2018), to dialogue with the Latin American and Caribbean decolonial movement is essential for this thinking practice. The reconstruction of the different branches of critical thinking enables the development of analyses of the current world, global policies, social relations, temporalities of power, and locations of knowledge. The radical criticality of the theories also allows us to recognize and understand the multiple forms of subalternation based on the process of coloniality of being, knowledge, and power. According to Aguiar (2018), it is fundamental to be aware of the fact that, when we think about decolonization emphasizing and prioritizing dimensions of subjectivity and culture, this can weaken the effective struggle to overcome the vulnerability of the people and children of Latin America and the Caribbean vis-à-vis global economy and capitalism. In this sense, childhood studies understood as a scenario of struggles for emancipation and liberation make anti-colonial and counter-colonial stances, behaviors, and analyses urgent. To this end, it is necessary to operate a decolonial turn in the ways of being, thinking, living, and knowing.

### **TO DECOLONIZE WAYS OF THINKING, RESEARCHING AND ACTING: THE VALUE OF “DECOLONIAL TURN”**

It is urgent, in theory and practice, to go beyond the ideas of humanist, rationalist, idealist, and enlightenment utopia coming from the European world. In research on children and their childhoods, this ideology is present, according to Liebel (2019) and Martinez (2014), among others. Understanding the need to promote a “decolonial turn” in the ways of acting, thinking, and research, as analyzed by Balestrini (2013), can generate tensions but unveil the mechanisms through which coloniality operates, re-examine Latin American history and establish new practices. For this, it is fundamental, in the view of Candau and Oliveira (2010), to produce spaces for the cultivation of critical interculturalities and decolonial pedagogies that enable epistemic negotiations and also contribute to the composition of radical ways of acting and thinking. According to López (2012), in dialogue with Quijano (2005), it is urgent to overcome the humanist idealism that makes us seek to be what we are not and what we will never be. Thus, we will be able to poetically inhabit the world and language, strengthening the desire to know and find what escapes us because it is unprecedented and chaotic.

Thus, the proposal to decolonize research cannot be understood as a refusal of everything that comes from the North and a blind defense of everything that comes from the Global South, as the ideals of emancipation and liberation go hand in hand. Dussel (2005) defends a transformation in the ways of thinking and acting, which means a process of transmodernity, that is, there is a vector that comes from the center to the periphery and another that makes the opposite movement and goes from the periphery to the center. We know that the traditional scheme of interpreting the geographic manifestation of the division of labor in which the South provides only experiences and the North provides theories and explanations is questionable. The decolonial movement thinks, does, and theorizes anywhere on the globe. What unites us is the radical questioning of ethnocentric Eurocentrism with universalist pretensions. To decolonize action and thought, it is necessary to denationalize epistemologies that analyze the local as if it were global and study the global as if it were local, operating a refoundation of the ways of knowing. To this end, the recognition that concepts and theories have normative potential and explanatory capabilities helps us in our theoretical and practical journey (Ballestrin, 2013).

In our history, Northern theories founded the architecture of the colonization of peoples who did not live in the so-called exemplary West. However, it is necessary to be able to react, criticize, and produce other theories, other subaltern and peripheral ways of living, acting, and thinking. For this reason, the decolonization of theory is an important step towards the decolonization of power, having political utopias on the horizon and practicing intellectual radicalism, continuing the journey of encounters to tell and narrate present and distant experiences, as the traveling narrator does, the sailor or the peasant. This requires us to practice and develop

other ways of studying, analyzing, and interpreting social, cultural, political, and economic experiences in which subjects and their public and private powers can be understood and discussed. Other propositions. Other programs. Other projects will emerge from these meetings. Questioning the schools of thought that tolerated, tolerate, and will tolerate the current state of affairs due to our colonial past of oppression and slavery requires an equally radical stance (Ballestrin, 2013).

The necessary decolonial turn recognizes and enhances Latin America as the founding place of colonialism and modernity, as the first test laboratory for structural, structured, and structuring racism. It also recognizes that the colonial difference underlies some origins and other differences in the continuity and actuality of imperialist and colonizing practices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The possible horizon of our actions escapes Manichaeic reproductions and romanticized diagnoses, with decolonization movements having a strong connotation of class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc., which articulate vectors of liberation and emancipation coming from the North and the South. On this horizon, it is not a question of rejecting modernity, but we seek to build alternative modernities to the alleged modern universal model that founded capitalism based on slavery, monoculture, and colonization. Thus, the reality of the Brazilian people is not distinguished from the reality of the Latin American people, with the decolonial turn being as necessary in Hispanic as in Portuguese America (Ballestrin, 2013).

The aforementioned author also maintains that, in practice and theory, we have to go beyond the romanticization of the oppressed, the paralyzing deconstructivism, and the idealization of an autochthonous, original, and free subject. This stance can even distance us from scientific communities in which the game of contesting concepts and ideas takes place. In this game, an activist position requires, at the same time, radical questioning of liberals and Marxists as heirs of European, Enlightenment, and Western thought, as well as the recognition that these two currents of thought, each in its way, can contribute to the struggle for decolonization. The epistemological and political debate that starts from the peripheral and subaltern conditions of Latin America does not deny or ignore the current influences of post-critical, post-colonial, post-Marxist, and post-structuralist thought. The decolonial turn and movement tension from the outside and operate from within institutions, schools of thought, and the experiences of subjects, carrying out studies, actions, and analyses at different scales, spheres, and levels at which coloniality operates. In political actions, epistemological options, and discursive practices, the identification of signs of the decolonial turn or the maintenance of imperialist coloniality places the forces in the game of disputes.

The study by Candau and Oliveira (2010), developed in 2006, follows this perspective. The authors problematize the relationship between education, human rights, and multiculturalism based on the tension between the concepts of equality and difference; the defense of a Latin American intercultural education highlighting the critical potential of the decolonial turn for the study of education and ethnic-racial relations. Taking as a reference the concepts of critical interculturality and decolonial pedagogy, Candau and Oliveira (2010) show that, in the case of Brazilian legislation, such as Law 10.639/03 for example, aimed at promoting racial equality and the education of ethnic-racial relations, there is an opening to question the false racial democracy in Brazil and to criticize the coloniality of power, being and knowledge since basic education school. The new legal frameworks of recent decades have also made it possible to open political, legal, and academic debate on the issue of epistemic racism manifested in theoretical options that consider non-Western knowledge as inferior and less valid than the one produced within dominant Western modernity. Other stories, other experiences, and other epistemes are increasingly recognized and affirmed.

The change of our epistemological bases and paradigms is a condition for reexamining our history and the production of knowledge among us. Other ways of acting and thinking, other ways of living and education based on the production of other spaces for critical interculturalities and decolonial pedagogies can create better conditions for conflicts, debates, confrontations,

compositions, and epistemic negotiations to strengthen critical thinking and decolonial at the crossroads of borders and the border of crossroads (Candau; Oliveira, 2010).

In Brazil, it is important to act in favor of other alternatives to combat racism and overcome the false racial democracy so touted in speeches and so absent in our practices. Decolonial thinking values knowledge originating from African and indigenous peoples, breaking with the traditional dichotomies between reason and emotion, intellect and sensation, body and soul, etc. The school inspired by the decolonial turn promotes collective actions of solidarity, creativity, and autonomy, always incorporating movement, play, joy, and the pleasure of being with others in coexistence in the school space. Silva, Munsberg and Balzano (2020) state that exploring the concepts of transmodernity, by Dussel, decolonial thinking, by Mignolo, and interculturality, by Walsh, as a theoretical foundation for an “other” alternative for valuing knowledge, contributes to deepening this debate. Ballestrin (2013), in turn, supports a critical renewal of research among us, radicalizing what he calls decolonial turn. To this end, the author presents a possible genealogy of post-colonial thought and the central concepts around which its main exponents are articulated in the epistemological confrontation about decolonial, and counter-colonial theorists.

Segato (2010), V. Santos (2018), Castro (2021) and Sevalho (2022) debate issues of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, race, culture, multiculturalism, feminism, and epistemology from the terms of this confrontation. V. Santos (2018), in his disobedient notes, shows the political and epistemic coalition of decolonial feminism of black and indigenous resistance in opposition to postcolonial thought originating from Eurocentric matrices. The author does not disregard the differences between the “decolonial” and “post-colonial” matrices but supports the need for us all to focus on bringing the different aspects together through a movement that could be called counter-colonial epistemological transgression.

Brazilian research *for, with, and about* children, childhood, and Early Childhood Education can bring us closer to thinkers who are situated between contemporary studies called post-modern, post-structuralist, post-critical, and/or post-colonial. Philosophers and researchers such as Agamben, Derrida, and Žižek are present in the composition of this new way of thinking. The context of this debate provokes a deeper, perhaps even more radical, questioning of the ethical, political, linguistic, gnosiological, and/or epistemological foundations of knowledge production. López's research (2012), in dialogue with the concepts of “idleness” and “anthropological machine” formulated by Giorgio Agamben, points out that what we define as “human” and also “child” do not exist as pre-existing substances, but as devices that aim to comprehensively capture different vital and living forces.

Decolonial or anticolonial thinking, in different parts of the world, involves questioning the paradigms that guide the production of knowledge and the mobilization of inaugural epistemological strategies that value the voice and word of subjects, groups, and social classes that remained in the past and remain sunk in oblivion. Discourses, words, and concepts that weave a universal, imagined, and supposed human being are articulated and maintained over time through “machines” and “mechanisms” that operate and colonize in a grammatical, linguistic, pedagogical, and educational way. López (2012) shows us that education in modernity helps to weave a grammar in the language that aims to reduce the sensitive dimension in the human and increase the intelligible dimension under the light of the sign of civilized reason against the desiring and barbaric body.

López's (2012) research reveals that this anthropolitical machinery of modernity begins to dissolve following historical events in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that challenge theories of representation and signs, pointing out other poetics, ethics, and politics. It is increasingly evident that the so-called educated, enlightened, modern, and civilized man is dark, slave-owning, ancient, ill-mannered, and capable of committing atrocious barbarities and barbaric atrocities in the name of his interests and ideologies. In dialogue with this author, it is possible to say that decolonial thinking in its constitution is involved in dismantling this machinic gear, which is anthropological, anthropolitical and anthropogenetical. In questioning and dismantling this machine, education can

be understood as an infinite effort in the movement we operate to be and become the humans we are and no longer as a search to achieve or become what we are not yet.

In the movement and action carried out together with children, here and now, so that we can live experiences with them of being what we are and not seeking an ideal of a good and civilized human being that we never were, never will be, and do not even need to be, the effort to educate and research *for, with and about* children and their childhoods, according to López (2012), does not seek to reveal hidden meanings, but ways of poetically inhabiting the world, relationships and languages. In this movement, forms of knowing and not knowing are increasingly perceptible, always fueling the desire to find what may still escape us, what appears unprecedented and chaotic outside the supposed repetition of order, what is a celebration beyond the work and work beyond the market of festive illusions. Decolonial thinking helps us go beyond the established that makes us indifferent and almost inhuman. Decolonial thinking, on the other hand, is an invitation to articulate debates about children, childhood, and Early Childhood Education, aligned with the recognition and increasing dissemination of children's rights in Latin American countries, and also experience the power of our childhood and the childhood of our power.

## **A “DECOLONIAL TURN” IN RESEARCH FOR, WITH, AND ABOUT CHILDREN, CHILDHOOD AND EARLY EDUCATION**

The production of knowledge about other childhoods that are still invisible depends on a radical act in research that extremely questions modernity, which opens dialogue but polemicizes with thinkers from the North and South called post-modern, post-critical, and post-colonial. In pedagogical education coming from the North, manifested in “[...] the face of colonial, adult, white, Eurocentric power [...]” (Richter; Barbosa, 2013, p. 3), the aim of taming the wild prevails and moralizes the children of dominated peoples who are called backward and unprepared for the material and ideological progress advocated by the colonizing peoples.

To know and recognize Latin American and Caribbean children and affirm education as a significant and relevant cultural experience, an engaged and committed pedagogy thinks beyond the typical educational practices of the school environment. Richter and Barbosa (2013) argue that to know and/or invent other childhoods in the sense of a decolonial perspective, it is urgent to criticize the vision of modernity centered on the European World from Latin American studies that, since the 1950s, they seek to overcome ethnocentric theories of social, cultural and political analysis and operate a de-Westernization of Asia, Africa and America. By problematizing the relationship between colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed, it is possible to identify the origin of the proposed analysis and the routes of convergence and divergence between different authors and texts.

The so-called decolonial or anti-colonial turn is characterized as a movement and action of resistance in practice and theory, in politics and epistemology, which starts from the radical questioning of modernity, born together with the colonial system since the arrival of Europeans in America in 1492 (Dussel, 2005). Colonization – and everything it entailed and still entails – left deep marks and gave rise to modernity that needs to be overcome. Decolonial thinking recognizes the effects of coloniality on colonized populations and proposes decolonizing being, knowledge, and power (Mignolo, 2005; Quijano, 2005).

The biggest challenge is recognizing that there is another way of thinking about others and ourselves. Mignolo (2005) highlights that decolonial thinking is established in the necessary fracture that exists between Franco-European postmodernity – in the line of Derrida, Lacan, and Foucault – and postcoloniality, in the line of Said, Spivak, and Bhabha. Decoloniality comes from other sources: part of the Haitian Revolution in 1808, indigenous struggles, and the cultural legacy of our original peoples; part of Gandhi's activism and decolonial criticism, of the fracture that occurred in Marxism after its encounter with the “decolonial turn” proposed by Maldonado-Torres (2007). Recognizing that coloniality is constitutive of modernity is already putting decolonial



thinking on the march. Historical movements, the struggles of colonized peoples, decolonial political writings, and treaties do not have the same prestige as the writings of Hobbes, Locke, or Rousseau, for example. English, French, and American revolutions are more prominent than the revolution in Haiti and the national independence struggles in Latin America and Africa, telling other stories about ourselves.

The stories about the children, where are they? How do children live their childhoods in the fractured contemporary world, as defined by Agamben (2005, 2009)? How do childhood pedagogies and childhood policies contribute to increasing children's listening in educational practices and academic research? Santos (2014) analyzes political speeches and official documents on Early Childhood Education and shows how children remain (in)visible in these speeches. The author adopts the philosophical perspective of difference in dialogue with the sociology of childhood to produce a cartography of territories, traces, and discursive flows, showing that the multiplicity that surrounds children and their childhoods is absent when sexuality, gender, race, class, ethnicity, culture, religion and region of residence are considered. To escape the established, subvert the order, propose and compose ways of inventing other childhoods that problematize the Eurocentric colonization that dominates children's school, it is essential, according to the author, to think about black, indigenous, *quilombola*, *caçara*, immigrant, and *Candomblé* children, homosexuals, transsexuals, etc. Standardized and stereotypical political discourses legitimize colonized education that reinforces domination, subordination, and exclusion. Faced with this reality, Santos (2014) supports the need for a decolonizing pedagogy based on other epistemologies and nomadic childhoods.

To achieve this, according to the author, it is urgent to remove children from the historical, civic, and scientific invisibility to which they have been confined. The social reality of childhood has not gained public attention throughout history, meaning that children's full citizenship is promised for a future that is always distant and almost always unattainable. Scientific production, by taking the child as an object, ends up corroborating this process of making childhood invisible. A daycare appears when it catches fire. A baby makes the news when he is abandoned. In general, society ignores and forgets its children, reinforcing adult-centrism as the power of adults over childhood. To the age hierarchy are added other hierarchies such as class, race, gender, sexual, aesthetic, linguistic, etc. The white, military, straight, Christian and European adult is seen as stronger and with the power to disqualify cultures, languages, and knowledge (Santos, 2014).

The act of decolonizing pedagogies and policies for childhood enables the children present in school environments based on their ethnic identities and knowledge of African origin, being a way, according to Basso and Alcanfor (2019), to practicing a decolonial education. Based on the literary production of writer Reginaldo Prandi, the researchers highlight Yoruba culture and Yoruba mythology present in school teaching materials, highlighting the representations of children and childhood in the set of writings and narratives of this writer. Articulating anti-racist education, decolonial movement, ethnic identity, and African diaspora, Basso and Alcanfor (2019) show the importance of the presence of African and Afro-descendant cultures in Early Childhood Education schools.

The selected narratives show the potential of literary production as relevant teaching material as long as the proposed and developed work is associated with a decolonial teaching perspective. School curricula and practices can no longer obscure identities in the name of an illusory national identity that is allegedly exclusive and homogeneous. The marginalization and stigmatization of Afro-diasporic cultures make up the school model of colonization that needs to be combated and overcome. Another school and another decolonial pedagogy are committed to an egalitarian society that respects differences and confronts the epistemic and racial prejudice that still prevails among us. "Access to knowledge about the History of Africa and Afro-Brazilian Cultures helps us understand the historical and ideological reasons for racial and epistemic prejudice to overcome it" (Basso; Alcanfor, 2019, p. 14).

The authors also show us that, when no longer privileging Eurocentric contents based on colonized and colonizing epistemic matrices in the school curriculum, we will combat school racism in practice. It is not possible to continue ignoring subaltern cultures, keeping them permanently invisible. Thus, works such as those by Reginaldo Prandi offer extremely important teaching paths to make visible and value the identity of historically subordinated black people. Prandi's literature is a tribute against religious, racial, and epistemic prejudice, also allowing the unveiling of black aesthetics present in the daily lives of the Brazilian people and showing “[...] Yoruba culture as a cultural complex of fundamental importance for the constitution of an anti-racist and decolonial curriculum, as the foundation of a democratic and non-Eurocentric school culture” (Basso; Alcanfor, 2019, p. 15).

The study of childhoods and the investigation of children's cultures and pairs of Indigenous and Afro-diasporic children, when starting from the sociological variables of ethnicity and race, already presupposes the questioning of theories that universalize the understanding of children. By looking at the specific child considering their ethnic and racial origins, the researcher seeks to give visibility to dimensions of the experience that are often ignored or even secondary. A. Santos (2018) moves in this direction and problematizes Brazilian constitutional principles that guarantee in the letter of the law the right of all children to a healthy life from the beginning of their arrival into this world. Would the principle of this right be reaching all Brazilian children? To answer this question, the author opens dialogue with the National Curricular Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and the Teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian History and Culture – DCNERER (Brazil, 2004) and with research carried out between 2003 and 2016 on the interface between “ethnic-racial relations and Early Childhood Education”. Furthermore, A. Santos (2018) analyzed portfolios, photographs, images, posters, and literature present and used or not in a daycare center in the city of Juiz de Fora, in the State of Minas Gerais.

The study and analysis of daily educational practices with babies and young children in daycare centers show how ethnic-racial relations occur in early childhood and highlight how important it is to continue training the professionals involved to promote and develop notions among children of identity and belonging. Valuing the construction of positive self-images, valuing the color of the skin and hair of black children, dialoguing with families, children, and teachers to promote ethnic-racial equality – all of this contributes to overcoming the racism that persists in society. Brazilian society. The experiences of babies and young children in school spaces make up human relationships that are historically and socially structured. Thus, when schools adopt a decolonizing pedagogy, they combat racism and develop anti-racist practices from Early Childhood Education onwards as the first stage of basic education (Santos, 2014).

From Juiz de Fora to the Abaetetuba Islands, in the State of Pará, Correa (2021) takes a dive into the river and the forest through a decolonial ethnography of riverside children from the Paruru River Community. It analyzes images and representations of childhoods constructed by children in the relationship they establish with school squares, showing that decolonial ethnography can be a relevant tool to emancipate and decolonize our research practices. It reveals how the childhoods of children who live on the banks of rivers in the Amazon remain silenced, invisible, and subordinated in different school spaces, using observation, participation, interaction, drawings, cartographies, records, and various images. The work with the enchanted tree and the drawing workshops contributed to mobilizing and involving children with the ethnographic proposal of the research, uncovering knowledge produced by them in their relationships with rivers and forests.

Also, on the outskirts of large cities, it is possible to research children and their childhoods from epistemic and decolonial political perspectives. Macedo and Alencar (2021) delved into the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro and sought to listen to the voices of the subjects, at the same time, carrying out, a decolonizing strategy, research and training, training and research with everyone involved. The articulation between theories and pedagogical practices in public and emancipatory Early Childhood Education, according to the authors, can guarantee the

implementation of an inclusive and democratic political and pedagogical project for popular childhood education.

In children's body, skin, soul, and spirit in the city of Manaus, capital of the state of Amazonas, signs of the history of the cruel colonization of our people are evident. Even today, in daycare centers and preschools, as revealed by research by Santos *et al.* (2018), it is possible to observe the effects of the colonization of babies and young children aged zero to 3 years, especially when ethnicity and gender variables are considered. The author compared the total number of Manaus children enrolled in daycare centers with the total child population in that city to problematize and question visible and invisible signs of colonization. Coloniality operates to reinforce and reproduce inequalities and create mechanisms of hierarchy among colonized peoples. According to Santos *et al.* (2018), Early Childhood Education policies aimed at providing children with educational services sometimes ignore the Amazonian reality. Legal frameworks are established disregarding existing differences between people and local populations. Thus, to guarantee decolonizing research and practices from Early Childhood Education onwards, it is important to consider the Amazonian pluralities that manifest themselves in different conceptions of educating and caring for children. How to capture and analyze visible and invisible signs of resistance to the colonialities of knowledge, power, and doing? From the outset, we have to admit and recognize that coloniality operates through multiple processes of exclusion and seeks to prevent struggles, confrontations, and resistance.

The debate on coloniality in research on children, childhood, and Early Childhood Education is situated in the context of affirming decolonial thinking, which is defined as borderline thinking between the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality, a logic characterized by a monoculture of knowledge that subordinates and oppresses the diverse and difference. Research with children, as shown in the study by Paz (2017), exemplifies and signals an intellectual movement of rupture and criticism of colonialism and adult-centrism. Research with children carried out by decolonial authors can contribute to the movement of rupture: "We argue the power of the relationship between research with children and (de)coloniality" (Paz, 2017, p. 32).

Decolonial movement, in practice and thought, according to Dussel (2005), combats universal modernity as a myth forged by Europeans to justify the domination and subordination of different peoples of the world. The path to overcoming oppression and the wounds left on our bodies by the massacre of the colonial system is the universalization of pluriversality through (de)coloniality (Paz, 2017).

Research with children and their childhoods in different social contexts can capture the pluriversal movement that exists in reality towards the decolonization of being, knowledge, and power. Paz (2017), in dialogue with authors of Latin American decolonial thought, shows that, in theories and in social practices, hegemonic models colonize, subjugate, dominate, inferiorize, and violate "[...] women, black people [...] Indigenous people, elderly people, and children, that is, in addition to being sexist, racist (...) it generationally subordinates elderly people and children" (Paz, 2017, p. 80), not considered productive subjects. Societies, dominated by adult, European, white, Christian, and straight men considered pious, pure, elected, and superior, point to all other subjects as inferior, impure, barbarians, and sinners, as a way of justifying all forms of slavery and domination. Knowledge of the concrete reality of "inferiorized" children is decisive in breaking with coloniality and establishing new paradigms for thought, research, and action. Segato (2010) argues that there are singularities that intertwine, that is, both in the world of the State and in the world of the Village, patriarchalism, for example, is marked by various forms of violence, such as gender-based violence. The low or high intensity of patriarchal violence will be overcome by the movement of women from the city and the countryside, the village, and the world to guarantee their inclusion in social policies in the world of the State.

Abramowicz and Rodrigues (2014) support the need to decolonize research with children, escape hegemonic models, and think beyond the logic of capital. To this end, those who carry out research with children seek to identify and analyze devices of power that impose on each

child uniquely and universally, sustaining childhood as a singular, individual, and social experience, in which each child thinks critically and builds their history. The authors also show that decolonized research with children necessarily incorporates themes such as race, diaspora, ethnicity, gender, etc.

Thus, decolonized research and non-fascist education conceive childhood as an experience, construct nomadic curricula<sup>2</sup>, and see the school and classroom as places that enable acts of creation. In action and thought, it is necessary to deny and combat various pedagogies that subordinate children in favor of social contracts imagined by adults, in which each of them is educated for defined and determined social places, to assume the position of oppressor or oppressed, revolutionary or reactionary, conscious or alienated, etc. What is different, in this contractualist and normalizing vision, is pathological. Decolonizing research with children means producing spaces outside the constraints of meaning, of the conforming and dominant logic. In this type of research, the arrival point and the path to be followed are not defined *a priori*. In the educational and research journey, children can be what they are, they can speak or remain silent, they can leave or enter, they can think, remain silent, act, etc. “If you want to produce a difference, it is because it is there and needs to assert its political power, it needs to be removed from the place of the strange, the horrible, and the aberration” (Abramowicz; Rodrigues, 2014, p. 472).

Difference does not seek identity. Identity does not escape difference because in the diaspora with migrants and excluded people, with women, with black people, with Indigenous people, with the LGBTQIA+ community, the objective is to achieve ever greater equity and ever better lives. Adults and children occupy the time and space of the history of those who came before, who are with us, and those who are yet to come in the plurality that constitutes us. A story told like this is discontinuous. A space like this is not homogeneous and rectilinear, but diasporic. A school designed in this way creates networks of solidarity and thought for becoming a child. A researcher like this opens up to knowing and learning. A teacher like this opens doors and strives to listen and understand what children say; she does and lets people do, plays and lets people play, thinks and lets people think, sings and lets people sing, dances and lets people dance. “The teacher is not the mother, nor the aunt; the colleague is not the sister; and playing house is not imitating mom and dad, just as children's stories do not need to refer to a happy ending or the idea of women, couples and people” (Abramowicz; Rodrigues, 2014, p. 472). The authors argue that to practice decolonization, it is necessary to establish a movement that prevents the domination of those who have already been converted into profit for capital.

For those who intend to operate a “decolonial turn” and deconstruct hegemonic paradigms in research *for, with and about* children, childhood and Early Childhood Education, it is important to read the book *Pedagogias descolonizadoras e infâncias: por uma educação emancipatória desde o nascimento* (Decolonizing pedagogies and childhoods: for an emancipatory education from birth), organized by Santos *et al.* (2018). Pereira (2019) highlights that our research ignores specificities and singularities of children and their childhoods, disregarding markers of differences in age, class, gender, race, ethnicity, etc. that constitute social relations in our highly competitive and extremely unfair and unequal society. To build an increasingly emancipatory education, it is needed “[...] a critical post-colonialist analysis of the dominant discourses about children, which reflect the hegemonic knowledge of childhood or children” (Pereira, 2019, p. 340).

The work's provocations indicate the imperative need to produce knowledge in the South-South vector and deconstruct colonial ties that condition children and their childhoods and also the knowledge produced *for, with, and about* them. To this end, it is urgent to denounce situations in which our children have been subjected to oppressive conditions at school and outside it. Post-colonial studies subvert the hierarchical, colonized logic without commitment to social transformation that still guides our ways of thinking and producing scientific knowledge. Pereira (2019, p. 341) also states that the work contributes “[...] as a subsidy to combat oppression and for the construction of a decolonizing pedagogy of childhood that favors the understanding of the

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<sup>2</sup> There are strands of post-critical thought that propose nomadic curricula based on Deleuze's philosophy of difference, for example.

constructions of inequalities [...]”, enabling us to overcome this reality. Dialogue with research that falls within the field of multicultural, moving, and transversal epistemological resistances can help us to formulate new questions and seek new answers that enable us to know more and better about our children and their childhoods, beyond a humanistic universalism or a universal humanism.

## A PROVISIONAL CONCLUSION AND A GUIDE FOR NEW STUDIES

In this provisional conclusion, we highlight that the studies by Abramowicz and Rodrigues (2014); Basso and Alcanfor (2019); Correa (2021); López (2012); Macedo and Alencar (2021); Paz (2017); Pereira (2019); Richter and Barbosa (2013); Santos (2014); A. Santos (2018) and Silva (2021) can be initial references for those who wish to contribute to new research on children, childhood and Early Childhood Education based on the assumptions of decolonial thinking. In this movement, we can mainly be inspired by the women Abramowicz and Rodrigues (2014), Gomes (2011), Gomes and Teodoro (2021) and Walsh (2010); the Latin Americans Castro-Gómez (2005), Freire (1987) and Quijano (2005); and Agamben (2005), Deleuze and Guatari (1995), Foucault (1984) and Larrosa (2002). All of them, coming from philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and pedagogy, are widely used and cited by those who carry out research in Brazil to understand how children from Latin America and the Caribbean live their different childhoods.

New research in the field of childhood studies is in line with Streck (2010), among others, who seek sources for Latin American education and pedagogy. From this perspective, it is essential to: a) know Nisia Floresta (1810–1885), a pioneer in the Brazilian feminist movement and the debate on the condition of women and girls' education; b) study Maria Lacerda de Moura (1887–1945), feminist leader of the International Women's Federation who fought for improvements in the living conditions of children and women and fair social relations for the always exploited and oppressed female multitude; and c) dialogue with Chilean embroiderer Gabriela Mistral (1889–1957), who was also concerned with the “instruction of women” and adopted the pedagogical *motto* that it is possible to always teach with joy and pleasure. Latin American and Caribbean women, pedagogues, educators, and feminists who inspire critical and post-critical epistemologies from the perspective of transformative activism. With Streck, Floresta, Moura, and Mistral, three axes/routes for new studies emerge in three areas:

- Studying other childhoods in Early Childhood Education: the decolonial perspective helps to think about the rights of children and their childhoods. The presence of children at school to experience educational experiences depends on a decolonizing pedagogical action. How are issues of class, gender, religiosity, and children's sexuality studied and analyzed from a decolonial perspective? We need to investigate and respond.
- Studying children and their childhoods from indigenous, African, and decolonial perspectives, that is, the experiences of belonging and ethnic and racial identity need to be incorporated as research questions in the field of childhood studies. How to think about children considering their racial and ethnic origins?
- Study childhood and education at the interface of post-modern, post-critical, and post-colonial thought. Contemporary authors who criticize the universal pattern of thought of modernity contribute to investigating childhood as a unique experience in which each concrete child builds his or her story. How does decolonial thought dialogue with the radicality of these authors?

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Author 1 - Participation in the organization of the database and conceptual definition of the proposed approach, being directly involved in writing the initial versions and reviewing the final versions of the text.

Author 2 - Participation related to the theoretical and methodological aspects adopted for writing the text, being directly involved in writing the initial versions and reviewing the final versions of the text. Data analysis, text writing, and review of the final writing.

Author 3 - participation related to the collection and storage of the data used, the organization and analysis of the selected material, and being directly involved in writing the initial versions and reviewing the final versions of the text.

## **DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with this article.

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