

GENDER DISCOURSES IN THE INTRODUCTORY BOOKS TO DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to identify and analyze the discourses about gender present in introductory books of the Developmental Psychology disciplines of undergraduate courses in Psychology, in Brazilian public universities. We identified, based on a consultation of the teaching plans of these courses, the two most cited books. We organize, examine and present the material, taking into account the procedures of documentary research: the context of production of the works, their authorship and the discourses about gender in the descriptions of age markers (childhood and adolescence). Based on the contributions of feminist and queer studies about gender and on the contributions of Michel Foucault on biopower, we identified possible effects of discourse about the control function and limitation of the ways of managing gender experiences in childhood and adolescence. We formulate considerations about these effects and the circumstance that training in the area approaches criticism of scientific discourse, from feminist and queer studies.

Keywords: gender; discourse; developmental psychology.

Discursos de género en los libros introductorios a la Psicología del Desarrollo

RESUMEN

El objetivo de esta investigación fue identificar el analizar los discursos sobre género presentes en libros introductorio de las asignaturas de Psicología del Desarrollo de cursos de graduación en Psicología, en universidades públicas brasileñas. Identificamos, con base en la consulta a los planes de enseñanza de esos cursos, los dos libros más citados. Organizamos, examinamos y presentamos el material, teniendo en vista procedimientos de la investigación documental: el contexto de producción de las obras, sus autorías y las de los discursos sobre género en las descripciones de los marcadores etarios (infancia y adolescencia). A partir de las contribuciones de los estudios feministas y *queers* sobre género y de las contribuciones de Michel Foucault sobre el biopoder, identificamos posibles efectos del discurso en la función control y limitación de los modos de gestar las experiencias de género, en la infancia y en la adolescencia. Formulamos consideraciones a respecto de esos efectos y de la circunstancia de la formación en el área acercarse de las críticas al discurso científico, desde los estudios feministas y *queer*.

Palabras clave: género; discurso; psicología del desarrollo.

Discursos de género nos livros introdutórios à Psicologia do Desenvolvimento

RESUMO

O objetivo desta pesquisa foi identificar e analisar os discursos sobre género presentes em livros introdutórios das disciplinas de Psicologia do Desenvolvimento de cursos de graduação em Psicologia, em universidades públicas brasileiras. Identificamos, com base em uma consulta aos planos de ensino desses cursos, os dois livros mais citados. Organizamos, examinamos e apresentamos o material, tendo em vista os procedimentos da pesquisa documental: o contexto de produção das obras, suas autorias e as os discursos sobre género nas descrições dos marcadores etários (infância e adolescência). A partir das contribuições dos estudos feministas e *queers* sobre género e das contribuições de Michel Foucault sobre o biopoder, identificamos possíveis efeitos do discurso na função controle e limitação dos modos de gestar as experiências de género, na infância e na adolescência. Formulamos considerações a respeito desses efeitos e da circunstância de a formação na área se aproximar das críticas ao discurso científico, desde os estudos feministas e *queer*.

Palavras-chave: género; discurso; psicologia do desenvolvimento

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INTRODUCTION: DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY, GENDER AND FEMINISM

This investigation is part of a research program that proposes to provoke critical reviews, in the field of studies in Developmental Psychology. It follows other studies and essays that dealt on the theme, supported by queer, feminist, and trans-feminist perspectives (Burman, 2017; Mattos & Cidade, 2016; Oliveira & Madureira, 2014). However, we have here attempted to do a reading that connects age, gender, and sexuality, based on the discourses of scientific Psychology, in introductory books in Developmental Psychology in psychology courses from Brazilian public universities.

We aimed at demonstrating how the discourse on gender, intersectional with age, produced by a determined scientific psychology, realize approximations and distancing by feminist perspectives that lead to the dislodging of ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives in the sciences. In order to do that, we were guided by the conceptual tools offered by Michel Foucault on knowledge production, such as the concepts of episteme, biopoder, and discourse. In *“As palavras e as coisas”*, Foucault (1987) reflects on the inner works of the relations between the sciences and society, by means of epistemes, considering them a way of thinking/knowing a certain age or context. Therefore, they do not belong to the affirmation of a way of knowing and the establishment of true conditions.

Epistemes refers to the conditions for the formation of discourses (formulations) on determined objects that refer to a certain *a priori*, which provides the conditions for the production of a “true” discourse”, permeated with power relations. Discourse is an instrument for this social imagination and contributes to ways of control that are already naturalized and socially accepted.

The discourses instrumentalize bio-power. As a concept-device formulated by Foucault (1988), it is in the vital processes of bio-power that intervention processes are formulated by means of an anatomy-politics of the body and a biopolitics of the population. The first process consists of implementing disciplinary devices that are capable of extracting from bodies, in institutional spaces, their productive power, their full development of skills and competences to live in society by means of time control and experienced spaces. In the second one, Foucault describes the forms of controlling the masses, in which it is possible to build tools for handling birth rates, the increase of longevity, mortality, and so on.

Psychological theories on gender, which describe processes of change along the ages, inscribe origins, and routes whose purpose is to construct a true narrative on the truth concerning the nature of gender identity and the differences between the genders. The subjectivation processes engineered by the bio-power of gender discourses in the psychological theories (evolutionist, cognitivist, psychoanalytical, social learning) sustain,

in different degrees, gender binarism, dichotomies in the relations between nature and culture, as well as universities on the gender scripts. Some of these theoretical perspectives appear as a result of feminist criticisms against the androcentric and sexist vision in Psychology.

The relations of Psychology with feminism have a history which is related to explanations regarding the differences between men and women, and these range from biologizing perspectives to the absence of women and gender in Psychology studies to intersectional post-modern perspectives (Rutherford, 2012; Saavedra & Nogueira, 2006).

Psychology, in its intentionality to become a science, has sought to build a unified, theoretical and methodological body that is based on the experimentalist tradition of modern sciences. In this proposal, psychology ended up incurring into studies on the differences between men and women, whose results corroborated sexist, patriarchal perspectives, in which there is an affirmation of male superiority over female and the naturalization of the explanations of these differences, based on the discourse of evolutionism and of biology (Burman, 2017; Oliveira & Madureira, 2014).

Saavedra and Nogueira (2006) affirm that the preoccupation of psychology with a perspective of gender might be located identified ever since the late 19th century until the 1930s.³ Psychology has appropriated methodological references and biology's explanations (physiological and anatomical), in order to establish explanations for behavioral differences between men and women. But after the 1930s, the interest is transferred from studies on cognition and motricity to personality differences between men and women, due to difficulty to reach consistent readings of these differences on physiological bases, resulting in the development of instruments to measure skills and competences linked to differences between genders.

At a second moment, between the decades of 1970 and 1990, psychology allies itself to the debate on the influences of the patriarchy on the differences between men and women, resulting in the development of theories, methodologies, and political implications of the research. In addition, the feminists focused on the following efforts by the research and knowledge production, which has implications in the Psychology research: a) establish arguments of those who criticize the form of investigation that reinforces equality rather than difference, which legitimizes inequality; b) propose arguments to justify the differences; c) implement the appreciation of differences, based on criticism to universality (Saavedra & Nogueira, 2006).

It consists of an empiricist feminist program, which

³ The period of reference, since the reading of the American Psychology.

unites itself with the traditional research models, to fight andro-centrism and sexism from within the model. In this program, two approaches emerge: essentialism and socialization. In the essentialist approach. In the essentialist approach, sex, and gender are equivalent, a stable, innate, and bipolar propriety of sexual differentiation. Thus, the essentialist approach determines the expression and the quality of human behaviors, such as cognition, effectiveness, and moral judgment, for example. In the socializing approach, the focus shifts from biology to socialization, and gender is situated as a product of the social relations in individuals' life contexts – gender is a learned and modeled characteristic. It is not something innate.

After the 1980s and 1990s, feminism approached criticisms to structuralism in the sciences and to the perspectives that aim at alternative models of research (Harding, 1993). In Psychology, the passage from one of the women's perspectives (essentialist, rationalist, universalist, binary) to a feminist perspective (relativist, critical, intersectional), and attentive to diverse forms of oppression of different women, rather than a single woman, leads to the review, not only theoretical, but with methodological and intervention implications (Rutherford, 2012; Saavedra & Nogueira, 2006).

The influence of these perspectives have reached some specific fields of Psychology. The studies by Nuernberg, Tonelli, Medrado and Lyra (2011) and Jesus and Galinkin (2015) highlight the role played by Social Psychology in the appropriation of feminism. In these studies, together, the researchers assessed the scientific production of Brazilian Psychology in Brazil in the last three decades, verifying that Social Psychology reveals itself as a major articulator of feminist ideas, producing theoretical and methodological discussions.

Adopting the perspective of Social Psychology is a matter of assuming a political and ethical position regarding what is being investigated and analyzing phenomena in a way that considers the complexity in which they are produced. It is a matter of amplifying the vision towards a multiplicity of elements that make up what is intended to be known rather than operating with dualisms and polarized determinism in the explanation (Borges, 2014). The queer feminist perspectives also come into action as a means to produce other languages, routes, methods, and narratives on the experiences of the dissident genders and heteronormativity, on the centrality of the cisgender; therefore, when debating on the sex-gender-desire system (Butler, 2003).

Among the investigation fields, Developmental Psychology is another field that has found support in feminist readings, for a review of research models, especially when it operates on the criticism of gender of the processes of investigation and theorization on lifetimes and change processes (Burman, 2017; Mattos & Cidade, 2016).

In Developmental Psychology, it is possible to locate the influence of feminism with initial preoccupations to describe the differences between the psychological skills and competences between men and women, according to Rutherford (2012) and Saavedra and Nogueira (2006). Developmental Psychology has always played a fundamental role in the construction of psychological science (Mota, 2005; Dessen & Guedea, 2005). Developmental Psychology has acted as a device for practices and theories on individuals and their change processes. To these authors, there is unanimous consensus that the study of human development consists of investigating change processes along individuals' life trajectories.

Mota (2005) suggests the emergence of Developmental Psychology in four moments, in the European and American contexts. A moment might be considered formative, between the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th centuries, with the appearance of a set of studies on psychobiological processes, the psychology of personality and the cognitive development of children. Right after that, there would be a phase in which there is an institutionalization of the Psychology of human development, with the studies by Stanley Hall on adolescence and aging.

After the Second World War, there was a new moment, in which studies focus their attention on preoccupations with the development of children, with further focus on variables that create route deviations (pathologies) and variables that might promote development in a healthy way. From the second half of the 20th century until the end of the 1980s, there is an amplification of the studies, due to experimental and longitudinal methods, with an emphasis on the theories of social, behavioral learning and a return of the studies of Piaget's genetics Psychology. After this period, there is greater emphasis on interdisciplinary aspects and an amplification of the analyses by means of an approach to the vital cycle – *Life Spam Theory* – and of the bioecology of human development, considering influences by new paradigms in science, such as systemic theory.

Closer to interdisciplinarity, these readings question the singularity of the evolutive process and suggest the idea of probabilistic trajectories, based on the relations between variables by diverse influences on the changes along the course of life. Even considering such contributions as more dynamic. They incorporate elements such as serendipity and the curves in the route of the course of life. The epistemic background still contains determinisms and dualisms, in some explanations, given their epistemological connections (Burman 2017).

One of the groups that connects to a critical approach to the program by Developmental Psychology is made up of individuals who take gender as a device for problematization of the science of human development

– more related to preoccupations to build a Psychology of the differences of gender. For example, Gilligan (1993) denounces the andro-centric, sexist bias in the morality studies. Miller (2006) recommends a dive into feminism and studies on the change processes for different ages. It is a criticism to feminist studies as excessively focused on adulthood and it also highlights the need to realize more research works on other age markers.

Burman (2017), especially, shows us how scientific approaches constitute powerful discursive resources in the regulation of women and families, marginalizing the working class and ethnic minorities, while normalizing western family configurations and pathologizing mothers. In this study, the author undertakes critical readings of major theories in human development, working on discursive constructions on children, adolescence, and psychological characteristics based on universal, decontextualized principles that exclude the voices of children and adolescents, in their cultural, ethical, gender, social and economical specificities.

Works such as the one by Castañeda (2002) unite with the propositions by Burman, when they assess productions on development: the need for a contextual perspective that is a result of the concrete experience of children, escaping from a generic, abstract, and universal affirmation, according to which the end is the model of psychological development of the white, Euro-American child in the traditional sciences of development.

Based on the debate on gender and their intersections in the contemporaneous feminisms, we attempted to tension the field of Developmental Psychology. In order to do that, we analyzed a few discourses on gender, in Developmental Psychology in formation courses, based on introductory books to the area, while aiming at producing the necessary moves in order to comprehend the multiplicity of gender expressions, and connecting to ethical and political readings on genders and age markers.

METHOD

Aiming at identifying and assessing the discourses on gender in introductory books to Developmental Psychology, we proceeded into the search for disciplines on the theme/area of Developmental Psychology and their respective pedagogical plans. The referred search was realized between the years 2018 and 2019, by digital means and by telephone contact, when necessary, in order to have questions answered and/or collect information, from the psychology courses (of the subdivisions and central campuses) of public universities in different Brazilian regions.

We did not intend to produce a representative sample of each region. Rather, we wanted to comprehend the largest number possible, under the collection conditions, from public universities in different Brazilian regions. Thus, we assessed 11 state universities and 18 federal universities. The total sum was 29 universities: four from

the north; nine from the northeast; three from the south; eight from the southeast; five from the mid-west.

Researchers highlighted the disciplines that directly or indirectly dealt with Developmental Psychology, which is generally offered as part of the common nucleus of formation courses and/or disciplines that have social markers of age (adolescence, childhood, and youth) as their focus. We defined the term “Development Psychology” as reference for the search, usability, and tradition, in many courses, the terms “childhood”, “adolescence” and “youth”, because they are age markers contemplated by the preoccupations of Psychology, ever since their beginning (Burman, 2017; Motta, 2005).

After selecting the pedagogical plans of these disciplines, one per course, from the universities, the titles, menus, and bibliographies were read, and researchers dedicated themselves to sorting out the ones that were indicated as reference or characterized themselves as introductory. Such books identify themselves as books intend to introduce readers to the study of Psychology and/or the science of human development. They are, therefore, works of reference that compile major themes and theories in the area. We did not select, thus, the literature of specific approaches and theories. Rather, we picked the ones that presented themselves as organizers or compilers of the knowledge produced by Developmental Psychology during their time.

For the treatment of material, we used documental research, which is characterized by the adoption of methods, techniques, and other instruments for the analysis of documents. The documental research presents similarity with bibliographical research, because both produce surveys in the scientific sources, books, encyclopedias, etc. However, considering that documental analysis raises issues that have not been edited or that have not gone through enough analytical treatment (Sá-Silva, Almeida, & Guindani, 2009).

In this analysis, we attempted to evidence the statements presented by the books on how gender constitutes itself as a component of the bio-power that engineers the subjectivation processes in childhood and in adolescence. We have attempted to identify the crossings and approximations in these cases with the feminist criticisms while attempting to amplify the perspectives of the studies of gender. The intention was to describe how the discourses on gender in childhood and adolescence in this material have their effects in psi and educational practices.

Thus, based on a reading of the pedagogical plans, we chose to analyze two of the most often mentioned introductory books. Subsequently, we presented these books, their description in terms of form and content and, after that, we presented the analysis procedures on the collected material.

The first one, mentioned 26 times, is a book entitled Human Development, by Diane Papalia, Sally Olds, and Ruth Feldman, published by Art Med and McGrawHill, in Brazil. The mentioned publications dates are from 2000, 2006 (8th edition) and 2010. The most recent edition is from 2013, which is the 12th edition, and the authors, this time, were only Diane Papalia and Ruth Feldman. We chose to analyze this last edition because the proposal to have these books as reference in the formation contemplates the students' access to this more updated material. In this last edition, the authors presented the book in diverse sections. A first block demonstrates the objectives and goals of the book and articulates them with the formation in Psychology established by the APA (*American Psychological Association*), in addition to the report on changes in content, concerning the last editions and the availability of online courses.

In the other parts, researchers followed the procedures of presenting the study on development in its theoretical and methodological aspects (part 1). Next, there are the parts in age division: part 2 refers to the description of the beginning of development, in its physical, biological, and psychosocial aspects. Subsequently, there are the cognitive, psychosocial aspects of childhood (parts 3 and 4), adolescence (part 5), youth and adult life (part 6), intermediate adult life (part 7), late adult life (part 8), and end of life (part 9). At the end of each part, there is a set of activities and propositions for reflections, with the final purpose to optimize the learning of contents and critical reasoning on the human development theme.

The authors do not mention, in the updates, the gender theme (identity) in childhood. However, we emphasize that they include a series of themes related to homosexuality, at different moments of life, especially after young, adult phase until old age, which deal with the depathologization of homosexuality, as well as the description of how homosexual couples live regarding affections and society and the effects of homosexual parenting on the raising and education of children.

The second most mentioned book (10 times) is *Vital Cycle*, by Helen Bee (1997, 1st edition). We did not find any recent updates of this study. We also identified that it is unavailable in the publisher's catalogue. The book is organized into 19 chapters. They follow a chronological sequence of ages on physical, cognitive, social, and personality development. The first two chapters focus on the presentation of basic concepts and methods of Developmental Psychology, while aiming at describing the nature of the object of this science. This book also contains sections of contents to be learned and it also proposes activities that students and teachers can carry out together as a proposal for a pedagogy on the human development discipline.

The other chapters follow the chronology of pre-natal life and birth (chapter 3), from 0 to 6 years (chapters 4 to 8), from 6 to 12 years (chapter 10), from 12 years to the end of adolescence (chapters 11 and 12), adult life

(chapters 113 and 14), intermediate adult life (chapters 15 to 16) old age and late adult life (chapters 17 to 18), the act of dying (chapter 19). Bee (1997), right in the beginning, debates the strategy of organizing the book by age, which was not something common in his previous works, organized into themes rather than age. The publisher's demand for this format was seen as a challenge and, strategically, to avoid losing the focus of the approach in *Vital Cycle*, she created spaces in the book that are named "interludes" in order to articulate different ages regarding a determined theme.

In the book, Bee (1997) highlights matters of gender and sexuality, in terms of the development of identity in childhood (acquisition of gender roles, influence of gender/sex on intellectual and social differences) in adolescence and adult life on the choices and insertions into the working world (differences and expectations regarding roles, based on gender/sex). Regarding homosexuality in adolescence, the author highlights it on a panel on "the real world" and tries to explain, in the literature of the time (between the 80s and 90s of the 20th century), the possible origins of homosexuality, focusing on male homosexuality, but she also refers to adolescent mothers.

Childhood and adolescence in the plots of the discourses on gender

In both books, we aimed at identifying the discourses of Scientific Psychology regarding gender and its possible effects on the subjectivation processes of childhood. To do that, the documental analysis of the material considers the contexts of production of the work and how the scientific discourse, based on human development, uses the gender category as an analyzer of differences.

The two works are written by sis gender women who are north American researchers with a lot of experience in the production of compilations targeting student populations on human and Psychology's development. The authors have academic formation in important and recognized institutions as well as lots of experience in the writing of advertising for science in different media (scientific magazines, information magazines, tv shows, radio shows, and the internet). Helen Bee and Diane Papalia have academic formation and experience in universities in the area of Psychology and Developmental Psychology. Ruth Feldman also has university formation and is a dedicated writer on the themes of childhood, adolescence, old age, and parenthood to the great public.⁴

Eagly and Rider (2014), by raising the influences of feminist perspectives on the way to produce research and knowledge in psychology, emphasize the experi-

⁴ There are few sources in order to get to know the authors better. It is possible to find some information on reference sites such as these: https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/276776.Diane_E_Papalia; https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helen_Bee

mental character of most research works, quantitative as well as quantitative-qualitative, in the tradition of Psychology research in the United States of America. Thus, the set of two examined works privileges these studies in a way that the produced data are used as the truth about human development processes. When it comes to relational perspectives and to the amplification of multi-determinist and interdisciplinary analysis, the epistemes that sustain the modes of doing research are based on epistemological models anchored on the relations of cause and effect between systems or contexts (affective, cognitive, biological, and social), which articulate generating behaviors, actions, and types of psychological behavior.

The contexts and the organization of the works involve a described set of development processes, throughout life in chronologically ordered ages – birth, childhood, adulthood, old age, and death). The way to narrate this development and/or change processes predominantly have references in research in Developmental Psychology, whose ways of doing research have as references predominantly experimental, analytical positivist, and post-positivist models in literature in North American Psychology (Eagly & Rider, 2014). Despite the presentation of different perspectives and approaches on human development, right in the beginning of introductory texts, generally in the first chapters, the descriptions by age read in books refer much more to research works of experimental-methodological nature. Exceptions happen in highlights indicated as sections on cultures and realities that differ from the scrutinized universal aspects, pointing at inter-cultural, sociological, and anthropological studies that expose data on social groups that have less visibility.

One option for analysis of the statements was to take age markers as a starting point. This choice justifies itself by being the one that is presented in the books, offering to us the possibility to follow the routes made by the narrative on the ages, their continuities, and discontinuities. In order to follow the analysis on the way discourses operate, when one employs the gender category as analyzer of differences, their relations with sexuality, the modes of socialization, and everyday life, we become aware of the concept of bio-power (Foucault, 1988).

As the of the books, gender acts as a device of bio-power when we stick to the narrative of identity construction, whose effects are the control over the modes of socialization and of expression of the bodies, towards a teleology of the socialization of male or female. The preoccupation is with the acquisition of gender roles by the children, when it is identified as being of or another sex (male or female). The games, behaviors, and values are located and interpreted as closer or more distant from their genital sex/gender. There is no evidence, in the research works reported by the authors, of perspectives of self-references (self-

identification) of gender in the mode of research with children, especially.

The gender role is approached, in these works, in a determining way concerning how the female and male behaviors reverberate in the imagination of family and school institutions that discipline the expressions and bodies of boys and girls:

The boy's tendency to be more active and physically aggressive when compared to play styles that are more supportive and affectionate are probably contributions to gender segregation. Boys play spontaneously on the sidewalk, on the streets, or in empty lots; girls tend to choose activities that are more structured and watched by adults (...). This does not seem to be driven by social influences. No matter what social group they belong to, boys tend to participate in more exploratory games, and the girls appreciate more symbolic games and make-believe (...). (Papalia & Feldman, 2013, p. 301).

Papalia and Feldman (2013), just like Bee (1997), carry out a description of the theories that explain perspectives on gender development. The set of theories comes down to: a) biological approach – based on the notion that gender roles and behaviors originate in the biological mechanisms of the species (hormones and genetics); b) the evolutionist approach, whose arguments rely on the processes of natural selection that ended up determining the typical behaviors for each gender; c) Psychoanalytical approach, in which gender behavior and roles constitute a form of resolution of unconscious emotional conflicts; d) Cognitive-developmental theory – a process that is based on cognitive conflicts over the gender perspective (sex); e) Gender scheme theory, when children seek cultural references, schemes, and information on gender and incorporates them, considering what is appropriate and what is not f) Social learning approach, in which children observe reinforcing behaviors, in determined contexts, creating behavior combinations.

Such approaches and theories create (and constitute) an intense debate over cultural, biological, internal, external, individual, and social aspects, on the acquisition or construction of gender identity. Gender is also a category that remains fundamentally stuck between biological, cultural/social poles. Its theoretical use is an attempt to explain the effects of a discourse that sometimes affirms biological or cultural determinism, and sometimes attempts to articulate these two places, though still in a dichotomic way and at different influence degrees. The absence of the debate over gender perspectives, beyond the male/female binomial,⁵ is also recurrent, fundamentally and methodologically

⁵ In the gender scheme approach, a third element is inserted – the androgynous, based on the works by Bem, S. L. (1974). The measurements of psychological androgyny. *Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology*, 42, 155-162.

disregarding the need for self-declarations of gender by the participants, such as children and adolescents, depriving them of their right to express themselves.

The controversy and debate reveal that the anatomic-political and bio-political device of the population acts here in the production of discourse on the origin of psychism and practical consequences in education and treatment (correction) of individuals that fall out of "normality", which is something that the authors repeatedly attribute to a certain culture or innate incident. It applies to the affirmation that behavioral changes are realized in the environment, a certain pedagogy of distinction between the sexes that might guarantee the maintenance of hegemonic models of masculinity or femininity, and it also applies to the biologizing discourse, which is subject to eugenic effects.

Regarding that matter, Papalia and Feldman (2013, p. 291) report the nefarious effects of the operations of sexual resignation of children that were born with undefined genitalia, in the experiments and procedures by John Money⁶, who recommended the gender resignation right after birth, leading people to psychological suffering and suicide, in other periods of their lives. According to the authors, these facts raised the issue of the effective role played by the innate components of gender identity.

Foucault reminds us that, regarding the sexuality device (1988), the discourse on sexuality perfects itself along the centuries and *Scientia Sexualis* takes over, after the end of the 19th century, concerning how we must situate ourselves regarding sexual practices and the related gender models. The discourse of the trajectories of gender modulated by culture, biology, or both, operates as a means to keep certain necessary repertoire for the maintenance of values, ideas, and norms that regulate the bodies and the social space.

Unlike the appointments targeting childhood, adolescence sees a greater focus on sexuality, loving relations, and the relations of friendship and socialization between the sexes. The dominant model is the heterosexual, cisgender one.

The gender and the time of the definitions also become part of the engine of *cientia Sexualis*. Adolescence, considered a phase that comes after childhood, in the western societies, is described in introductory books as a transition into adult life, the rules to compose the groups are less strict, there is greater exchange and socialization among people of different sexes. However, the idea of gender as an aspect that might be under construction does not have strength:

Children aged between 7 and 8 years seem to deal with gender categories as if they were fixed

rules; adolescents, however, see that a wide scope of behaviors takes place among the members of each sex group (...). in fact, a significant minority of adolescents and young people start to define themselves as having feminine and masculine features. (Bee, 1997, p. 351).

The rituals of loving and sexual relations in adolescence are approached predominantly based on heteronormativity. When homosexuality is mentioned, there is still a predominance of discourses on its rarity in comparison to heterosexuality, treating it often as factual minority and excluding a process in which the loving relation rituals have a heteronormative model as reference:

Among all changes in the social relations of adolescence, the deepest one is the exchange of the absolute domain of friends of the same sex for heterosexual relations. Undoubtedly, there is a considerable element in all this. Therefore, we have found many cultures in which heterosexual contact during puberty or before marriage is quite controlled and supervised; there are other cultures in which there are no restrictions whatsoever. (...) The heterosexual experience is not the only one that adolescents can have. Homosexual interactions are also quite common, especially among boys during childhood and early adolescence.

(...) Whatever the cause, homosexual orientation is, no doubt, a preference of minorities, with elevated levels of prejudice and stereotypes, associated with high risk for many problems in adolescence. (Bee, 1997, p. 365).

Papalia and Feldman (2013) bring other positionings concerning data on homosexuality throughout life. In their most updated book, they incorporate the effects of definitions and decisions on the depathologizing of homosexualities. The reports concern research works of comparison between the life models of homosexual and heterosexual partnerships (from adolescence to old age), as well as the effects on psychological health, in a prejudiced society that rejects homosexuality.

Besides that, the updated themes of the work focus on the amplification of readings on gender and sexualities, in the realm of socializing, affections and health, expressed by the inclusion of homosexuality as other possibilities of existence, endorsed and authorized by the APA, from the depathologization of homosexuality, in 1973, to the LGBTI+ rights movements (Lesbians, Gay people, bisexual people, transvestites/transgenders/transsexuals, intersex, and other dissidences and alliances).

However, it is important to emphasize that depathologization refers to a discourse on the truth that comes from scientific procedures. The need for scientific prescriptions to depathologize homosexualities, as

⁶ Money, J. (1988) *Gay, Straight, and In-Between: The Sexology of Erotic Orientation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

pointed out by the authors, is made in the dispute over who will discover its origin (and consequently correct it with treatment). Even with scientific prescription, there is still a struggle over the origin of homosexuality in the moral realm. Sexuality as a device is not independent from society's moral aspects, which determine what is acceptable and what is not, and whose acceptance does not take solely the scientific prescription of normality. It is all related to a set of beliefs and values that are historically rooted to social practices, and which takes science to its own benefit or not. It is no surprise that conversion therapies still retain any visibility, even in Psychology itself (Garcia & Mattos, 2019).

The discourse on homosexuality as a disease or immoral practice is part of the logics for affirmation of "healthy and acceptable" heterosexuality. The change in logic takes place by means that rely not only on the feasibility of scientific discourse. It would be necessary to construct other logics, in the social context of organization of differences, so that homosexuality gets its place somewhere else, away from the notion of abnormality.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

What we managed to present here was an excerpt, among some other possible ones, of a reading over discourses on gender, in these introductory books. Besides that, other sources might be consulted, such as specific books on the theme – it is important to emphasize that we have found very few, but they can be present in other disciplines during formation.

The discourses in the introductory books reveal the processes carried out by bio-power on gender and the intersections. Considering the tools of bio-power as a gender-sex-system, present in different statements by the books, we can identify how the processes of disciplining the bodies/age and the management of age groups take place.

Thus, the discourse on gender, in the introductory books, considering the age markers, reveal that childhood is defined as a place for learning and the acquisition of repertoires of hegemonic genders and with any protagonism of sexuality (which must be conducted and controlled). Therefore, the political effects (attention, care and education policies) of the discourse over gender, in childhood, demonstrate the control and the inter-disciplinization of children's bodies as depositors of the maintenance of the cultures of patriarchy and of heteronormativity.

In adolescence, the discourse over gender comes before the one on sexuality. Although dissident sexualities (homosexuals) are approached, the discourse prevails over polarity and/or comparison of this sexuality with heterosexuality. Gender appears in the array of repertoires on the relations on friendship and love. There is a definition of the ways to conduct and live these relations, marked by a stereotypical description of how

boys and girls relate to each other.

In both cases, childhood and adolescence, gender is an analytical category of the differences based on hetero-identification. We did not find, in the texts, the mentioning of research works when it comes to the gender theme as self-identified. Transgenderism is situated, in the book by Papalia and Feldman (2013), as something possible, though it returns to a medical-biological discourse of the origin or transgender.

The works analyzed in the research are references for psi and educational practices and their statements have bio-power effects and are also producers of such power. The science of human development, announced in books, has the purpose to legitimize regularities on the change processes in order to implement actions that are capable of regulate or optimize the processes of acquisitions of skills, competences and behaviors that are "healthier". The knowledge produced by Developmental Psychology intends to predict the production of preventive actions. It consists of information on the population, by the age outline, which manage the lives of these populations in different social institutions for attention and intervention such as schools, hospitals, prisons, health services, and social projects.

The present research work offers elements for a debate on Psychology formation, when it comes to studies on gender and age. The formation that deals with lifetimes needs to be incorporated into other theoretical and methodological perspectives, which are allied with the realities and experiences of concrete individuals, and leading to the production of readings of epistemological and ontological alternatives. In this sense, the feminist and queer contemporaneous perspectives can be interesting allies, by dislodging neutrality and duality discourses that are determined by the relations between nature and culture, subject and object, towards other places that imply an ethical relation with expressions of gender and sexuality.

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Submitted on: Juny 08 2020

Approved on: April 11 2021

This paper was translated from Portuguese by Régis Lima.