

**Bedrooms of contemporary children: the construction of a new object  
of research<sup>1</sup>**

***Quartos das crianças contemporâneas: a construção de um novo objeto  
de pesquisa<sup>2,3</sup>***

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**Abstract:**

This article seeks to describe how the change of the spaces reserved for children in the residential architecture has generated a new object of study that has been named as bedroom culture. If the empirical object is new in the childhood studies field, the theoretical issues are frequently the deployment of diverse aspects of the material culture. Therefore, this paper has elected three main issues: the concept of material culture of childhood, the use of the notion of space in academic research, and, finally, the relationship between subjects (children in this case) and objects.

**Keywords:** architecture, children's bedroom, material culture

**Resumo:**

*O artigo busca descrever como a mudança dos espaços reservados às crianças na arquitetura residencial suscitou um novo objeto de estudo que vem sendo denominado de “cultura do quarto”. Se o objeto empírico é novo nos estudos da infância, as questões teóricas frequentemente são desdobramentos de diversas vertentes da cultura material. Assim, o artigo elegeu três problemáticas centrais: o conceito de cultura material da infância, o uso da noção de espaço nas pesquisas acadêmicas e, por fim, a relação entre sujeitos (no caso, crianças) e objetos.*

**Palavras-chave:** arquitetura, cultura material, quartos de criança

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## Introduction

Maria Lúcia Garcia Pallares-Burke (2005) tells, in her work on the influences and experiences that led Gilberto Freyre to write the work *Casa Grande Senzala* in 1933, that the author would have confided to Manuel Bandeira, in a letter written in 1929, his project to write about childhood in Brazil similarly to the work of Oxfordian essayist and art critic Walter Pater in his book *The child in the house* (1878). Even though Gilberto Freyre had abandoned this idea of a generational analysis, Pater's text would have inspired the centrality of 'house' as an analytical category in Freyre's work.

In Pater's text, marked by auto bibliographical traces, the character Florian Deleal helps an older man carry his bags and, during their conversation, discovers they are countrymen. At the same night, he dreams with his childhood house in details. When he wakes up, he tries to understand how his thoughts were created in that house and in that furniture, that is, how the materiality that surrounds his childhood has contributed to make him who he is. If the influence of material things seems insignificant during childhood, the narrator continues, we discover much later that they indelibly affect us: "The realities and passions, the rumors of the greater world without, steal in upon us, each by its own special little passage-way, through the wall of custom about us." (Pater, 1878, p.12).

This part has inspired Gilberto Freyre to focus on material culture and, more specifically, residential architecture, assuming the idea that spaces and objects contribute to the articulation of senses and the life configuration of people. Although the author had confided on Manuel Bandeira his intention of writing about *meninice* (a Brazilian Portuguese expression, similar to boyhood), as Freyre referred to childhood (Pallares-Burke, 2005), in his work the relationship between children and the household spaces appear only marginally.

We know very little about the emergency of children's bedrooms in Brazilian architecture<sup>4</sup>, but we can suppose that, as Gilberto Freyre had such an interest on childhood and architecture, one of the reasons for the lack of attention given to children's domestic spaces

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<sup>4</sup> Between 2014 and 2017, I researched in Scielo, Google Scholar and in the Platform *Periódicos da Capes* using the terms: child/childhood; architecture and history. The results found, which will be presented in this article, point to a history of school architecture, but not to a history of children's spaces in the domestic architecture. The bibliographical research also done at the research sector of *Museu da Casa Brasileira* points to the almost inexistence of works on the history of children's bedrooms, the work of Dantas (2014) is an exception.

is due to history. Descriptions of the Brazilian house written by European travelers that had visited the country between the 18th and 19th centuries<sup>5</sup> lead us to believe that, from the colonial period until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, residential architecture rarely discriminated a specific space for children. Despite the ethnocentric perspective and, at times, even tinted by prejudice, these reports are considered important sources of studies on domestic spaces and children (Leite, 1997).

In 1868, Oscar Canstatt left Germany to Brazil, where he worked on the Imperial Commission of Agriculture. His reports describe trips done in the region of São Leopoldo in the south of Brazil. About his accommodation in a small house in the top of *Serra do Mar*, far from any “human culture”, Oscar Canstatt (2002) writes:

I have reached without any incidents, but through improbable paths and in the darkness of night, a small house of the farmer who had been warned of my visit. He was not home, but his other half has amiably received me and a herd of boys snored in different tones in the corners of the wooden house...After a strong meal, I laid comfortably in the large bed, in a room of wooden walls which muffled the concert provided by the snoring boys and, without waiting for the return of the rightful owner, I joined their sleep...I saw very clearly, then, that those good people, in the lack of a guest bed, had given me a place in the couple's bed and, after I had fallen asleep, both calmly laid to my right and my left. I calmed down and we slept, the three of us, in this extraordinarily uncommon manner, until morning (p. 430).

More than two decades later, the Englishman Robert Edwart Edgecumbe retells (Edgecumbe *apud* Leite, 1997):

Brazilian parents live with the children around them and completely spoil them. A Brazilian child is worse than a dizzy mosquito. Brazilian houses have no1 bedroom for them and, it is cruel to put the little dears to bed during the day, they enjoy their companies non-stop (p. 37).

Even though the reports of Edgecumbe and Oscar Canstatt suggest the lack of children's bedrooms in the Brazilian house, letters from the French engineer Louis Vauthier (1943) point to their existence in some richer houses. Louis Vauthier's (1943) letters, important documents on residential architecture in Pernambuco in the beginning of the 19th century, have descriptions and blueprints of urban and rural houses. Describing a *casa-grande*<sup>6</sup>, he claims that,

<sup>5</sup> I specially thank the *Museu da Casa Brasileira* (Brazilian House Museum) by the support given in its archive research, done in August 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Translator's note: *Casa-Grande*, 'big house', is the name given to the house of the proprietors, often in contrast to the *senzalas* where the slaves would sleep. I chose to keep the original term, as it appears in the title of Gilberto Freyre's iconic book "*Casa Grande & Senzala*". In English it received the title 'The Masters and the Slaves'.

in general, the first floor held the living room, the guest bedrooms, and the ballrooms, thus, a space frequented by the guests. The access to the second floor was granted only to close visitors. Therefore, the higher floors in the house would keep the family's privacy and, mainly, shielded women and children. Figure 1 presents the blueprint of a *casa-grande* showing a children's bedroom in the third floor.

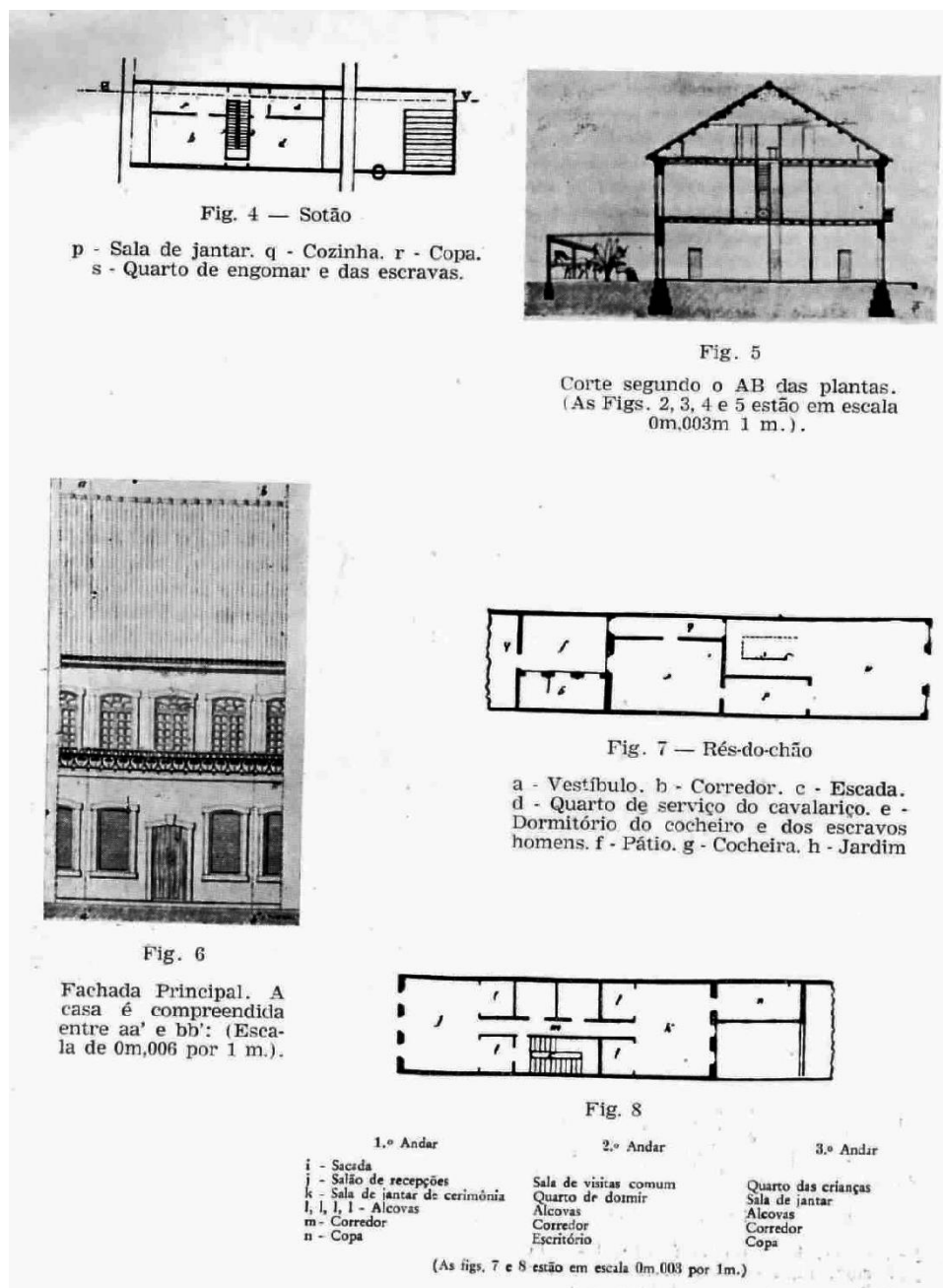


Figure 1 – Blueprint of a house in Pernambuco in the 19th century done by Vauthier

Source: Louis Vauthier (1943)

Although there is a lack of more systematic researches on the theme, the reports lead us to believe that, until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, having a bedroom for the children would maybe be a more frequent, but not obligatory, practice in the upper classes. The same seems to have happened in Europe, where the architects started to include children in the house plans after the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Donzelot, 1986; Eleb-Vidal & Debarre, 1995; Elias 2010; Perrot, 2010).

Therefore, the research on the history of children's bedrooms also needs to consider the different configurations of domestic spaces in different social levels. In Brazilian context, did children's bedroom emerge in the privileged classes and was disseminated into the lower ones, together with civilizing practices and values? Or was the movement backwards, as in Paris, where the bedrooms first start in the plans of low-income houses designed by hygienist architects who were granted an educative role by the State and, only later, in the richer houses (Eleb-Vidal & Debarre, 1995)?

If we know little about the history of children's bedrooms in Brazil, there is no doubt that this room is seen as indispensable in contemporary urban households, even though it was not the case in other periods, as shown before, and also in other cultures (see Reimão, Souza, & Gaudioso, 1999, Reimão, Souza, Medeiros, & Almirão 1998, Reimão et al., 1999). Its emergence has been considered a result of the specialization of domestic rooms (Dibie, 1988), as well as a different sensibility towards children (Elias, 2010). On its turn, its rising importance in the last 60 years is due to the fact that the main leisure space for bourgeois children in the big cities was displaced from the public spaces to the domestic ones, and from that to more individualized spaces (Buckingham, 2007), which now have the possibility of entertainment offered by communication and information technologies (Crubellier, 1979; Frith, 1978; Glevarec, 2010; Livingstone, 2002; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007; Opie & Opie, 1969). Furthermore, the increasing importance of the bedrooms is due to an individualization that allowed each person, including children, to have privacy also within the family (Singly, 2006). Followed by a stronger cultural automatization of childhood, this new way of thinking, feeling, and living childhood in the domestic space receives the name of "bedroom culture" (Glevarec, 2010).

As a new object of study, bedroom culture is part of an epistemological framework increasingly interested in the analysis of spaces and objects. This type of empirical object is new, however, the theories and methodologies that have been used in the researches on bedroom culture are not that new, but unfoldings of material culture studies.

## **Childhood material culture: basic concepts**

The broader idea of material culture, that is, not strictly related to childhood material culture, emerges more clearly from the Marxist tradition, through Lenin's decree that created, in 1919, the USSR Academy of Material Culture. It is initially connected to historical materialism, the approach is latter influenced by archeology and sociology, mainly by the proposal of Marcel Mauss of thinking the body as the first instrument to be dominated and the guide of human experience in the world (Manson & Renonciat, 2012; Rede, 2003).

The study of material culture also had an expression on the history of mentalities, in works aiming to understand the circulation of certain objects such as books (Chartier, 2011), clothes (Roche, 2000), or food (Montanari & Flandrin, 1998). Regarding specifically the studies of childhood, the pioneer study of Philippe Ariès (1981) is part of the material culture context in the studies of mentalities, granting some importance to the objects, even though more as a support tool and not very analytically.

The materiality of childhood culture had already been taken as a study object by international and Brazilian<sup>7</sup> folklorists who catalogued toys since the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, these works were limited by the lack of theoretical elaboration and the historical and social decontextualization of these cultural artifacts.

The emergency and centrality of the notion of childhood material culture are fruits of an Anglo-Saxon tradition, having as a mark the work *Children in the house: the material culture of early childhood 1600-1900*, by Calvert (1992). In this research, Calvert shows how the universe of

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<sup>7</sup> Among Brazilian folklorists that catalogued the toys of Brazilian children, it is worth highlighting the importance of the works by Câmara Cascudo (1947) and Veríssimo de Melo (no date).



objects, produced by adults, structure times and spaces, defining developmental stages<sup>8</sup>, but also contributing to configure childhood according to the imaginary of a society.

With a very different goal, another important work for the childhood material culture was written by Sofaer and Derevenski (2000) entitled *Children and material culture*, a type of state-of-art of researches in the field of archaeology on childhood in Pre-history, Antiquity, and Middle Ages.

Recently, new objects, methodologies, and concepts aim to understand these circuit of object senses from the conditions of production and reception. They have tried to think children, the spaces, and the objects produced by or for them more dialectically and within socially-situated relations. Some authors have been suggesting the expression “childhood culture materialities” instead of “childhood material culture”, which is already broadly used by different theoretical currents (Manson & Renonciat, 2012). This change would aim to highlight the idea that not all childhood culture is material, materiality is part of this culture. On the other hand, this part of culture expressed in objects and spaces is not separated by the symbolic. It is in this sense that Sarmento guides his criticism to the excessively stagnated distinction done by Corsaro between childhood symbolic culture, constituted of medias and literature, and childhood material culture, established by clothes, toys, and furniture. To Sarmento (2003), it is simply to understand that there can be materiality in the symbolic, as well as a symbolic dimension to materiality.

## **The space in researches: metaphor or analytical category?**

Beyond the discussion on the concept of material culture, a second issue can be debated, that is, the uses of the notion of space in different theories of material culture. In the works of anthropologist Daniel Miller (2001), the house is taken not only as an explanatory model, as in some readings of Bourdieu’s work. On the contrary, it is considered as an analytical category.

It is worth mentioning that, recently, even the idea that the space in Bourdieu’s work would have a metaphorical role has been questioned. Nikolas Fogle, in the work *The spatial logic*

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<sup>8</sup> Calvert considers developmental stages the moments or marks considered ideal for children to do or not do activities such as breastfeed, walk, swim, climb the stairs or eat alone with cutlery. According to the author, these abilities and times of acquisition, which configure developmental stages, are structured with the participation of spaces and objects.

*of social struggle* (2011), assembles and analyses some ideas on the theme in the complete work of the author. Fogle affirms that the importance given by Bourdieu to space allows us to think it as a topological sociology. He also shows how space is not reduced to a model of social explanation (as exemplified by the ideas of high and low class), and can even be considered an important category. To support his proposition, he assembles and problematizes a series of excerpts on space in Bourdieu's works, showing that the special analysis is present in many works of the French sociologist and not only in his famous work on the Kabylie houses.

The house is also a very operational ideal in Brazilian sociology, be it on the works of Gilberto Freyre, as mentioned, or in the works of Roberto DaMatta, to whom

houses do not simply designate geographical spaces or physically measurable things, but above all moral entities, spheres of social action, ethical provinces gifted by positivity, institutionalized cultural domains and, because of that, capable of arising emotions, reactions, laws, prayers, songs, images aesthetically framed and inspired (1997, p. 8).

The author points that, despite the importance of the house in Brazilian tradition, with a great relevance in social history, it is commonly taken as the stage of the true social actor that is the family, thus its centrality is not recognized. Based on this assumption, DaMatta offers another way out, differently from Miller's. He aims to understand it as a metaphor, not as a physical space, as if the street were an extension of the house, and the bedroom understood as the house of an individual inside the family.

In this Direction, i.e., taking the house as a metaphor, in the dissertation entitled "The house inside the house: the meaning of the teenager's bedroom in the contemporaneity", psychologist Marilza Friche (2016), using the concept of bedroom culture (Glevarec, 2010), aims to understand contemporary teenagers ways of living and their processes of subjectivity, investigating the meanings given by them to these rooms.



## The relation between subjects and objects

Another issue that has been raised, older and already developed in the studies of material culture, refers to the relation between subject and objects. About this theme, we can recognize and differentiate two positions. In the Marxist perspective, very used in the works analyzing the impacts of publicity on children, the relation between individuals and objects is through the way the later oppress children (alienated or reified). Shared by the Frankfurt school and by Baudrillard (2009), the concept of alienation became central do the debate. It is the process through which, in large-scale-production industrialized societies, the object is depersonalized and reduced to the condition of mere good.

On a second approach, represented by Daniel Miller (2001), this relation between subject and object is understood as a two-way street. Influenced by Hegel's phenomenology and Bourdieu's theory of practice, Miller has been studying material culture in a domestic environment, understanding the house dialectically, that is, as a conditioning but also conditioned space. On the way opened by the work of Bruno Latour (2005), Miller claims that, in the everyday relationship with the materiality of things, we are submitted to the agency of objects, even though it often goes unnoticed. As modern people, we are convicted that we are subjects in total control of objects, but it is not really the case. To use an anecdotal example of philosopher Graham Harman (2010), a small seed can destroy an empire if the emperor chokes. Thus, the finding of the action of objects over us seem to be a consequence of recognizing the limits of the modern ambition to separate nature and culture, humans and non-humans (Kimmich, 2011).

Analyzing architecture through this perspective, Miller starts by distinguishing it from clothes. While this last raises questions on superficiality, the house presupposes much stronger power relations, often connected to the "war of places" carried out by the real-estate market (Rolnik, 2015). This game of powers is not only restricted to the public domain, but crosses the doorsills, conditioning the way people live, socially placing the inhabitants, determining how they are distributed in the rooms and the meanings given to that space. “

In 1979, the magazine *Architecture d'aujourd'hui* dedicated a volume to children's spaces in which there is a report by Marie Jaoul (1979) on her childhood memories in *Maison Jaoul*<sup>9</sup>, a famous house designed by Corbusier in his brutalist phase. In the article, Marie tells that her classmates asked her if she was poor, as she lived in a factory with exposed concrete and bricks. She also reveals that the integrated spaces proposed by the architect caused her a profound displeasure, as after the family's move, parents and children started to live excessively "among themselves".

She also describes the lack of sunlight, her constantly nervous mother nervous, and her childish disappointment upon discovering the lack of secret hideaways. Everyone was uncomfortably watched in that house where everything was connected. Marie remembers that she wanted to stick her drawings on the blue walls but was forbidden by the adults who would say it was unnecessary: the blue wall was a painting in itself. For the child, that house was very beautiful and sad, as a museum. With the construction and furniture under the uncompromising supervision of Corbusier, each thing (and even each person) had its designated place since the project. "We were like statues", she concludes, "the house dictated the law" (Jaoul, 1979, p. 8). Marie Jaoul's report is a good example of Miller's ideas that the houses intervene in the way their inhabitants live, what he calls the "agency of things".



**Figure 2 – Maison Jaoul (Photo of Cemal Emden)**

Source: "Le Corbusier" (2017)

<sup>9</sup> The Jaoul houses, in the Parisian suburb, were two constructions designed by Corbusier André Jaoul and his son Michel Jaoul, grandfather and father of Marie Jaoul. The project finished in 1951, the houses were built between 1954 and 1955.

The idea of agency of objects in Miller does not allow us to think that we are completely submitted to the houses as goods or totally alienated by the objects that surrounded our childhood. Miller understands the house as a *home possession* (Miller, 2001), that is, at the same time a good and a space to store goods. Having a high cost and submitted to strong power relations, it is the “elephant of things”. For all this, the process of appropriation of a house, which Miller calls accommodation, is not simple, but is always conditioned by a variety of factors that are external to the relation between inhabitant and house. In the end, what interests Miller is to understand how people singularize the experiences with the spaces and the objects when those are standardized, turned into goods or taxes by the State. If the focus is not the depersonalization or the deflation of the object of all its personal charge provoked by marketization, as in Marx, neither it is on a “causality aporia”, or a type of determinism that could be read in the homology of Bourdieusian structures<sup>10</sup>. On the contrary, the work consists in, through empirical researches on the ways inhabitants accommodate themselves in standardized popular houses built by the State, thus, depersonalized, showing possible ways of singularization and subjectification.

The way found by Miller to the impasse between subject and object, and other anthropologists who are retaking material culture, such as Jean-Pierre Warnier (1999), is not to think in terms of social actors and their categories (generation, gender, social class), as in sociology, but through the singular experience of the subject. Other researchers, anthropologists, and sociologists do not share this movement of abandoning a broader perspective but propose to observe social reality through the microsocial.

In the scope of education researches in Brazil, these and other questions raised by material culture have been discussed, especially in the field of history, but circumscribed to the school environment: the school building (Funari & Zarankin, 2005), the uniforms (Dussel, 2005), or didactic material. However, little has been studied on education through the domestic spaces and objects, that is, the relation between family socialization ( or primary socialization) and material culture.

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<sup>10</sup> I am referring to certain readings that criticize Bourdieu’s critical social objectivism, seen in it an exaggerated emphasis on the homology of structures, that is, a perfect and total equivalence between *habitus* and social structures, what would result in the idiotization of social subjects (See Celikates, 2012).

## Children's bedrooms as an object of study

In this direction, children's bedrooms have been resuming the approaches of material culture, while at the same time, raising new theoretical, ethical, and methodological questions. If on one hand, there has been some years that History has observed this room (Hall, 1987; King-Hall, 1958; Miall, 1980; Perrot, 2010, 2011; Renonciat, 2014; Robertson, 1974; White, 1984), children's bedrooms have only recently raised the same interest by researchers of different areas (Brougère, 2014; Dinka, 2014; Gaspoz, 2014; Glevarec, 2010; Hachet, 2014; Krupicka & La Ville, 2014; Long, 2014; Mangeard-Bloch, 2014; Nal, 2014; Rollet & Pelage, 2014; Zaffran, 2014).

We should highlight a multidisciplinary colloquium that took place in Rouen, France, in 2013, called *La chambre d'enfant: un microcosme culturel* (The child's bedroom: a cultural microcosmos). Organized by the *Musée National de l'Éducation/Centre National de Documentation Pédagogique*, by the laboratory *Experice* of *Université Paris 13* and the Laboratory *Cerege* of *Poitiers University*, the colloquium was supported by the *Agence Nationale de la Recherche* through a broader research program called *Les biens de l'enfant dans l'espace familial* (Children's goods in family space).

With a populational diversified sample and non-comparative approaches, most of recent researches propose to describe the changes in family relations through the uses of spaces (Alanen, 2001; Hachet, 2014; Long, 2014; Nal, 2014; Roucoux & Dauphragne, 2015), while others focused on contemporary representations of children's bedrooms (Bazin, 2014; Renonciat, 2014; Yemsi-Paillissé, 2014). Fewer works analyzed bedrooms belonging to non-hegemonic groups, as the handicapped (Cammaréri, 2014), intellectually gifted children (Lignier, 2016), or even teenagers' bedroom in geographic migration (Gaspoz, 2014).

The construction of gender identity is analyzed in the work of Catherine Rollet and Agnès Pelage (2014) on how parents prepare the bedrooms for in-coming babies. Through quantitative data, the research *Étude longitudinale française depuis l'enfance* (French longitudinal study since childhood) held with 18,500 families whose children were born in 2011, the authors did a qualitative research interviewing and observing 18 families who had their second child between 2011 and 2013. The results show that the rule of separating siblings of different genres, prescribed for many centuries by the Catholic Church (Perrot, 2010) and resumed in other historical moments, is strongly internalized. Due to this internalized rule, parents try to discover

the sex of the baby as soon as possible, allowing them to decorate the bedroom with colors and images “for boys” or “for girls”. Thus, the authors show how socialization, beyond being conditioned by social class issues, is related to gender.

In Brazil, there are few works that take children’s bedroom as an object of study<sup>11</sup>. In History of Architecture, Thereza Dantas (2012) proposes to investigate children’s place in the domestic space through the study of children’s furniture in São Paulo’s houses in the 1950s. To do so, the author used texts and images taken from specialized magazines of that period.

However, it is in the health field that children’s bedrooms and sleeping habits have been more frequently investigated in Brazilian academic production. These researches try to find, for example, correlations between electronic equipment and children’s weight (Ferrari, Araújo, Oliveira, Matsudo, & Fisberg, 2015) or between sleeping habits and the chances of sudden infant death (Geib, Cataldo, Wainberg, & Nunes, 2003). Among the works on the area, it is worth highlighting those organized by physician Rubens Reimão who, together with interdisciplinary teams, study the sleep habits of *Bororós* children from the Indigenous tribe Meruri in an Indigenous reserve in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso (Reimão, Souza, & Gaudioso, 1999), the Terena children, from the tribes *Tereré* and *Córrego do Meio*, also in Mato Grosso (Reimão et al., 1998), and the children from a *quilombo*, a black rural community formed by slave descendants, who live in a relatively isolated area in *Furnas do Dionísio*, Mato Grosso (Reimão et al., 1999). These works show that the place designated to children in the houses is strongly related to sociocultural aspects: the results show that, in some Indigenous and *quilombo* communities, *co-sleeping*<sup>12</sup> is the standard among children until 2 years old, a majority among children between 2 and 10 years old, and that sleeping alone only becomes a habit among children over 10 years old. Embora não tomem o quarto como objeto empírico, alguns trabalhos sobre a infância

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<sup>11</sup> In a research on the portal of theses and dissertations by Capes, using as key words “child(ren) bedroom(s)” and “childhood bedroom” I found no results. When researching with the words “architecture” and “childhood” I found researches on school architecture. When using the words “architecture” and “*infantil*” the results were: (i) a doctoral research in the *Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro* on the appropriation of a kindergarten space by the educators; (ii) a master research in the *Faculdade de Arquitetura* of *Universidade de São Paulo (USP)* entitled *A criança e o arquiteto: quem aprende com quem?* (The child and the architect: who learns with whom? - Nascimento, 2009); (iii) a research on *Faculdade de Arquitetura* of USP, in the field of Environmental Psychology entitled *Casa, um lugar de verdade: o estudo do espaço individual como um reflexo de quem o habita* (Home, a real place: a study on the individual space as a reflex of those who inhabit it). In a research in Scielo using “bedroom” e “child” or “children’s bedroom”, the results were all in the health area

<sup>12</sup> Practice in which the parents share the bedroom or even the bed with the children...



Even if they do not take the bedroom as an empirical object, some works in childhood in contexts of institutional care approach the ways these children appropriate themselves of this space, commonly referred as dormitories in these contexts. *A infância institucionalizada: um outro modo de estar na “roda”* (The institutionalized childhood: another way to be around) by Antônio Feitosa e Leni Dornelles (2014), aims to find the impressions on the shelters by those who live in them. To do so, the researchers, proposed activities, in which the children should, through collages and photos, express what space they would like to have in the shelter, and, among the existing ones, which were their favorites. It is as one of the favorite places that some children photograph the dormitories, especially because, according to them, it would be a more organized space.

The research by Roseli Nazário (2015), *Entre estar na casa e estar em casa: modos de ser criança em um contexto de acolhimento institucional* (To be in home and to be at home: ways of being a child in a context of institutional care) describes an institutional culture marked by impersonality, verifiable through the organization of space and the perception of an almost completely lack of objects that show the singularity of the child: my toy car, my sneakers, my bedroom.

With the exception of the dissertation entitled *A casa dentro da casa: o sentido do quarto para o adolescente na contemporaneidade*, of Friche (2016), previously mentioned, those are works that take into consideration the materiality of culture as a physical support of children’s practices, but that, not always, focus on this dimension.

## Final remarks

If there is a considerable amount of international research in this line, when thinking about Brazilian children’s bedrooms it is inevitable to observe the immense inequality in the access to housing and consumer goods in the country. Considering the cultural specificities of this reality, some questions can be raised for future researches: faced by the lack of works in the field of History on the spaces of children in Brazilian residential architecture, we could wonder where did children sleep in different times? Did the lack or presence of a children’s bedroom vary depending on social class? How were these bedrooms? Considering the hygienist discourses circulating in Brazil in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, was there an explicit prescription to separate children and adults to sleep? Were there prescriptions to save a



room for children in the 1940s, when there was, for the first time, a national policy for popular housing in Brazil?

Researches on contemporary childhood can even try to understand how children from low-income classes appropriate themselves of dormitories with an excessive density<sup>13</sup>. How do children “accommodate” themselves, using Miller’s concept, in popular houses, when they are standardized by governmental programs? Or yet, how do the ways of living from the upper classes contribute to the reproduction of capitals which guarantee the social position of their heirs? How do children live in gated communities?

The humility of things is how Daniel Miller (2001) calls the ability of objects to lay peripheric under our eyes and still condition our daily lives. The author adds that the more invisible they are, the more they can determine our lives. There lies the relevance of the studies on childhood material culture as a new agenda of research.

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*Submitted for evaluation in November 6th, 2017; revised in August 4<sup>th</sup> 2018; accepted for publication in October 9th, 2018.*