

FROM CHILDREN TO STUDENTS: SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE TRANSITION FROM PRE-SCHOOL TO PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

The text discusses some of the findings of a doctorate research in Education conducted in the municipality of Três Rios, Rio de Janeiro, with a class from a municipal public school. The research focused on the children's transition from early childhood education to fundamental education, and on the impact of the school culture upon child culture in the transformation of these social agents from children into pupils. The theoretical-methodological groundings were constructed in dialogue with the concepts created mainly by Bakhtin, Vygotsky, Foucault, Certeau and Sacristán. The concepts operated here at three levels: on one side we had Bakhtin's concept of language, the main category of analysis of the field data, and Vygotsky furnishing the elements for a dialectical reflection around child, and school, cultures seen as texts. At a different level, we included Foucault and Certeau in the analyses of the power strategies and resistance tactics identified in the practices observed, and of their impacts on the agents' processes of subjectivation. Lastly, the sociology of childhood and the concept of school culture contributed to clarify some of the elements of the fieldwork, placing them into context. The investigation of the transitions and ruptures from early childhood education to fundamental education drew from the works of Moss, Corsaro, and Molinari.

Keywords: Children – Pupils – Transitions from early childhood education to fundamental education.

Introduction

*Children are first sent to school
not to be taught something, but
to accustom them to remain calm and
punctually observe what they are commanded,
in order to prevent them from
giving in to their whims later.
Kant (1991, p. 302)*

This article discusses some findings of a doctorate research in education conducted in the city of Três Rios, Rio de Janeiro, in a classroom of a public school. The object of such research was the passage of children from pre-school to elementary school and the effect of

school culture on children's cultures transforming the social agents *children* into *students* (Motta, 2010). During the field research, the researcher moved to the city studied.

Due to the study's ethnographic inspiration, empiricism had a key role in the process from the beginning. The initial questions belonged to the field of the sociology of childhood and aimed to examine the power relations established between the children themselves. The observations took place in a classroom of the 3rd year of preschool, with 5-year-old children. At that stage, however, research was still designed as specific work in the field of studies in childhoods.

Joining elementary school was extremely striking for the children and the researcher. The issues, studies and people changed. Schooling was imposed on the subjects. At first it seemed impossible to integrate it into the research. The study had to change direction: to focus on the school, its processes and its subjection of children to the roles of students. Apparently, the children, their speeches and games were no longer the focus of attention. However, at no time were their actions considered less important. Observing them as children and students became the *leitmotiv* of the research; it was then necessary to invite the sociology of childhood to come into the classroom and observe the social actors in their processes of transition.

The research was conducted in three academic years, from 2007 to 2009, as a longitudinal study. One group was followed from the 3rd year of preschool to the 2nd year of elementary school. All the names are fictitious to preserve the identity of those involved.

Weaving theoretical fabric

The theoretical and methodological principles were woven through the concepts developed by Bakhtin (2002, 2000, 1998, 1997), Vygotsky (2001, 2000, 1998, 1997), Foucault (1992, 1988, 1977), Certeau (1994) and Sacristán (2000, 2005). Each author contributed in a specific manner for the analysis of the issues. The concepts were articulated in three

moments that occasionally intersected. Initially, we used Bakhtin's concept of language, the main category of analysis of field data. Vygotsky provided the resources for a dialectical thinking about children's and school cultures, taken as texts. Foucault and Certeau contributed to the analysis of power strategies and resistance tactics found in the practices and their influence on the subjectivation of the subjects. Finally, the sociology of childhood and the concept of school culture enabled us to explain some field elements, particularly the relationships between children themselves and with the school practices, contextualizing them.

Vygotsky and Bakhtin: to start with

The methodological choice dialectically builds the question and derives from it. "The object and the research method have a very close relation" (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 47, freely translated by the author). It became necessary to search for units of analysis that did not decompose the field into isolated, unrelated parts. Confronting children's and school cultures present in the practices and interactions of the children seemed to be a proposal tailored to a dialectical exercise.

Taking a cultural-historical approach meant to bring the discussion to the multiplicity of voices that have built a speech on the topic in question. In this case, it was essential to identify what children and educational institutions were saying through their practices, what the researcher was saying, from the elements in question, and what theorists who were called to help to analyze the issue were saying. Amorim (2003, p. 12) speaks of polyphony in the humanities and of the conflictual and problematic character of research. The speech as an event becomes the unit of analysis through the confrontation that different values present for the production of meaning acquire. This is the conception of the humanities which guided this work.

Therefore, the issues are worked on at three levels which are constantly intersecting: at the first level are Vygotsky and Bakhtin. The choice of theory and method relied on the dialectical method and the conception of language. Vygotsky also contributed with the idea

of subjectivity, based on the interaction between the subject and the others through the development of a cultural sphere due to the fact that the intra-subjective processes occurred before intersubjectively in social practices. These propositions help to understand the construction of the student category as a phenomenon that happens both in the history of society and in the individual history of each subject, involving social and cultural dimensions.

Bakhtin believes that language is social. It is not the experience that organizes expression; the expression precedes and organizes experience, giving it shape and meaning. The speech always has an alive meaning and direction; the words contain values and ideological forces: here lies the historical approach of language. At the same time, the communication of meanings implies a relationship; we are always oriented toward the other and the other does not have a passive role only; the interlocutor participates in assigning meaning to the utterance, in a responsive attitude. The idea of language gives culture its perspective of meaning, so "to understand the utterance you need to understand what is said and assumed, what is said and what is not said" (Kramer, 2003, p. 78). Having language as a category of analysis means considering polysemy and intonation.

Language is inseparable from the flow of verbal communication. It is continually constituted in the current of verbal communication. Two utterances far apart in space and time, when confronted as to their meaning, may reveal a dialogic relation that is always a relationship of meaning.

The research text depicts an unfolding "to infinity of enunciative places, its dialogic utterance deserves to be called polyphonic, for a multiplicity of voices can be heard in one place" (Amorim, 2002, p. 8). The text polyphony brings the voices of the supposed addressee, of the real addressee and of the super-addressee, allowing a spatial and temporal expansion of the text. From the viewpoint of the object, there is also something to listen to: everything has been said in some perspective. The speech is not initiatory. The text responds to those that have preceded it in that issue and intends to add something new.

The specific object of the humanities is the speech or, more broadly, the significant matter. The object is a speech producer subject. And the researcher deals with its speech. Speech on speeches, the humanities have, therefore, this specificity of having an object that is not only spoken, as in all the other disciplines, but also an object that speaks. (Amorim, 2002, p. 10)

The human being is constituted in relation to the other. Social interaction is a process that combines the cognitive and affective dimensions. Interacting, children not only perceive and are raised: at the same time, they create and transform – which makes them constituted in the culture and culture producers. This conception implies considering them active subjects who participate and intervene in reality around them. Their actions are their ways to redesign and rebuild the world. Adults have the important role of mediation. Jobim and Souza (2001) say that, for Vygotsky, "studying the development of consciousness in childhood is not just to examine the inner world in itself, but to rescue the reflection of the external world in the inner world, i.e., the interaction of the child with reality "(p. 126)

From this perspective, every utterance is a dialogue that is part of an ongoing process. What is said always responds to a previous utterance and will allow its replication. The speech is a component of a dialogue that reflects the interaction of someone who enunciates with an interlocutor in a given context. "Every word has two faces. It is determined both by the fact that it stems from someone and by the fact that it is addressed to someone (...) the word is a kind of bridge thrown between myself and the other" (Bakhtin, 2002, p. 113).

Less than the dialogue itself, the Bakhtinian circle is interested in the dialogical relationships that manifest themselves in it. A wide variety of texts, speeches and practices can be taken as dialogues. Those events are subject to the action of dialogic forces. This idea will be the basis to examine the "speeches" of the school culture and children's cultures, seeking to identify how they dialogue in the practices observed. This approach relies on the Bakhtinian ideas about the dialogic relations: relations of meaning between utterances that are referenced to the whole of the verbal interaction. These relations are

more of tension than of agreement or consensus. When approaching utterances that are not directed on principle to each other, they still "end up establishing a dialogic relationship" (Bakhtin, 1997, p. 117). This is because the utterances and the values they express are the unit of social interaction to be analyzed. Thus, the dialogue in its broad sense ("the universal symposium") is to be understood as a broad area of struggle between the social voices ... (Faraco, 2003, p. 67).

Every utterance is always a response to the previous one. The speaker relates at the same time with the object of the utterance and with other utterances. There is an implicit or explicit search for a responsive attitude of the other. "To have an addressee, to address to someone, is a constituent characteristic of the utterance, without which there is and there could not be any utterance" (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 325). Speech addressees are an active part of the discursive chain, because they give direction to what is said by means of the expectation of their answer. The shape the utterance takes is related to that. The addressee is asked to express an opinion, because the speaker awaits an answer: "Sooner or later, what is heard and understood in an active way will find an echo in the subsequent behavior of the listener" (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 291).

Foucault and Certeau: an analysis of discipline and resistance

There is a clear relation between the ideas of de Certeau and the concept of disciplinary power developed by Foucault. This is what we shall focus on now, trying to start from an implicit dialogue to extend it to the level of the words of the children and teachers observed in the study.

In the genealogical phase, Foucault developed the concepts of disciplinary power and biopower. For our study, the first concept is of special interest, considering its scale of application or of production of its effects through the techniques, tools and institutions. The power ability to circulate shows that it is potentially exercised by all subjects, and that they are at the same time holders and addressees of power. "Power moves through individuals, it does not apply to them (...) power travels through the individual that it has

constituted." (Foucault, 1999, p. 35) At this point, Certeau (1994) complements the concept by addressing what has no visibility: the anonymous ability of resistance in everyday life. Subjects make their own and give new meanings to the cultural or material consumption objects or materials and this process reveals the cunning of those who make up a sort of a "network of anti-discipline" (Certeau, 1994, p. 42), expressed by resistance or inertia.

In *L'invention du quotidien* (1994), Certeau talks to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977), showing the resistance that subverts the instruments of power within itself. Looking at everyday life, Certeau reveals the "micro-resistances that found micro-liberties" (Giard, 1994, p. 19). This resource, hidden by the strategies of power, is what the action of children will show in their relationship with school discipline, which founds the subjectivities of students, while creating resources to resist this type of subjectivation, making room for creation, for the unexpected. Observing the small and everyday social spaces may prove a tool for the analysis of the tactics of resistance to the reproduction that leads to uniformity.

Foucault takes some precautions in the study of power: the first one is reflected in the concreteness of the institutions examined. This is not a central or sovereign power, but one that is exercised in millimeters in total institutions such as convents, asylums or prisons. Moreover, there is a concern with the effective exercise of power, as shown in its objectification, or in the way it produces effects. The dynamics of the exercise of power is in the mobility among social agents, not belonging to one group or another. The movement from the smallest to the largest, from specific concrete mechanisms to more global ones, is of great interest. Finally, power is related to knowledge and its mechanisms of production and accumulation.

If power consists of power relations, which are *multiple* and *mobile*, *unequal* and *unstable*, it is clear that it cannot emanate from a central point, but from peripheral located instances. Along with the impossibility of centrality, is the impossibility of unity. Power is at the same time in all parts of the mobile support of the correlations of force that constitute it. It is everywhere, in the relation of one point with another. It multiplies and stems at the same time from all places. (Pogrebinschi, 2004, p. 188)

Foucault's concept of discipline is approximate to that of a technology for the exercise of power, it "contains a whole set of tools, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets..." (Foucault, 1977, p . 177). The effort for the subjection requires a minimum expenditure of energy. Discipline enhances and leverages the power techniques. The disciplinary mechanisms are: *surveillance* (Bentham's panopticon model, where one can see everything while the subjects ignore whether or not they are being observed), the *normative sanction* or disciplinary punishment, and finally the *examination*, which allows qualifying, classifying and punishing, and thus make individuals visible and subjected.

The repressor function is no longer the main attribute of power. Power creates and recreates in a multiple network of countless possibilities. At this point, we invite Certeau (1994) to join the discussion, through his concepts of strategies and tactics that can serve as analytical categories to operate with the practices found in the field, considering the asymmetry in the relationships between adults and children or between the different cultures brought here for discussion. Certeau (1994) says strategy is:

[...] The calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible from the moment a subject of will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. The strategy posits a *place* likely to be limited as *its* own and be the basis from where one can manage relations with an *exteriority* of targets or threats. (p. 99)

The tactics differs from the strategy by the absence of a delimitation that provides autonomy; the tactics does not have a global project, "it operates blow by blow ... it does not keep what it earns ... In short, the tactics is the art of the weak" (Certeau, 1994, p. 100 - 101).

While the disciplinary system as defined by Foucault impacts relentlessly on the subject's life in all the institutions through which the subject passes, Certeau draws attention to the anti-disciplinary processes, i.e. the professional practices of ordinary subjects who can

rearrange what was imposed on everyday life by technical rationality. Through small cunning and tactics of resistance, the subject can re-contextualize elements established by the power that disciplines, defining new uses or different combinations. Certeau acknowledges that such practices and tactics remain inscribed within the limits of a predetermined repertoire and that sometimes they end up creating new rules, but he emphasizes their importance in the generation of multiplicity and diversity in social spaces, which tend to integrate the difference through disciplinary homogenization.

In addressing the speech, Foucault and Certeau bring the dimension of space as a metaphor: language is an architectural construction where the subjects move and interact. For Foucault (1996), however, the speech is a strategy of domination:

[...] I suppose that in every society the production of speech is at the same time controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a number of procedures designed to conjure their powers and dangers, to master their random aspect, to avoid its heavy and fearful materiality. (p. 4)

Foucault devotes himself to the microphysics of power, control and order guarantee, because for him the speech is not a set of signs, significant elements that refer to contents and representations, but a set of practices that systematically form the objects about which they speak. "The speech is not simply what translates the struggles or the systems of domination, but what one fights for, the power we want to seize" (1996, p. 10).

Bakhtin contributes to the debate of the speech, because, although the language constitutes the subject, it is also a continuous current established in a continuous stream of dialogues that relate what is being said to what came before and to what will follow.

The utterance always creates something that did not exist before it, something new and unrepeatable, something that is related to a value [...]. However, any created thing is created each time from a given thing [...]. What is given is transformed in what is created. (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 348)

This leeway provided by Bakhtin in the creation may be the loophole where the *ordinary subject* of Certeau reintroduces the possibility of order subversion. Metaphorically, we can assume that the speech for Foucault tends to immobility, to settling, while for Bakhtin and Certeau it moves in the concrete world of routine actions, given the possibility of new combinations or utterances, not necessarily inaugural statements, but a reordering of what was previously set.

Having integrated in its composition a further utterance, the enunciation of the narrator formulates syntactic, stylistic and compositional rules to assimilate it in part, to associate it with its own syntactic, stylistic and compositional unit, while noting, at least in a rudimentary way, the primitive autonomy of the speech of others, without which it could not be fully grasped. (Bakhtin, 2002, p. 145)

While Foucault is concerned with anchoring his research in the speech imposed by placing the ordinary forms of speech outside his field of study, Certeau bases his approach on the language of concrete life. Like Bakhtin, he proposes that the meaning is necessarily linked to everyday language, not just to its institutional production.

While acknowledging the strategy game, Certeau argues that the existence of tactics makes the speech a performative act, a practiced place where the subject affects the institutional speech, making the control of history and of everyday practices a fiction.

When analyzing the speech, what is at stake for Certeau and Foucault are the issues relating to power, even if they are expressed through it. They differ in the way they see micro-powers and micro-relations. For Certeau, they modify the limits of the domination imposed by the speech of power, while for Foucault they feed this domination.

As the goal of this article is not to establish theoretical affiliations, we shall seek analytical tools: with Foucault, we shall focus on the power structures to identify what in them imprisons us; with Certeau let us take the idea of fractures of the speech of power in which the possibility of change insinuates.

Children's and school cultures: where the child becomes a student

Some aspects can be considered confluent in the *plural declination of the sociology (ies) of childhood* (Sarmiento, Gouvea, 2008, p. 25): childhood should be studied from its own field and from the analytical autonomy of its social action, not from an adult-centered perspective. Simultaneously with the generational category, the aspects which distinguish children, such as class, gender or ethnicity, should be articulated. The competence of children opposes the negativity historically attributed to childhood. It used to be studied focusing on what children could not speak or do. Finally, childhood should not be taken as a transition – which all ages are – but as a period in which the subjects are competent social actors, who express themselves in generational alterity. Sarmiento (2006) notes, in this proposition, a critique of developmental psychology. The sociology of childhood also agrees on the need to study children as the social category most affected by structural conditions such as social inequality, war, or lack of social policies.

Children are seen as producers of culture and express their perceptions and interactions with peers or adults through culture. Children's cultures have specificities, such as the ways games and make believe are incorporated. As to institutions dedicated to children, there is the action that configures the children's task determining patterns of "normal" social performance. Socialization processes in these spaces try to develop in a vertical way.

In institutional work, the role of school and pedagogical work is especially significant. It "invented the student" [...] and "institutionalized childhood" [...]. But institutions are also filled by the action of children, both in a direct and participatory way and in an interstitial way, i.e., through child protagonism (with influential action) and as a mode of resistance, in spaces concealed or freed from the influence of adults – during which socialization processes take place horizontally (intra-generation communication), and the "social order of children" expresses itself. (Sarmiento, 2006, s.p.)

Then let us enter the school and take the category of school culture as an element of analysis. To do this, let us see the school as an institution that has speeches and forms of

action that have been historically constructed, resulting from clashes and conflicts caused by the clash between the determinations external to the school and its traditions, which reflect on the organization and management, on the daily practices in classrooms, schoolyards and corridors.

The curriculum is a device of school culture that deserves specific analysis for its structural consequences. For Sacristán (2000, p. 17), the curriculum expresses a balance between interests that influence the educational system and realizes the goals of education in the schooled teaching. His proposal is to take it as a cultural artifact that needs to be deciphered, as it is full of values. It is not enough to examine it in its most straightforward sense, as a "particular selection of culture (...) intellectual contents to be learned" (2000, p. 18), because curricula – especially those in compulsory education – translate a socializing project developed by the school.

The school educates and socializes by mediating the structure of activities that it organizes to develop curricula which have been ordered – a role it plays through the content, its forms and also the practices which take place within it. (Sacristan, 2000, p. 18)

The curriculum goes beyond the educational field and is within the field of political, administrative, intellectual creation, and evaluation practices, among others, because "the ultimate meaning of the curriculum is given by the very contexts in which it is embedded." (Sacristan, 2000, p. 22). The curriculum is also the mediator in the relationship between the teacher and the student, it establishes their places in relation to the transmission of knowledge and it defines identity from that position. It has a materiality, and it is this dimension which must be considered: the curriculum in action, its praxis. Thus, the school tasks represent

[...] rituals or patterns of behavior that require a reference of conduct [...]. This social character of the tasks gives it a high power of socialization of individuals, because through these tasks the conditions of schooling, curriculum and social

organization which each educational center is become concrete. (Sacristan, 2000, p. 205)

Veiga-Neto (2002) proposes that the curriculum should be questioned through its relations with the reinterpretation of space and time, since the curriculum was devised to facilitate an order and a representation based on specific time and space logics. The curriculum has a disciplinary function.

On the one hand, the curriculum gives epistemological support to spatial and temporal practices that take place continuously in schools. On the other hand, practices lend substance and rationale to the curriculum. (Veiga-Neto, 2002, p. 172)

Disciplinarity is the articulating element between the practices and the curriculum. The operations of docilization of children's bodies and the organization of knowledge into disciplines take place through disciplinarity.

The curriculum is also a "subjectifying device, involved in the genesis of the modern subject itself" (Veiga-Neto, 2002, p. 171). When sent to school, children learn that "being a pupil is being a student (the one who studies) or learner (the one who learns)" (Sacristán, 2005, p. 125), and this translates into specific behaviors. Sacristán (2005) acknowledges, however, one area of resistance of children in peer culture, which is favored by the segregation from the adult world and the institutionalization at school.

The experience divided into two niches is an opportunity to protect themselves from the total control of parents and teachers. Between family and school environments, in which one can hide, a third environment arises and can become independent of both: that of the group of equals. (p. 58)

Sacristán (2005) approaches Certeau when he acknowledges that institutionalization does not guarantee full control over subjects, but instead "institutionalization itself provides reasons to become a space of resistance that will strengthen [...] the community of equals." (p. 58)

The schooling that imposes itself: "Discipline is everything!"

After a first year observing the interactions of children in a school practice that privileged the logics of children, their space for creating and playing, the research needed to be redefined: should I further observations in preschool or follow the class observed into elementary school? The second option was chosen aiming at researching – from inside the classroom – the cultures of children at school.

The first day of school marked a dramatic break with the work developed before. The children were unaware of what they could do. The desks arranged in rows, facing the blackboard, the teacher's desk in front, the presence of children who had failed, the absence of others that made up the previous class, the alphabet and the numerals on the wall, everything indicated a different year. It was not allowed to run, go to the bathroom, play, drum, sing or look out the window. There was a gap between the children who came from preschool and the others. Lowering one's head and waiting were not in the repertoire of the previous year.

The coordinator came into our room and said he would give a "message from the heart", talked quietly with the teacher at the door and then spoke to the class. He did not introduce himself, he did not say his name or job. He only warned that now there was a new principal and things had changed.

- Discipline is everything! No one can go out not even one minute before the buzzer. You can only go to the bathroom in case of extreme necessity. If you run down the stairs or ramp, you will come back to learn how to go downstairs orderly, with discipline. If there's any problem, the teacher can have the child talk to me because this is just the best age to mend your ways!

The model of schooling was in progress: there was no dialogue between children and the adult who represented the school. What really mattered, however, is that they understood

clearly what was wanted from them and that they knew that, if they did not comply with the rules, they would be punished because they were “the best age to mend their ways!”

Among the elements observed, queues can be taken as concrete expression of disciplinary power: each subject becomes a unit, and each one has a particular place. At entry, children seek the queue of their class, organized from the youngest to the oldest. Each year, children change grades and acquire the right to move to the next row. The line ends up being the organizer that distinguishes gender, age, size, power. Children learn very early that being in the queue is to be part of that universe. However, although the queue individualizes, it also makes its participants dispensable, because when someone is absent, it immediately reconfigures itself by moving its units. The queue makes each child one more student in a serial space.

Despite the discomforts of the researcher, a week after school started children were better-adjusted. There was a poster on the wall containing "Our agreements", i.e., the rules set for the proper functioning of the group. Such rules did not seem to have been drawn by children, because some of their content was very present in the speech of adults:

- Play without fighting.
- Respect the teachers and classmates.
- Put trash in the trash can.
- Do not run or walk around the school (sic).
- Wait for your turn to speak.

What was expected of each one was explicit on the poster. Gradually, the children started dealing with the new rules more effectively:

Caio nudged William, who nudged André to pass the backpack to him. This was done when the teacher was not looking. I've noticed that now when children want

to talk to other children who are not next in line, they do not call them loudly anymore. Instead, they ask the child who is between them to call the other child¹.

The expression of the body revealed a learning. In elementary school, the classroom was a space of more restrained movements, of voices regulated at low volume. Unauthorized movements should be done quickly and subtly, preferably when the teacher was not looking. One could see here a subjection of the children's bodies to the logic of school cultures, which form a very specific kind of subjectivity: that of the student.

The body is a surface that receives the actions of power relations and their specific technologies. As a material dimension, the body pre-exists the subject and is the necessary path for subjectification processes that would form a "being", who is a product and a prisoner of his/her own body (Foucault, 1977, p. 133). The exercise produced by the disciplinary power on the body creates an environment in which another scenario is immediately seen as abnormal, outside the norm. Discipline explains the rules, the body must comply with them.

The success of the discipline depends on the hierarchical look, on the normalizing punishment and on the examination. This comprises the disciplinary power and its detailed and sometimes intimate but still important techniques. Small actions in the school routine reveal that: a frown, a scolding, hitting the eraser on the board, deprivation of the right to go to the playground. There is a varied repertoire of actions designed to punish those who do not conform with the desired behavior:

At the heart of all disciplinary systems, runs a small penal mechanism. It benefits from a kind of privilege of justice with its own laws, its specified crimes, its particular forms of sanction, its trial proceedings. (Foucault, 1977, p. 171)

¹ The research reports were taken from the researcher's field notebook and cover the period between 2007 and 2009.

The educational effect of the sanction is exercised both at the one who committed the offense and the others:

João asked: "Is Wellington going to the playground today?" Lídia replied, "No, he will think twice before punching a friend in the nose until it bleeds, especially a little friend like André".

A reward system is the counterpart of punishment and has the same effect. It is important to assimilate that "the indefinite field of non-compliant is punishable " (Foucault, 1977, p. 172). The moral dimension permeates the behaviors that are considered "good" and worthy of reward or "bad" and subject to punishment. One can establish an economy, a favorable balance or not. So what qualifies thereafter are not one's actions, but subjects themselves. "The perpetual penalty that permeates all points and controls every instant of the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, ranks, homogenizes, excludes. In a word, it *normalizes*". (Foucault, 1977, p. 176)

The arrangement of furniture contributes to the exercise of control. Student desks are generally arranged in rows, with some space in front reserved for the teacher, the large windows are transparent. It seems that things are arranged at school to create a network of gazes that control each other: the teacher controls the group, the principal controls the school. Children, however, resist...

Certeau (1994) thinks about everyday life from a possibility for invention. It corresponds to a historical dimension in which the ordinary subject develops practices of interpreting the world, building small resistances and small freedoms that subvert the rationality of power. It is a subtle and silent way to create loopholes in the oppression, that is, in the construction of everyday life, children will not merely reproduce the existing social and cultural patterns. "These ways of doing things and these gimmicks (...) make up, at worst, an anti-discipline network..." (Certeau, 1994, p. 41-42).

If the tactics translate into ways to do in which the "weak" appropriate the elements destined to them and create a new syntax, let us examine them in the actions of children in school, because the tactics' "only place is the place of the other. The tactics suggests itself in the place of the other, fragmentarily without grasping it entirely, without being able to keep it away (...) it does not keep what it earns. It has to constantly play with the events to turn them into opportunities "(Certeau, 1994, p. 46-47).

While they learned to be students, children discovered their power of resistance. The ways to do school activities were translated into a range of events transformed into opportunities:

The task consisted of scratching the letters a and circling the letters e. Lídia sang a song referring to sounds ê and é. I thought of the sound i, which was not even mentioned. The teacher encouraged, praised and corrected what was wrong. She did the exercise together, holding the hand of the child. Julia seemed to have difficulties, she talked, got up. She put on an exhausted face. She then tried another strategy: doodled all the letters and went to the teacher to show and the teacher corrected "- No, this is a t .." With this move, Julia watched the task of her classmates who had completed them and which were being pasted on their notebooks.

Even before mastering reading and writing, Julia had learned to "cheat" as a tactics of survival in school. Several examples show that children do not submit passively to what the codes of the school culture determine. On contrary, they learn them and give them new meanings through the peer culture.

The teacher argued: "Is Caio not behaving? No recess for him "I did not see what happened, just heard the teacher's reprimand. Caio was angry. He sat with his head down, holding it with his hands.

An act whose first meaning is to communicate submission – laying one's head and waiting silently for the next activity – was used by Caio to express the anger he felt at that moment.

What the boy felt was evident. However, nothing in his behavior allowed the teacher to admonish him again, which would be inevitable if he had expressed this anger verbally or through another behavior typical of someone who was angry. Both gestures and words are polyphonic and allow users to enter data from another context in a text, changing its meaning. This was possible because, through the peer culture, Caio interpretively reproduced the action of lowering the head and wisely used the gestural repertoire approved by the school to speak out against what had happened.

Silence is a particular concept in school. The dynamics is the continuing movement of the children, although to a hasty observer it might seem that the class took place according to the representation we make of it: the teacher explaining the task and the children performing it in an orderly fashion. In practice, everyday life reveals a series of actions that occurs parallel and is invisible and inaudible to those who wish to see only the oppressive dimension of reality. Bodies themselves prove to be less docile than we thought, and children whether or not authorized move through the school:

While waiting to go down to the cafeteria, the children talked freely, without much fuss, each at their desks. Isabela was sharpening her pencils to the trash bin. We went to the cafeteria and, back in the classroom, the teacher wrote the lesson on the board. Isabela sharpened her pencil again. When she finished, the teacher sat down with Lucas and started a different activity with him. She gave him individual attention for quite some time. João and Juliano talked all the time. Now Isabela also took part in the conversation. Juliano stood up and went to João's desk, then returned to his seat. Isabela was sharpening her pencil for the third time. Meanwhile, Wagner seemed to do contortionism on his chair, ending up under the desk. And... Isabela is sharpening her pencil... fourth time. Kauã made movements of martial arts at his desk. Renan, who had not finished yet, started playing with his classmate. Caio offered me some candy. I thanked him. Renan, who had not finished the task, was scolded. Caio went to the bathroom with the teacher's permission. João and Juliano were talking again. Ana Maria scolded him: "I've told you I don't want João talking with Juliano and Juliano talking with João and ending up doing something wrong". She warned them that once Caio had come back, she would dictate a text. Kaua took a box of crayons from his backpack, while Wagner played with a little toy and Rubens and João chatted quietly. Gabriel was talking to Kauã, Isabella sharpened her pencil for the fifth time. Caio came back, and Ana Maria did the dictation.

In this event one can identify a variety of small actions and movements that makes clear the non-submission of children and their potency. Bodies do not remain still at the desk; they go to the bathroom, stand ups, stretch, do contortionism, sharpen pencils. Interactions do not cease during the activities, and even prohibited actions, like having candy, can occur without being noticed. This is the busiest lull ever seen.

Shophie laid her head on the desk while Mariana colored some sheets. Edmundo, Julia and Lucas started a mess. Renan and Richard started a play-fighting, but stopped soon. Caio sat beside me on the last chair, then got up to talk with William and Denis. Renan and Richard sat on the floor. Wellington lay on the chair. Renan and Richard played with something. It looked like an eraser. Richard returned to his desk, he pretended to eat something and playfully kicked and slapped Renan. The game started to become more brutish. William crumpled Kauã's sheet. Kauã complained and Denis said Wellington had done it. The teacher warned that he would not go to the playground. Renan and Richard answered the call to "bring the notebook for the teacher to paste." Caio shook his desk as if he were on a rocking chair. While Lídia pasted the sheet on the notebook, Richard did jumping jacks in front of her. She asked what was happening, and Richard returned to his desk.

It is amazing that all this activity happens while the class seems calm. There is not excessive noise or confusion. There is constant dynamism in the room, but if someone passes behind the door s/he will have no idea of what is going on there. Even though the adults are involved in their function of repression, children are able to subvert the order and turn into fun what could result in a reprimand only.

During the class, João and Luís were playing with their pencils as if they were characters. João snitched, "Teacher, Giovana is having candy." Giovana hid the candy in her mouth and João said: "Open your mouth wide open." Giovana hid the candy under her tongue. João laughed and said: "It's there." Luís laughed too. João asked Luís: "Have you seen Madagascar?". Luís: "Yes." João imitated an animal from the movie and turned to Giovana again: "Let me see under the tongue?".

To achieve the desired results, discipline demands that besides space time is also controlled. This feature appeared in the field throughout the research time in the three grades observed.

The institutionalization developed in modern times demanded the uniformity of subjects to ensure results with less expenditure of energy. Submitting all the subjects to the same schedules was translated into the denial of individual needs in the name of a generic abstract subject, necessary to the configuration of that time. Until today, however, children at school are supposed to feel hungry, want to go to the bathroom, are willing to do tasks or play at the same times.

*Romeu asked to go to the bathroom.
Ana Maria replied, "No way!"
You went there at the milk time.*

The school day also has a large length of waiting time, which results from different individual rhythms to complete an activity and from the impossibility of the teacher to manage the time of her class the way she finds best. These times of doing nothing must be occupied in order to prevent the lack of direction from favoring a creative freedom that might oppose rigid control.

Wellington took the broom and started sweeping the room. Lídia told the children to join their desks in pairs to draw while they were waiting to go downstairs.

Children often finished their proposed activity and had nothing to do until the end of the class.

Julia watched her colleagues' tasks, which were being pasted. Sofia laid her head on the chair, while Mariana colored sheets.

Like in everything else, the children grasped the time construction, reproducing it interpretively:

Renan: Have you turned seven years?

Denis: Yes.

Renan: I'll turn seven, then I'll be eight, nine, ten, eleven, then ninety, ninety-one, ninety-two...

When the control works, there is no need for punishment. To achieve that, normalizing sanctions are applied as micro-penalties, which range from subtle punishments to punishments involving deprivation of some activity or humiliation:

The teacher came up to Caio and scolded him for being lost in dictation. She said "I should just let you go on not knowing. // Caio gets extremely upset when he is reprimanded.

Examinations are part of a ritual that ranks, subjugates, promotes or fails based on results. Through them, the subjects acquire a visibility that individualizes and sanctions. For Foucault (1977), the test allows teachers to both transmit what one knows and build a wide range of knowledge about their students (p. 179). This way, a knowledge-power link is established. Such link definitely marks the disciplinary society and allows the construction of a documented, described, compared individual.

Before going to the 2nd grade, I went to Carmen's and Lídia's rooms. Both welcomed me warmly. Lídia told me about the failures, noting that this year Julia has been far more interested. The students who failed the 1st year were: Julia, Mariana, Denis, Lucas and André.

Typical student behaviors were unprecedentedly visible on the first day of school. Children who did not attend pre-school the year before had, in their repertoire, actions such as raising their hands to be attended by the teacher, laying their heads on the desk to wait for

time to pass and the exact notion that games that displace the body through space, talking loudly or running were not allowed in the classroom. Children who did not master the typical rules of the social subject student got such repertoire progressively, which did not happen, however, without any resistance, tension and reactions.

Endnotes

Addressing the potency of children has enabled us to see them not only as subjected to a disciplinary system, but also as subjects who grasp elements of this system to reproduce them interpretively. Interpretive reproduction is a concept of William Corsaro (1997) as opposed to the idea that socialization takes place vertically through pure and simple internalization of the values of the society in which children are embedded. If there is a massive action of school discipline to turn them into students, there is also their action to transform reality, recreating it according to their socio-cultural context. It can be argued, thus, that children learn how to be students without ceasing to compose a social group apart, with specific characteristics and culture, because:

- Children, even subjected to the constraints of the student role, continue performing their *agency* as a social group.
- The actions of sympathy, the tactics of resistance, the bodies constantly in motion, the hidden communication, the invisibility of an uninterrupted movement, all this leads us to see them as much more powerful than the disciplinary action would allow us to think.

We conclude that there is a need for more research on children's cultures in formal schooling. The sociology of childhood, in its effort to distinguish itself from the sociology of education, fails to legitimize the main question posed here: children are still children after school entry. The question about the limits of childhood cannot obscure the fact that, even within the school sociology, there is an important aspect to see: children are a generational group with its own characteristics and culture and as such deserve to be studied regardless of the context in which they are. What we cannot forget is that 6, 7 or

even 10-year-old children are still children no matter whether they are more or less educated. They are children *and* students, not children *or* students.

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