

THEMATIC SECTION:
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Meanings of School Opportunity for Youth of the Popular Classes in Rio de Janeiro

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ABSTRACT – Meanings of School Opportunity for Youth of the Popular Classes in Rio de Janeiro. In this article, we seek to analyze the senses of opportunity that poor young people from Rio de Janeiro attribute to the school and to understand if, for these young people, school and schooling have a value in the now and/or imagined later. A total of 51 youths participated in this research, being students in elementary schools, from two public municipal schools of Rio de Janeiro, with ages between 14 and 16. Three discussion groups were made in the format of workshops. In the analysis of the meanings of opportunity and the value attributed by young people to school, the intra and intergenerational relationships established in this space were focused and the imaginary relation that these young people have with what will come after school.

Keywords: Young People. Opportunities. School. Public School.

RESUMO – Sentidos de Oportunidade da Escola para Jovens de Classes Populares Cariocas. Neste artigo, buscamos analisar os sentidos de oportunidade que jovens pobres cariocas atribuem à escola e compreender se, para estes jovens, a escola e a escolarização possuem um valor no agora e/ou no depois imaginado. Participaram do estudo 51 jovens, estudantes de 9º ano do ensino fundamental, de duas escolas públicas municipais do Rio de Janeiro, com idades entre 14 a 16 anos. Foram realizados três grupos de discussão, que ocorreram no formato de oficinas. Na análise dos sentidos de oportunidade e do valor atribuído pelos jovens à escola, foram focalizadas as relações intra e intergeracionais que se estabelecem neste espaço e a relação imaginária que estes jovens têm com o que virá depois da escola. **Palavras-chave: Jovem. Oportunidades. Escola. Escola Pública.**

Introduction

In the last years, many radical transformations in the ways people can be subjectified have been happening, and it is visible when one establishes new relationships with the registers of time and space, based on the increase of uncertainty levels, the lack of guarantees and stability. In a context of growing unpredictability of life courses, in the face of an educational system and a job market that are not capable of ensuring the fulfilment of aspirations, for the structural precarity and for the lack of objective opportunities, the great part of the poor young Brazilian people experience disbelief, uncertainty and fear for the future.

Recent studies with young people of Brazilian popular groups highlight the issue of their precarious schooling which, along with the adverse conditions of life, tends to stimulate and perpetuate the situation of exclusion and social inequality that they live (Arpini, 2003; Castro; Correa, 2005). Because of the insufficient school formation, there is marginalization of work, making the young people crave ever smaller opportunities for themselves, thus limiting their horizons concerning their tomorrow (Arpini, 2003).

Furthermore, the young people are the ones who suffer the most with the job market changes that come from the neoliberal globalization of the international economy. Job market, as well as the educational system, seem incapable of ensuring the fulfilment of the aspirations of many of them. As they face the difficulties of professional insertion, many of them are, therefore, threatened by feelings of disbelief and fear, betrayed in their capacity of hopefully imagining tomorrow.

In face of this scenery, researches have pointed out that the experiences of the young people are even more connected to here and now, notable in attitudes and behaviors limited to the immediate and the ordinary, since beyond the unpredictability and the uncertainties that are parts of their lives, the future often fails to provide possibilities to make their aspirations come true (Cárdenas, 2005; Oliva-Augusto, 2002; Pais, 2004; Soares, 2000). Therefore, the “enjoying life” dimensions come out more strongly in the young people’s mobilities and talks than the dimensions related to the preparation to what comes after (Dayrell, 2003; Mendes, 2008).

Nevertheless, the formal education system seems to insist on trying to take over the future, planning it, anticipating it, so that it can be controlled. According to Castro (2010), “[...] every organization of this (school) space, its ritual practices and values highlight the importance of individual progress, in which the effort and dedication of each one are fundamental pieces to build, in the long run, what *will become* a rationally prepared and socialized human being” (p. 64). In relation to this aspect, more and more, a gap between the youth-student culture (youth experiences and perceptions) and the school culture (the everyday school dynamics), has stood out, in other words, a gap between the expectations, interests and necessities of the young people and the educational institution’s (López, 2012; Pereira, 2016).

Having in mind this panorama previously presented, we wonder if schooling is still a value for these young people who are inserted in contexts of social precarity. About this question, Arpini (2003) states that, to great part of Brazilian poor young people, working can be more attractive than education, somehow being valuable, even in the cases in which its nature and conditions are precarious. Its value resides in what it can offer from the income received, such as achieving some autonomy concerning their expenses and the choices that can be made as well as possible consumption experiences. On the other hand, from the young person's perspective, school cannot offer, at short notice, the same perspectives and gains that work would (Arpini, 2003). Similarly, from the French cultural context, Bourdieu (1983), already pointed out the wish to achieve the status of adult more rapidly, and the economic capacities to which it is associated, as one of the reasons that could bring the young person to consider leave school and enter the job market sooner.

By preferring occupational activities instead of school, the poor young person seems not to accept the waiting that school formation predicts, as the waiting doesn't mean there will be a satisfactory answer tomorrow and it can constitute in a prolonging of a difficult survival situation. Therefore, instead of betting in something that, in the long run, doesn't offer any guarantees, some young people can end up betting on something that may give them some immediate answer, even if a precarious one, like the insertion in informal jobs, or even the involvement with illicit activities (mainly drug dealing and the practice of theft and robbery). On the other hand, many young people also keep studying and believing that education can guarantee something better for them.

In relation to the value of education, Gomes (1997), from studies that took place in the 90s, questions if, for the young people and their families, their permanence at school was felt like a guarantee of better conditions of life and work in the future. In relation to this aspect, the author observes that education still seemed to constitute a second criteria when the access to work to young people from popular classes was at stake, since, in that time (the 1990s), there was still a significant number of jobs accessible for young people with little education. For the author, the value that the individuals attribute to educational is proportional to their familiarity with things that concern school. In the popular segments of society, this familiarity is historically recent and the process of incorporating the school and the value given to education in relation to the cultural capital to be inherited by the following generations is still in course. On the other hand, for the young people from the most privileged classes, which have an older familiar history of education, this is already constituted in a value incorporated to the inherited cultural capital (Gomes, 1997).

Burgos (2012), based on more recent studies, affirms that, starting from the 90's, a universalization of the access to elementary school in Latin America countries have been taking place, leading to the appearance of many questions around the massification of school education, especially when it comes to the complex combination between social

inequality and cultural diversity that starts to challenge school structure. In the last years, the school has taking crescent protagonism in the life of the families of the popular classes. This is exemplified by the fact that, in some popular contexts, “[...] the school is the only public agency to have a comprehending and lasting relationship with the families and, more often than not, it reaches families which not even the social policies focused on the poorest segments are able to do” (Burgos, 2012, p. 1118).

The researcher conducted a study with parents/guardians of students of public schools which worked, basically, with children and young people who lived in Rio de Janeiro slums. The research points to a growing school appreciation coming from the popular families, which take it as a space of socialization and a place to access knowledge that is fundamental to enter the job market, which relates to the expectation around the *effect of social mobility* associated to school (Burgos, 2012).

One can question to what extent the young people believe that education can offer them guarantees of access to the job market and the possibility of a growing social mobility. From researches held in the last years, Novaes (2006) affirms that the poorest young people are delusional, they do not buy the *myth of education*. For them, school is no longer seen as a guarantee of work. Thus, many of them “[...] are aware that school is important as a passport for work, but it does not guarantee it” (p. 107). Other studies also point that, to many young people, it is a fact that the school certificate is not a guarantee that there is a possibility to find a formal job (Castro, 2012; Costa; Koslinski, 2006), to what can raise doubts about the value in strongly investing in something that may, or not, be useful in the future (Castro, 2012).

On the other hand, it is worth to think of the value that school and education can have in the here and now of these young people. Maybe the plans and certainties about tomorrow are not the aspects that are going to determine how much school is important and valuable today, but how the young people live the here and now of the school space. About this aspect, Núñez and Litichever (2016), from a study held in schools in Argentina, refer to the emergency of school senses which relate to the possibility of the young people to enjoy the here and now of the experience of being in this space as a value in itself, beyond the retributions that can be obtained in the future, that is, senses more associated to a short term temporality than to a long term projection.

In this study, the notion of *opportunity* was taken as the basis in which the relationship between young people and the school space is analyzed. Opportunity is seen as a favorable situation that moves and conduct the young person somewhere, like a *door*, that opens up the way to the individual towards something that has to do with him/her and make sense to them. It is something which is perceived valuable here and now, but that can also echo afterwards. Opportunity can be required by the young people themselves meaning that there is a search to find what they want and create opportunities to achieve what they want; or it can be random, that is, *found* from a mobility that has no

specific direction, in other words, when the young people only move themselves when they expect something favorable to happen.

From these considerations, we wonder if the young people who were part of this study consider school to be a place that offers them opportunities. Opportunity meaning something favorable to the individual, that can project and move them – really or imaginarily – in relation to other places. Therefore, in this article we intend to analyze the senses of opportunity that poor young carioca people attribute to school and we try to understand if, for these young people, school and education are valuable in the now and/or in the imagined afterwards. We will analyze the imaginary relationship that these young people have with the after school.

Method

In order to reach the proposed goals, we held a research¹ of qualitative nature, with 51 young people (25 girls, 26 boys), aging from 14 to 16, students of the 9th year of elementary school, from two municipal schools (School 1 and School 2) in Rio de Janeiro, located in the Central part of the city. It was chosen to hold the empiric research with young students of the 9th year, once they are in an important moment of transition to middle school, when they are facing the situation of changing schools, experiencing considerable changes in terms of sociability relationships and are maybe in a moment when they see themselves thinking about what to do in a near future.

It was observed that most parents/guardians of the young people who answered to the sociodemographic questionnaire had finished middle school or did not even had access to middle school. About the parents/guardians professional activity, it was observed that it comprehended mostly of occupations of *low socioeconomic status*, which probably granted them low income. Most young people lived in slums located near their schools.

Economic precarity is only one of the various aspects that characterize these young people's poverty. It is a social condition in which they are willingness immersed and is connected, among other elements, to the everyday confrontation of situations of exclusion in the access to opportunities and to the rights taken as equal for everyone in society.

School 1 worked fulltime, from 07:10 to 14:30 and received about 280 students, from the 6th to the 9th year of elementary school. School 2 also worked fulltime, from 07:10 to 14:30 and received about 250 students, from the 7th to the 9th year. Unlike the teachers of school 1, the teachers of school 2 worked fulltime, under exclusive dedication (40 hours), to act only in this school. School 2 also offered art-oriented elective subjects, which took place in graphite, painting, and media studios, among others.

Throughout field research, three discussion groups were conducted (Group 1- G1 and Group 2 – G2, held in School 1 and Group 3

– G3, in School 2), which happened like workshops. The workshops had an average number of 12 participants per meeting, minimum of 8 and maximum of 16 young people. Seven workshops with group 1, eight workshops with group 2 and 10 workshops with group 3 took place, for a total of 25 meetings.

We took out, from the results of this broader research, the ones who focused on the coming and going of the younger people in relation to their houses and school. The activity *From home to school* consisted of creating, in groups of 3 to 5 people, an image-story that showed how the journey from home to school would be for a young person like them. The following questions, highlighted in a poster, were used as guides to create the story: How does this young person go to school? What happens on the way? What does he/she do? Who does he/she meet? Who does he/she talk to? What does he/she see? How does he/she feel? What does he/she like the most? Does something special happen? What would he/she like to happen on the way? Moreover, it was proposed to the young people to include elements about the arrival of this character at school in the story and describe situations that usually happen at school. In the activity *From school home*, the participants were invited to tell, through an individual drawing, the story of a young person like them, who goes home from school. The same guide-questions presented on the activity *From home to school* were used as a basis for the story of the journey school-home.

On their journeys to go and come from school, the young people put themselves in physical movement, but an imaginary and subjective movement is also activated. Thus, we try to address along with the students, through this movement device, their memories, affectations and feelings related to these journeys, beyond the senses of opportunity that they recognize in school.

The meetings were recorded and transcribed, and the drawings produced during the workshops were photographically registered. In addition to the workshops, participant observations were made in both schools, which were registered in field diaries. The information was analyzed through Content Analysis Method, as proposed by Bardin (2011 [1977]). To reach the categories, the transcriptions of the workshops, the drawings and the observation reports were, firstly, analyzed individually and, after that, the analysis of the totality of the material proceeded, going to the present elements, taking into consideration the discursive force, the manifested feelings, the silences or conflicts related to the subjects.

For the young people, school senses like opportunity and value revolved around some discussions that became strong in the narratives and, from the analysis, they were organized around the following categories: (1) *the relations between pairs*; (2) *the intergenerational relations*; and (3) *the value of school and education now and in the imagined after*, which will be presented and discussed in the following section.

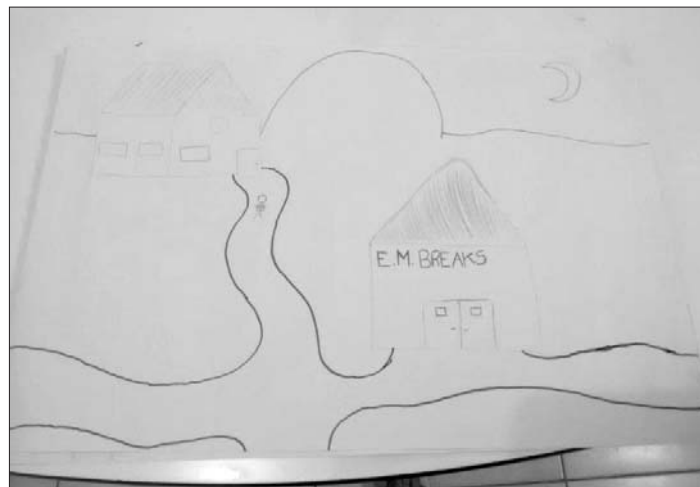
Results and Discussion

The Relations between Pairs and the Challenges to Coexist with the Differences

From the execution of the empirical field, it became evident that the sociability experienced in the school space alongside with their pairs is a very valuable element to the young people, an aspect that can still give them some sense in being at school. Therefore, the school was referred by the participants as a place where it is possible to meet friends, date, mock, have fun and play sports.

In the drawing bellow, João² drew the story of a young boy who goes home from school. The school is named *Breaks*. When asked about the reason for this name, João said that *Breaks* is the name of a group that he had formed with other three friends and classmates (G2, 3rd meeting). In this drawing [Image 1], besides the meaningful fact that the school got the name of the group of friends, it calls our attention for the use of the word break, which, in English, can mean interval, recess, rupture, rest or even opportunity.

Image 1 – Breaks School



Source: João work, G2. Authors Archive.

In the next talk, Laís, mentions that school had already been good, because of the interaction with friends, that was possible when they all studied in the same class:

S: What do you think of school?

Laís: Oh, it was good, now it's bad.

S: Why?

Laís: They separated our class this year. So, many people are in the other class...

[The classmates agreed] (G1, 1st meeting).

Meeting and coexisting with their pairs constitute a meaningful aspect of the school experience of a young person, aspect that is also pointed out by many other Latin-American studies (Castro, 2010; Costa; Koslinski, 2006; López, 2012; Nascimento, 2013; Núñez; Litichever, 2016; Pereira, 2016; Santos; Nascimento; Menezes, 2012). The interaction with their pairs, provided mostly by the school, influences significantly in the constitution of the young people's subjectivity. Especially in this moment when there is a greater direction of the individual's interest beyond the family scope, developing relationships which are more horizontal and equal than the relationships with the adults.

However, these relationships can be limited to the fact that they are still restricted to the scope of relationships of those who are similar and share the same tastes, values and beliefs. The strangeness caused by the different other, that one cannot understand, can open up doors to relationships marked by hostility. For that matter, it was possible to observe that prejudice and discrimination circulate among the young people by means of playing and mocking, but also by aggressiveness and by putting the other away, refusing to coexist with him/her, in an attempt to control and manipulate the difference, in order to minimize the strangeness that the otherness brings. This question was evidenced in some discussions that happened along the workshops, one of which can be visualized in the following excerpt, where two young people from group 3 (school 2) talk about *bullying* and how difference is denied at school, causing discomfort in the relationships between pairs.

Raiane: I came to a conclusion of my own, my opinion, that it is not normal, but it is common for everyone to suffer *bullying*. Because everyone wants to point out the defects of the others. [...] It is not even to notice, they have to point out, show you that you have this defect and make fun of it. So, he suffers and he does it, I suffer and I do it, or the person who did it, suffers too, but they don't realize it.

S: But why? The other's difference bothers you so much?

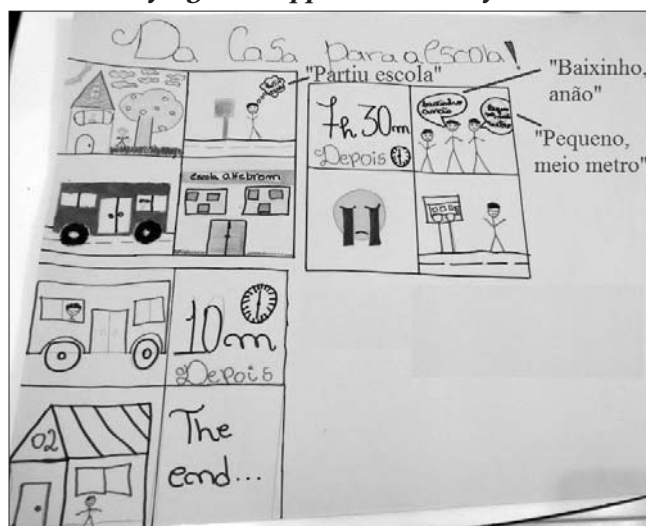
Heitor: Nowadays people think there is a standard. If the person doesn't fit the standard, he/she is strange, is different, is... an alien [...].

Raiane: It is like Heitor said, you cannot like anything out of this standard and you are different. And it would be nice if it wasn't like this, right? And if you were, at least, seen as not... it's not even different, it's strange, the strange boy, the strange girl. It would be nice if you were seen as someone who only likes different things, or that not only you like these things, you know, that more people liked them. It's a lot of superficiality... it is even repulsive (G3, 6th meeting).

In school 1, the tension in the relationships between pairs also popped out during the workshops. At the end of the first meeting with G1, Gleice and her friend Betina, after their classmates left the room, came to the activity coordinator (first author) and asked if we would talk about bullying in the meetings. It was said that it was not the central theme that would be approached in the group, but that they could bring it up some moment during the workshops, in case they wanted to talk to their classmates. During the next workshops, this issue was mentioned recurrently in Gleice and Betina's drawings and stories.

Betina: We can say that the boy has suffered bullying at school since he was little... [...] We are going to say that he comes to school and he gets sad because he suffers bullying. Everyone calls him little... [classmates laugh] (G1, 2nd meeting).

Image 2 – The bullying that happens on the way from home to school



Source: Betina, Gleice and Caio work, G1. Authors Archive.

Caio: One sweet day, a boy going to school smiling, but when he was going to school, he entered the bus. But when he was in the bus, he started to remember everything the others did to him, they would be calling him knee high. Then the guys call him little, knee high, something like that, the end, it's over.

[While Caio was telling the story portrayed in the drawing [Image 2], some classmates were making a big fuss and too much noise. I asked them to listen to their classmate, but it did not work].

Gleice: He gets out of his house, then he stays in the bus stop waiting for the bus, then when the bus comes, some things happen inside it. It's a boy who suffers bullying, that's why people don't talk to him.

S: What is there in this way?

Betina: On the way, he remembers every bad thing they had done to him. They would call him knee high, midget...

[While they were telling the story, the classmates kept on screaming and making a lot of noise].

S: Does he hope for something to happen on this way?

Betina: There's always hope, right?

S: Hope of what?

Gleice: That it is going to be over.

S: And is there going to be a sequel to this story?

Caio: He talks to the principal...

Betina: Here he is smiling and here he is sad.

S: When does he smile?

Betina: Going to school. But then when he enters the bus he gets sad because of the bullying he suffers (G1, 2nd meeting).

It seemed, thus, that there was some persistence by Betina and Gleice to bring up this question that affected them in their relationships with their classmates. However, the approach of the issue during the workshops did not seem to echo in the classmates, who did not seem affected by what the classmates were presenting.

It is notable that the topic *bullying* seems to have been strongly incorporated in the young people's talk. On the basis of what the young people called *bullying* is the recognition of a supposed difference on the other, related to physical, behavioral and/or psychological aspects, which is evidenced, exposed to the others and at the same time disqualified/despised. The disqualification of the other, through the signalization and exposition of his/her difference and precarity could be observed in many moments during the workshops, mainly in school 1.

Paulo: This roof is all bent, man...

Renato: You don't even have a bed, man. You [Paulo] go to church with this shoe... you go all crumpled. You don't even have shorts...

Paulo: You only wear the school t-shirts...

Renato: You come with that face every day, man!

Paulo: Your t-shirt is all torn up... His mom doesn't even sew his t-shirts...

Renato: He [Paulo] goes to church and home, only that. [laughter]. Not even in New Year's he goes to the street. Seriously, not even in New Year's he can go to the street, Christmas, New Year's...

Maicon: He only wears C&A [laughter].

Renato: Andy you come with these pants since last year... And this shoe? This shoe was free... [laughter]. You don't even have air-conditioning at home, man...

Paulo: And you have, right... You sleep uncovered.

Renato: You don't even have a pillow, man... (G2, 2nd meeting).

The relationship with their pairs is essential for the young person, because it can offer a great potential for him to know himself, see the world in different ways, go to places he has never been to and talk about his wishes. However, according to most of the participants' statements, at school, these relationships seem to be crossed much more inappropriate experiences than opportunities. Many young people, when facing the suffering caused by these bad experiences they had with their classmates, like *bullying*, get isolated or even behave in a self-destructive way, through mutilation as reported by some participants.

Therefore, it was possible to observe, among young people, difficulties to construct themselves from the other, in the differences, that is, in the cases when this other is strange and unfamiliar to you, in terms of opinions, values, appearance, habits and preferences. Moreover, the strong demand of the young people to talk about how the relationships with their classmates stimulates experiences that are basically bad, that cause suffering, called our attention. The fact that *bullying* as well as self-mutilation had been recurring topics in the workshops may be an indicative of the young people demand for hearing and discussion spaces about these topics, which school may not be able to offer.

One can notice that the positive opportunity from the meeting between pairs is many times tensioned, because it can be presented

to the young person mixed with a strong portion of suffering, for the possibility of being attacked and humiliated. Thus, the value of school, present in the possibility of companionship, fruition, friendship and discovery of the self, is minimized by the occurrence of various traumatic experiences in the relationships with their pairs. Facing the difficulty to symbolize such experiences and to deal with the suffering, some young people resort to some strategies, like self-mutilation. The self-mutilation behaviors, which are characterized by promoting superficial cuts in their own skin with sharp objects, had a considerable increase in the last 30 years. The use of such non-verbal resources aims at relieving a devastating and unbearable internal tension and involves a certain relationship between the body itself and the expression of suffering. There is, thus, an attempt to replace one pain for another, as far as one realizes the undeniable difficulty of psychic construction of a painful event (Fortes; Macedo, 2017).

The Intergenerational Relationships and the Tensions that Block the Participation and the Hearing of the Young People

Like the relationships with their pairs, the intergenerational relationships at school are also characterized by senses of opportunity. The young participants pointed out some tensions in the relationship adult-young person in the school space. One of the main complaints of the school 2 participants was *lack of respect* – humiliation, scolding for no reason, senseless rules – from the adults to the young people and the difficulty to be heard by the adults, who, according to them, attribute some characteristics to the young people that underestimate them, like inexperience, immaturity, naivety and irresponsibility. Age, in this case, reaffirms the difference between adult beings and beings under formation and, therefore, legitimates the attribution of such characteristics to the young people.

Joyce: I think that we, 3 or 4, are taking part of this conversation and speaking our minds. But no teacher gives us the right, no teacher calls us to have this kind of conversation.

Giovana: They think we are always wrong...

Joyce: Even if it is not all of us, only those who really think it is interesting. So, why doesn't a teacher propose a conversation like this? *About what we want, about what we think about doing after we leave here?* No teacher cares about *hearing us*...

Giovana: They only want to say all the time that we are wrong, that we don't know how to make choices in life... [...] We miss teachers who hear us. [...] And I think this is typical of older people, because they don't try to understand our side, they think that just because we are young, we are *innocent*, we are *naive*, we *don't understand anything about life*, we *don't have any experience*...

Joyce: We *aren't mature* enough... (G3, 2nd meeting, highlighted by us).

In this part, the young people refer to some characteristics like innocence, immaturity, naivety, irresponsibility, which, in the adult's conception, characterize youth. In this speech, the young people are given

a condition of lack in relation to various attributes considered adults, mainly those connected to rationality, maturity, impulse control and emotional stability. This perception is related, a lot, to a developmental perspective, which attribute such characteristics, that will be overcome in adulthood, as inherent to infancy and youth. The adults' attribution of these characteristics caused tension for the young people, as these were taken as exclusively juvenile, pointing to the fact that adults can also be irresponsible and naive, for instance.

This adult position is felt as depreciative by the young people, as if they did not have legitimacy to say what they think about school, its dynamics and relationships, and also about what they feel and want for their lives and their future. Besides that, these young people face a paradox, as they hear the adults say that they need to make effort, so that it is possible to get what they want when, on the other hand, they have already received depreciation and labels of immaturity and irresponsibility by the same adults.

These labels do not bring opportunities, meaning that they do not stimulate that the young person actively participate in the discussions and choices when it comes to school life. School participation involves bringing up what in the established relationships can cause suffering and talking about the situations they consider unfair and disrespectful. However, these tense relationships with the adults become walls, because they limit the possibilities of young people's participation, once their opinions, complaints and questions are not taken into consideration.

The strong criticism that the young people of school 2 make to what is set and established calls attention, mainly when it comes to the hierarchical relationships between adults and the younger ones. They do not seem to find a space to be welcomed and heard at school so that these difficulties to coexist can be expressed, discussed and negotiated. When questioned if there has ever been any attempt to dialogue with the adults about these discomfort and requests, they pointed to the null effect of their speeches and demands, as if, through the perspective of the older, they could not be considered valid interlocutors, to talk about what is bad at school.

S: But have you ever tried to talk about that in a council, for example?

Giovana: No can do. They don't listen.

Joyce: They say we are wrong.

Giovana: That we are inexperienced, that we don't understand anything about life... (G3 2nd meeting).

From these speeches, we can observe many kinds of coexistence at school, with regard to the adults, that the young people feel as if they were obstacles, that do not move them, meaning they cannot count on school as a place where they can be heard about the personal issues that cause angst and meaning that they do not feel legitimated to participate and give opinions in questions concerning school life. When these young people signal these afflictions and anguish, they seem to

wish some understanding about what they are experiencing, knowledge about themselves that can eventually help them enter the environment they live in different ways, to choose and take decisions about their lives. However, school tends to prioritize knowledge that is more formal and focused on the content and, often refrain from giving young people an experience of self-knowledge, participation and discovery of their own values.

The main obstacle might be the lack of bonds with the adults, which involves lack of proximity and affectivity and the little sensibility of the adults (teachers and direction) to understand their realities, aspects that were also referred in López's study (2012). The young people point out that they feel the bond with the teacher as being meaningful. However, not only some teachers do not pay attention to the importance of creating this bond, but also the situation of many of them, who need to divide themselves among many schools, do not facilitate this.

The young people also criticize the imposition of restrictive and unclear rules, transmitted in an authoritative way and, thus, emphasize the wish that their opinion is valued when it comes to taking decisions about school dynamics. And, mainly, they demand that the adults have a welcoming and hearing posture in relation to what they have to say, about what they want for themselves, about their expectations and anguish about tomorrow. This distance and the lack of dialogue make it difficult to create a creative and imaginative school environment, in which the young people feel invited to participate.

On the other hand, young people from both schools also pointed out that there are teachers they can count on, that see some potential in them and that, somehow, bet on them.

Jéssica: The only project here from school that really worked was basketball.

S: What is this project like?

Jéssica: It's a basketball project whose teacher really worked hard, so much that we could see NBA players, we went there with them, to Copacabana. We went there, took photos, won t-shirts, caps... He is a teacher who really fights for us to have a better future, for us not to give up our dreams. [...] He is always talking, always trying to find a way to help us one way or another. He's always lifting you up.

Naiana: Literally, he picks us and lift us up [laughter].

S: Nice... And is there any other teacher or someone that you know, that lifts you up?

Jéssica: X., Maths teacher...

S: How does she do that?

Jéssica: Giving us advice, telling us never to give up (G2, 6th meeting).

In this situation reported by Jéssica and Naiana, school seems to have offered the young people an opportunity to dislocate physically and symbolically to a different place, in the sense of getting in touch with other opportunities and so realizing that it is possible to see themselves occupying some spaces and to imaginarily project themselves in relation to other places. Therefore, the affective bond, the trust and

the respect are mentioned as appropriate aspects of the intergenerational relationships at school, which contribute to move and conduct the young person to other places and other experiences, making school valuable in the here and now and also after.

Beyond the content that school transmits, the bonds that are established here are mentioned as being very important for the young people, especially for the G3 participants. They seem to need these bonds, the adults' trust and respect, to feel like moving. The fact that the teacher is interested in them and in their experiences and hears them can move them to other places and make it possible for them to feel that the present does not end in the now, but that there is a present happening afterwards, as if this instant experience could be developed in relation to a time a little further.

The Value of School and Education Here and After

Education as a means to obtain a better future for themselves and for their families was another aspect mentioned by the young people during the workshops and came out especially as an assumption that come from their families. Great part of the young people attributed their feeling of obligation towards their studies to their families' demands. In this case, their families believed that education would be a road that would provide a better life, although this idea did not seem to be totally accepted by the young people.

S: What makes you come to school?

Mariana: What makes me come to school? My mom, because if it depended on me, I wouldn't.

S: Why does she think you have to come?

Mariana: Education... *this future stuff*...

S: And do you agree with her?

Mariana: She is right *to want my future to be good, but I don't care*... (G1, 1st meeting, highlighted by us).

If we consider the educational level of the young people's parents, the majority did not finish middle school. In spite of the parent's low educational level, it seems that, for them, their children's education is considered a value, in the sense of being related to broadening their chances to access the job market and the hope of a better future, something different from what they had. Therefore, we can consider that, despite of the recent contact of the popular families with education (Burgos, 2012), this seems to become, more and more, a value for these parents and guardians, who in the past did not have access to this process and they may create some expectation on the educational journey of their children, regarding the social mobility that it can entail.

This expectation around social mobility that can be provided by education was mentioned by Jéssica, when she talked about her parents' desire for her to study, so that she can "have a better job than theirs".

Jéssica: I have to study. I'm obliged to study.

S: Obligated by whom?

Jéssica: My mom.

Naiana: In my house, none of my older brothers study.

Jéssica: In my family too, nobody studies. My father is illiterate. My mom wants me to be the daughter who studied. I talk about her, I see her body out there. [Laughter]. (Jéssica's mom works as cleaning worker at school).

S: But why do your families want you to study?

Naiana: For us not to be like them, for us to have a good future, you know.

Jéssica: *A different future.*

S: But what is a good future?

Jéssica: It's, like, to have study, *to have a better job than theirs.*

Naiana: A good job.

Jéssica: Like my mom says that she doesn't want to see me in her place, she hopes it to be something better.

S: And what do you hope?

Naiana: I hope that for me too.

Jéssica: Me too. (G2, 4th meeting, highlighted by us).

Still, it is necessary to highlight that there was a meaningful difference of position concerning school, education and the expectations in relation to a more extended now, by the young people of school 1 and school 2. Beyond the respect and recognition as subjects of rights when it comes to the relationship with the adults at school, the young people of school 2 also demanded some improvement in the quality of education and a bigger government investment in the school institution. They stress the lack of investment and the public school depreciation, that contributes for them to feel demotivated to attend it.

The young people of school 2 (group 3) also mentioned their situation of public school, students, graduating elementary school, who are going to try to enter state or federal technical middle schools, which have a recognizably more advanced education, where you enter through being approved in a selective process. They mentioned the public school inefficiency, though, which does not prepare them for the level of knowledge required for the selections that many intend to take part, or even to attend middle school with an effective basis of knowledge. They say that their school and public schools in general are *easy peasy*, meaning they offer education with a very low level of demand, which worries them, because it does not prepare them to what they will need to face *out there* (G3, 2nd meeting). This young people claim, for instance, they do not have enough basis to compete with private school's students, because they realize that what they learned at school was not enough. Therefore, they demand quality education so they can equally compete with students from private schools to enter a technical middle school and to enter university afterwards.

Giovana: [...] we are going to experience that now at the end of the year, competing for a place in a school. It's sad.

Raiane: I think it's really sad that there are many people with potential, but they did not have...

Giovana: The chance...

Raiane: They didn't have orientation, *did not have this chance* to expand this potential [...].

Brenda: One thing that breaks my heart is when I hear people who come

from private schools say: 'oh, I learned that last year'...

Raiane: It's bad that we are in a public school. Because if we pass to a good, federal school, especially Enem, you have to take from your pocket to pay for a private tutor and a private teacher.

Giovana: Cefet's test is tough... *Then you imagine, if you do not have a good basis, how are you going to get there? They are always telling us to fight for our dreams, to go for them... we want to go for them. But when you don't have conditions for that?*

Raiane: Yeah, sometimes you do not have the basis... It's like wanting to study, but you don't know what to study.

Giovana: I imagine who is from the interior. Sometimes the person wants to study, but there is no school. Here we want to have a basis to pass the contests, but... (G3, 10th meeting, highlighted by us).

In the face of the precarity of school education, the young people mention the necessity to look for individual alternatives, which are not often stimulated by their teachers, like watching video-classes, paying for a private tutor or taking prep courses. However, most of these alternatives are restricted to the ones who have a financial situation a little better than most of the public school students. As Raiane affirms "[...] there are people who can [pass a contest], because they can pay for something outside, which is her case [classmate], which is my case, but what about who can't?".

In school 2 (G3), in spite of the students' complaints about some aspects of the school dynamics and the relationships that they took as problematic and inappropriate, it seems that they still expect something from school. Although they denounced that the school, the way it is presented, cannot sustain their dreams and projects, you could still notice some appreciation of this space when, for example, they state that they want a school with better conditions to welcome them and claim for a quality education. The same young people who denounce the lack of investments in the public school and the low level of education and that claim for a better school, which transmits the content in a way that goes beyond the basic, are those who seem to place their bets on school and education, even timidly, in the sense that it could enable mobility and the access to opportunities that permits them to ascend socially.

It was noticeable that the students of school 2 also perceived that the direction and the teachers invested and betted on them, what was less observed in school 1. In school 2, the participant students stated that, although the school presents negative aspects, the teachers could teach really well. Besides that, they mentioned the teaching of grammar as differential in this school and something that can be important, once some public contests usually ask for this knowledge.

Most G3 young people (school 2) seem to be able to identify with something related to a time more extended than the immediate, maybe for the fact that the school bets more on them and that they create more bonds in and with the institution. When they stress that "[...] school fills the time which would be idle with classes", that "[...] offers grammar, that can be useful in contests" and that "[...] some teachers teach extra preparatory classes for contests" (G3, 2nd meeting), we could, in

first analysis, consider that the young people seem to be showing some concern with the after and valuing what in school seems appropriate in relation to what they want beyond now. But, besides that, we could consider that these possibilities offered by the school, can be seen, by the young people, as opportune now. Maybe the young people cannot visualize the instrumental sense of study, but the value and the opportune sense that the access to these classes and to these contents have today. This value can be, for example, in the positive transference and in the relation of identification that the students establish with these contents and classes, with the teachers who offer these contents and with the classmates who share these spaces and in the satisfaction and gratification that these experiences can offer in the here and now.

Unlike G3, of school 2, in the two groups of school 1 there were no complaints about the school education precarity and the inequality in the access to opportunities were also not an issue to most of them. During the last meeting I had with G2 (school 1), I asked what they thought about the end of the year and about going to another school, where they would start middle school. Fernando answered: “you have to go” and Milena said, ironically: “I’m going to become homeless...”. When Milena states that, she seems to be pointing to the fact that, for her, school value in the after is zero, and that school does not seem to signal to some opportunity beyond that moment she is living there.

Maybe this apathy and lack of interest concerning the after does not mean that tomorrow is not important for these young people, but it is an answer of helplessness and impotence in relation to the precarity of this present, to the lack of guarantees and certainties and to the fact that there is no or there is little identification with teachers who mobilize them affectively and intellectually to think about the reason for school, about what they want, and what, in fact, bind them to these young people.

We could infer that the different position of the young people of institutions 1 and 2 concerning school is also influenced by differences of proposal of both schools. School 2 has a different proposal, focused on visual arts, offering students arts studios and classrooms equipped and decorated according to what subject to which it is designated. Moreover, the teachers dedicated exclusively to school and may have a bigger implication with the questions that involve the institution and its students than those who need to dedicate to more than one school, which is the case of the teachers of school 1.

Although the young people’s experiences were characterized by the appreciation of the now, the school still insists on initiatives, including institutionalized ones, to approach the issue of *life project* with the students. For instance, the subject Life Project is part of the curriculum of full-time schools (with only one shift of seven hours) in the Municipal Chain of Education of Rio de Janeiro. Both schools involved in this study worked full-time and had this subject in their curriculums.

During field work, I was present in some classes of the subject Life Project, at school 2. During one of these classes, the situation where a

young girl affirmed: "I have no future!" called my attention. I did not understand what motivated her to say that in that moment. The teacher, very annoyed, said, in front of the whole class, that she should not say that, because she would be a bad example for the youngest students that were present in the room. She replied "[...] I really have no future... I'm realistic!" Some students laughed. The teacher then, said, lecturing her: "It is necessary to see where you want to go and which way should be taken [...]. We, as individuals, are the only ones capable of changing our reality, the only ones responsible for changing the future". This teacher used his own story as example, like someone who lived in a slum and never put up with his reality, claiming that it was possible, through study and individual effort, to get where he did, "[...] with a decent profession, getting a good salary". He also used the case of athletes who had difficulties in their careers as examples, because they often do not receive any government incentive, but even so work hard every day to get what they want. The students silently listened to these words and did not expose their opinion about the topic. Maybe some elements in the teacher's speech – especially what referred to the meritocratic ideology – made little sense to these young people, once, later, during the workshops, some of them seemed to point to a direction that questioned this speech of individual effort as being the most important and almost exclusive factor involved to make what you wish come true. The teacher's speech, from his experience, shows that he could recognize value in his now as he envisioned it favoring and enabling the after. However, these young people do not seem to identify with this speech, as they live the situation when the now has no value as the after is something without great chances and precarious. In this sense, maybe moralization of the speech is not the way for the young person to see the value of school in the now as well as in what he imagines of the after.

Through this speech, the teacher shows some concern for the students; it can be very painful to meet young people who have few chances and guarantees every day, and that fact may stop him from *telling them like it is*, that is, to dialogue openly about these lack of guarantees and all the walls and barriers that these young people will probably face. Maybe the only line of flight is not to access the discomfort and outrage that the precarious reality of these young people provokes and, therefore, defensively use a speech that indicate the importance of the individual effort.

In another situation, during the 6th meeting with group 1, at school 2, the young people commented that there was the subject Life Project at school. When I asked about how they saw the subject, they answered: "[...] the teacher talks about lots of things; he talks about politics, he talks about what you want to be when you grow up; we talk about what we want to be when we grow up; the teacher wants us to think about what we want to do when school is over". Their answers were followed by expressions of disinterest, that may indicate that the topics that are approached and/or the kind of approach make little sense to them.

In cases like this, maybe the teachers show very formatted and closed speeches to the students and the students seem to feel that they do not have a space to discuss or even contradict, from their own experience, what is presented. These young people seem to wish for a hearing space so that their anguish and doubts related to the now and after can be presented.

Concluding Remarks

We have noticed, through the empirical field, that what is opportune for the young people in their mobilities is something related to which you can see the value now, since it constitutes like a *door* for something good and favorable in the after. If what is opportune for the young person is what he/she can enjoy in the here and now and this young person encounters school practices with which he/she cannot identify, for they are very distant from their experience embodied in the now, in this case, the school is not seen as an opportunity. Maybe this is one of the reasons which school is referred to as a boring and meaningless place.

But, on the other hand, school space still seems to have opportune aspects, that give sense to it, among which we can emphasize the bond that are sometimes created with the adults, that was stressed mainly by school 2 students, and the coexistence with their pairs, that influence meaningfully in the constitution of the young person's subjectivity and enable the senses of meeting themselves, moving to different places and other experiences and talking about their hopes and anguish.

Although, in the case of the students of school 2, there were complaints about some aspects of school dynamics and relationships taken as problematic and inappropriate, most young people of G3 (school 2) seem to still expect something from school and to identify with something related to a more dilated time than the immediate, maybe for the fact that there is an investment and a bigger bet on the students by the direction and teachers and that they establish more bonds in and with the institution, aspects that were less observed in school 1. On the other hand, in school 1, a greater tension and aggressiveness in the relationships between young people and adults and a more evident apathy from the students were observed, in comparison with school 2.

School senses and the young people's relationships with this space and its actors are marked for countless contradictions, but what was more evidenced by the young people was the school lack of senses of opportunity, especially concerning to the suffering caused by the denial of difference, in the relationships with their classmates and, when it comes to intergenerational relationships, the lack of affective bonds with the adults, the lack of hearing spaces and the depreciation related to the fact that they are young and, therefore, do not have legitimacy to talk about what is bad at school and about what they judge valuable here and now.

It was possible to observe, for this study, that what is valuable by the young people, in their mobilities at school, generally has to do with the enjoyment of the here and now, with their pairs and those who are familiar to them, what brings us to question to what extent these mobilities alongside their equals bring opportunities, in the sense of causing a significative subjective shifting. Therefore, a movement of young people in the sense of individualization and some difficulty to deal with what is different, weakening collective life and restricting the possibilities of subjectivation in public spaces, is noticeable.

In this sense, it stands out that the way in which the subjectivation dominant in modern society relate to the privatization of habits and the individualization. This can be observed in the appreciation of consumption, in the expansion of the private scope, in which individuals see the possibility to be fulfilled and happy, and the individual's increasingly distance to the public questions and the collective interest (Castro, 2010). We understand that the participation of children and young people in the school environment demands the subjective shifting of the individual to the public, to the collective. However, the tendency to the individualization, to the solipsism and to the competitiveness do not favor this openness, but instead, provide the closure of each one in their own questions and interests, turning school process an enterprise less and less collective.

Some young people seem to have occupied the workshops space to talk about the issues that seem very difficult in their reality of young people in the urban peripheral areas and the reality of public schools in which they are inserted, issues that seem little encouraged by the adults to be brought up at school. In this sense, we consider that the space of the subject *Life Project*, offered by both schools, could be better used so that the young people could talk mainly about the issues that anguish them, related to now and after. This approach could happen in a less structured way, more open to hearing these young people, about what they demand and what is an issue for them when they see themselves in such an unequal society, facing the lack of guarantees and certainties and submitted to the negative eventualities of time.

Finally, we emphasize that these young people's lives are so marked by the lack of opportunities and depreciation, that it seems to be hard for many of them to visualize that their actions are valuable now and also have some impact in what they imagine afterwards. This depreciation goes far beyond of a reference to the school space, but many times refers to the lack of a feeling of an appreciated self, of a feeling that their lives are valuable here and now.

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Notes

- 1 This study was submitted and approved by the Committee of Ethic in Research of the Philosophy and Human Sciences Center of Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, under the protocol number 1.518.016 and the Certificate of Presentation for Ethic Appreciation (CAAE) number 54208116.9.0000.5582.
- 2 Trying to keep the young people's anonymity, their names were replaced by fictional names throughout the text.

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