Play at child education: problematizing gender relations in school

A brincadeira na educação infantil: problematizando as relações de gênero na escola

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to discuss gender relations in early childhood education. This was a qualitative research, with observations made in classes with children between 5 and 6 years old in the public and collective environment of a Municipal School of Early Childhood Education of Aracaju, SE. The research took place between March and June 2018. The choices and ways in which the children put themselves in the games pointed to questions concerning educational practices in early childhood education, which establish the norms of the polarity of sexism in everyday school life. Finally, there is an urgent need to problematize gender issues from the earliest years of schooling. Implanted meanings in the collective unconscious need to be deconstructed and re-signified.
Keywords: Gender Relations; Playing; Children's Education.

RESUMO

O propósito desse artigo é problematizar as relações de gênero na educação infantil. Tratou-se de uma pesquisa de abordagem qualitativa, com a realização de observações nas aulas com crianças entre 5 e 6 anos de idade no âmbito público e coletivo de uma Escola Municipal de Educação Infantil de Aracaju, SE. A pesquisa ocorreu entre março e junho de 2018. As escolhas e formas como as crianças se colocaram nas brincadeiras apontaram para questões concernentes às práticas educativas na educação infantil, que vão estabelecendo as normativas da polaridade do sexismo no cotidiano escolar. Por fim, ressalta-se a urgência em problematizar as questões de gênero desde os primeiros anos de escolarização. Os significados engessados no inconsciente coletivo precisam ser desconstruídos e ressignificados.
Palavras-chave: Relações de Gênero; Brincadeira; Educação Infantil.

Introduction

This article proposes to problematize the gender issues from children's plays in children's education, analyzing the ways in which they relate to playing, their places and roles in this articulation. Therefore, it is observed how gender relations - and their hierarchies and disparities - are endured and/or reproduced by 5 and 6 years old children in the public and collective environment of a Municipal School of Early Childhood Education in Aracaju - SE.

The motivation for this study is originated by the current situation in which a paradox is based: if on the one hand there is a time when public discourses are advocated for the wide openness of the school to "diversity", we have from another point of view, a school settled in old molds, with organization and functioning permeated by a crystallized look at educational practices, which tend to perpetuate the dynamics of normalization. Moreover, the specialized literature points to the need for more studies in this area to be carried out taking as a locus the childhood, its place in the social construction of gender relations in the educational system, especially in the early childhood age group, between 0 and 6 years old (ROSEMBERG, 2001).

In this sense, it has been under pressure to reinvent itself as an institution destined for human development. To do so, it is necessary to problematize issues such as gender in school, against resistance to homogenization. Therefore, it is important that we focus on the beginning of school education, in the search for understanding the inherent aspects of the problematization of gender relations in the early years of schooling in childhood.

With the alleged desire to build a democratic project of education and school, we are still faced with binary conceptions of world significance and relations, which highlight problems of school exclusion and intolerance to differences. Unwanted stigmas and marginalized places are constituted from the beginning of schooling as subjects "deviate" from the rule regarding gender dichotomies imposed, which causes the naturalization of socially constructed truths, trying to impose a limitation on their spaces of belonging and development because they have the mark of (a) normality in front of the stereotypes that they insist on framing us.

Such stereotypes undeniably form as nefarious regulatory elements that, incorporated into the collective unconscious, naturalize discourses and contaminate practices within the school context. An effort to make these subjects invisible is undertaken by devising universal and encapsulated patterns of being/existing based on the meanings embedded in the pathological discourses that secondarily channel cultural shades (and even disqualify them) to biological "determinants." Thus, we see that this homogenizing logic harms the political-ideological pillars that circumscribe open and evaluative spaces to difference and the school ends up acting on the process of normalization of bodies, acting on the maintenance of hegemonic cultures.

In this movement, the difference assumes counter resistance character and seeks to subvert the established order, which incites violence and intolerance. By the heteronormativity, the abjection of the bodies that break normative rules of gender takes place. In a place of contradictions, one sees the school strengthening maintenance and certain conservatism, whereas it can also be configured as a potential modifier of tight orders in this controversial arena. There is a need to problematize the difference, to encourage the discussion, to trigger reflections that can break with the binary and normative meanings, resignifying the difference at school.

What does gender concept speak about?

The concept of gender as a category of social and historical analysis is recent if we think about the course of human history, having been introduced to the literature only in the 1970s by the studies of the American and Anglo-Saxon feminist groups (PACHECO; FILIPAK, 2017).

Its history is linked to the social movements of women, feminists, lesbians and gays, in the fight for civil rights, human rights, for egalitarian living conditions. Attempts to claim a space of definition, by emphasizing the incipience of existing theories for the explanation of asymmetry and inequality between women and men, in a moment of great epistemological effervescence. Their studies broadened the notions of sexuality, by proposing to distance the biological understandings and to move towards cultural ones, remarking that the concepts of masculine and feminine were much more related to cultural issues than to biological ones (SCOTT, 1995).

The aforementioned movement undertaken by feminists transcended the changes in the history of women and reached an understanding of their relations, in view of the demystification carried out regarding the naturalization of masculine (hyper-valued) and feminine characteristics, arguing that the construction around masculine and feminine were intimately linked to sociocultural aspects, much more than to biological ones. In this way, the aim is to remove essentialist propositions about gender and to denaturalize hierarchies of power.

In this sense, such studies countered the maxim that women and men are distinct biologically speaking, and that the distinction between the order of the relationship between the two, which irremediably suggests predetermined roles throughout the history of humanity. As Louro (2012, p. 24, *Our translation*) would say "whether within the common sense, or clothed in 'scientific' language, sexual distinction serves to understand - and justify - social inequality."

The poststructuralist discussion of Joan Scott indicates that gender acts as a knowledge of sexual differences, the gender being choked by power relations (in view of the inseparable relationship between knowledge and power). It suggests, therefore, that the dichotomy between sex and gender is subtracted, since the body would always be understood from a social point of view and, therefore, the concept of sex would be included in the concept of gender. It is therefore necessary to overcome such dichotomy. Assuming the rupture of this duality, understanding the concept of sex implied within the gender, still leads to the assumption that the body is also a social construction.

Therefore, he claims that gender is a perception about sexual differences, with differences that are hierarchized within a crystallized and dualistic thinking. Although it does not deny the differences between sexed bodies, it mentions looking at the ways in which cultural meanings are constructed for such differences, attributing them meaning and value so that they are later placed at the heart of hierarchical relations.

His proposal, therefore, was to take gender as an analytical unit, that we were able to delve deeper into the constructed meanings of masculine and feminine genders, shifting "women" and "men" from fixed, tight categories to questions. It is this symbolic universe, within the scope of language, of discourse, that would socially

organize what one sees in bodies and in social relations, for example. Therefore, the concept of gender arises with the need to deconstruct binary opposition between the sexes, making possible the insertion and broader understanding of the plural forms of "femininities" and "masculinities."

Still for the author, the sense of femininity and masculinity would not only be restricted to females and males in the restricted biological meaning of expression, but would be taken as real - and legitimate - positions of the subjects, thus spreading the manifestations of gender.

She explains that the historians' attempts to theorize the gender have remained stuck with the traditional references of the social sciences, based on causal universal explanations, which made them limited, see the inclusion of reductive or excessively simplistic generalizations, opposing to the complexity of the process of social causation, and to the feminist affiliation that intends to evoke analyzes so that they subsidize changes. These approaches are subdivided in two main ways: on the one hand, an essentially descriptive character, and on the other a causal bias.

With regard to feminist historians, a variety of theoretical approaches to gender analysis can be, according to Scott (155, p.77, *Our translation*), divided into three main categories:

> The first, an entirely feminist attempt, strives to explain the origins of patriarchy. The second lies within a Marxist tradition and seeks a commitment to feminist criticism. The third, fundamentally divided between French post-structuralism and Anglo-American theories of object relation, draws on these different schools of psychoanalysis to explain the production and reproduction of the subject's gender identity.

For the author, the concept of gender would rest on the connection between two propositions: that gender is a constitutive element of social relations based on the differences that are perceived between the sexes, and that gender would be a primary form of assigning meaning to power relations. Thus, it also raises a third aspect of gender relations:

> The challenge of the new historical research is to blow up this notion of fixity, to discover the nature of debate or repression that leads to the appearance of a timeless permanence in the binary representation of gender. This type of analysis should include a conception of politics as well as a reference to institutions and social organization (SCOTT, 1995, p. 77, Our translation).

Finally, there is still a fourth element in gender which is the subjective identity. It proposes, therefore, that the four do not operate simultaneously, but that the challenge of historical research is to understand the interrelationship between them. However, it points out that gender theorizing lies in the second proposition, that "it is a primary field within which, or through which, power is articulated" (SCOTT, 1995, p. 88, Our translation). In reference to Bourdieu, he states that

> established as an objective set of references, the concepts of gender structure the perception and the concrete and symbolic organization of all social life. To the extent that these references establish distributions of power (a control or a differential access to material and symbolic resources), gender becomes implied in the conception and construction of power itself.

According to this explanation, then, it could be said that gender is a social organization, woven from the perception of sexual differences that are strongly linked to unequal relations of power. Consequently, bodies should not be taken out of culture, allocated to discursive mechanisms and meaning-building processes. In their words,

> If we take gender as a guide not simply as men and women have been defined relative to each other, but also that visions of the social order are being challenged, overlapped, resisted and defended in terms of male/female definitions, we will come to a new view on the diverse societies, cultures, histories and policies that we want to investigate. Gender becomes not a guide to statistical categories of sexual identity, but to the dynamic interaction of imagination, regulation, and transgression in the societies and cultures we study (SCOTT, 2012, 347, Our translation).

This new understanding of gender and sexuality displaced from biology and more focused on social and cultural aspects has helped in a broader understanding of the social construction of the masculine and feminine, setting the discussion about human sexuality also in the social field. According to Louro (2012) it is in the social field that the unequal relations between individuals are constituted and reproduced, and the justifications for such inequalities should be sought in social arrangements, in the forms of representation.

Deepening the discussion, we walk through the understanding of gender from Judith Butler's point of view. It subverts some logic and brings the biological to the field of the social. Affiliated with some Foucauldian references, it proposes the dissolution of the dichotomy gender vs sex, undertaking an effort to historicize sex and body, inevitably giving subsidies to dismantle the heteronormativity that operates on the

binary logic of two sexes and two genders, criticizing the alleged order of compulsory sex/gender/desire (BUTLER, 2003).

It breaks with the premise of the need for subversion of the compulsory order that imposes absolutizing "coherence" between sex/gender/desire related to the heterosexual matrix, further undoing a binary opposition proper to Western thought, needing to be abolished the discourse that leads to the maintenance of that order (CARDOSO, 2016; DIAS ET AL., 2018).

He elucidates that this maintenance occurs through repetition within the culture, materialized in signs, acts, practices, discourses, which are established as reinforcers of the constitution of the female and male bodies in the way that they are commonly available. In this way, gender conceptions and performativity are postulated as being an intentional act, a performative gesture, and such a gesture is a producer of meanings, culturally circulating, responsible for destabilizing the aforementioned compulsory coherence (BUTLER, 2003).

This dialogue must also relate the question of abjection. Faced with the heteronormative matrix in which we find ourselves immersed, we observe that there is a degree of normalization through this logic that cuts across any construction, whether of a subject or an identity, which has the effect of producing exclusion and marginalization.

Thus, normalization massifies and implies excluding abject bodies, subjects, identities, after all part of the understanding that the so-called "deviant sexualities" cannot be accepted, since they consist of a threat to the homogenization alleged by the desire for radical erasures. The abject relates today to a paradox that lies between the desire for socially expressed elimination and the awakening of desire, interest, and feelings appeased in the private affairs. Fear and desire coexisting in an amalgam of affectations (DIAS; AMORIM, 2017).

By the binomial normalization/exclusion it leads us to understand that the excluded would be those who would not even be named, who cannot exist within our cultural matrix. This abjection occurs beyond the scope of denial of rights, it reaches the absence of recognition and legitimacy. However, even in view of massive attempts

at regulation of society, there is always something that escapes, which leaks to this rigid regulatory structure.

Gender in children education: why playing?

Early childhood education is the first stage of Basic Education and marks the beginning of the process of schooling, life and student experience. This right to be educated outside the home space by the 1988 Constitution and the 1996 National Education Guidelines and Bases Act. This is the time when children move from the family environment to live in a larger social group.

> This stage is the stage of intellectual, social and psychological inscriptions. In conviviality with others - educators and classmates - the body is highlighted: gestures, movements and postures are socially aligned; they gain a certain place and an image, according to standards of conduct and cultural values in which each child is inserted. In early childhood education, children can spend most of their time in contact with other children. It is in this singular relation that the protagonism of the child gains prominence and that the potentiality of the conviviality, in its various forms of relationships, can provide a new interaction. It is a universe with its own characteristics, aimed at small children. A format with spaces, times, organizations and practices built within the intense relationships among children and between children and adults (VIANNA; FINCO, 2009, p. 270, Our translation).

Some researches on gender relations in childhood have been carried out with greater interest, in view of the interest in broadening the discussion about the pluralization of current child's ways of being, a heterogeneity of childhood as a generational social category with new roles and statutes social rights of children based on their analytical perspective on the context of children's play/toys, because ludicity is a right granted to the child, and must be guaranteed by society, by the family and by the public authorities themselves, of the Rights of Children and Adolescents, 1989, and by the Statute of the Child and Adolescent, of the following year (SILVA, 2015).

Play is responsible for important mental structures of the child, acts on the construction of thought, language, about their representations and meanings of the world, relationships, and produce effects on bonding and sharing in childhood. The toys themselves are also sources of research, since they consist of semiotic objects that, as cultural artifacts, act as symbolic objects of culture, with effects on the

processes of socialization, symbolization and subjectivation (SILVA, 2015). They have a discursive dimension endowed with the production and implication of meanings.

Thus, school education may play a role in the construction of stereotypes, through ways of conceiving play and use of toys in their context, which tend to reinforce and perpetuate gender mechanisms and devices in society, such as preconceived and accepted places for girls and for boys, rules of behavior and sexist conduct, sports and professions more suitable for each one, among others.

According to Bento (2008), schools that are incapable of dealing with difference, with the plurality of subjectivities, they function as guardians, great breeders of gender norms, producing heteronormativity. Many who deviate from the norm and cannot cope with situations of hostility, invisibility or oppression end up evading. School drop-out in cases related to gender should not take this nomenclature, but rather that of exclusion, since in fact these subjects are expelled from school, taking into account that there is a desire to eliminate those who would contaminate the school space, they would transgress its rules.

The school needs to problematize the use of toys by children, because instead of the misleading idea that there are attempts to reverse gender roles, it is necessary to discuss the possibilities for children to cross between the various opportunities for play and their repercussions .The school can not avoid taking the interface between the toys and their discourses and the underlying power relations, taking into account the fact that the speeches in vogue from an early age regulate and imprison the child, encapsulating its functioning.

Foucault (1987) pointed out that the school institutions are configured as places of power dispute, producing hegemonies. In this way, the established practices and the statements that circulate in the school provoke that the subjectivities are targets of classification, depreciation and exclusion. While school can be supportive of excludable processes, it may have potential for the most significant changes. The stereotypes that the school has helped to build can be redefined from their prospective interference.

The ways in which the school conducts, in early childhood education, the relationship with ludicity, toys and play possibilities, tell how they conceive in their

curricula the plurality of forms of subjectivation, they especially talk about their hidden curriculum, and configure devices that can also participate in the validation of socially imposed hegemony. The ways in which they deal with playing in childhood can signal affiliation to a homogeneous social body, which aims to rank and distribute places and roles, for, as Foucault (1987, p. 153, *Our translation*) would still say, "the norm establishes as a principle of coercion in the teaching, with the introduction of a standardized education".

This discipline practiced at a seemingly unpretentious moment, which is that of playing at school, participates in the "making" of individuals in this early childhood, a specific technique of a power that makes subjects simultaneously objects and instruments of their exercise, not being the triumphant powers of the discipline undertaken in the school, if "compared to the majestic rituals of sovereignty or the great state apparatuses", in Foucault's words (1987, 153, *Our translation*), but of "humble modalities, minor procedures". Thus, because they are subtle mechanisms, it is necessary to invest with distrust what sounds "natural."

In this direction, Silva (2015) points out that there is still much to be done regarded to this, and there are discussions that relate gender and power to biopower and self-care. Reflections on subjectivity of the subject, taking into account the issues of childhood. There are specific glances for spaces where there is still violence against the "abnormal".

Methodology

This work is about a qualitative study, type of research that uses the text as empirical material, part of the notion of social construction of the realities under study. It is interested in the perspectives of the participants, in their daily practices, and in their daily knowledge of the study question. Generally, we could say that the qualitative research:

> [...] is a situated activity that positions the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive and material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world by making a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and personal notes. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretative and naturalistic attitude towards the world. This means that researchers in this field study things in their natural contexts, trying to understand or interpret the

phenomena in terms of the meanings that people attribute to them (DENZIN; LENIN, 2005a, p. 3, Our translation).

The case study was chosen as a method, in light of the definition given by Yin (2010), which describes it as an empirical research that seeks to investigate contemporary phenomena in a real-life context. It is used, especially, when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context in question have no clear evidence. It aims to explore and also perform the description and explanation of the event or provide further understanding of the phenomenon.

The research took place between March and June of 2018 at a kindergarten in the municipality of Aracaju, called EMEI Raio de Sol[1] located in a peripheral neighborhood of the city mentioned above. It is a cut of a broader doctoral research. The analyzes were carried out from the observation in loco in the room of the last year of the infantile education, that includes children in the range of five and six years old. The room has a teacher and eighteen students, being 11 boys and 09 girls.

Moments of observation occurred twice a week, in the full morning shift, in classroom situations and in other spaces and activities, such as canteen, playground, physical education classes. Field diaries were filled after each visit to school to systematize the observation data.

In addition to the observation, photographic records, semi-structured interviews with the teacher, conversations and free and semidirectional play moments with the students were carried out in order to learn about the meanings and meanings attributed to children's play and the intersection with the gender issue. The publication of these data was authorized through a Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF).

In this study, children were simultaneously taken as products and actors of social processes, as Sirota (2001) pointed out. This social construction of childhood points to a paradigm in which the child's social relations and culture must be studied in and of themselves. These assumptions authorize that childhood be taken for research as a component of society and culture, framed as a variable of sociological analysis, according to Louro (1997).

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[1] Fictitious name to preserve the identidy of the institucion.

Discussion and results

During the period of immersion in the field it was possible to observe how the gender relations are constituted in this institution, more specifically in the context of the classroom of the teacher of the last year of the infantile education. The way she organizes her teaching practice lets things surfaced from subtle things to sexist divisions more explicitly her view which inevitably affects children's perception of the subject.

As an example of a subtle form of sexist vision one could cite the way in which she divides the tokens with the names of children in capital letters. She always uses such a strategy at the beginning of class with the goal that the children can identify and recognize their names. Identifying them, they take the card and take it to a board, where they attach the names of those present in class. Such names are fixed to cards with blue background for the boys' names and pink background for the girls' names. The dialogue below transcribed shows how children establish this gender relationship from the socially associated colors, because blue and pink have become identity marks that define an ideal of masculinity and femininity, and how they weave their stereotyped representations from it:

> TEACHER: Whose name is this, class?
>
> STUDENTS: Samuel's!
>
> TEACHER: That's right, because the letters are S-A-M-U-E-L. And how do you know it's a boy, people?
>
> STUDENT 1: Because it's blue in color, right Miss? For boys ...I only like pink.
>
> TEACHER: All right, Bruna! (DAILY FIELD RECORDS, 2018)

Image 1 – Photograph taken in the classroom

Sources: Autors, 2018.

In the left corner of the picture we see the board with the students' names segregated with pink background for the girls' names and blue for the boys' names. Thus, the diversity of toys available in the room for free moments or even directed play activities is segmented into distinct boxes, an outlet "of the universe of interest of the boys" and another one as "of the universe of interest of the girls". It is curious to note the use of the term "interest" as if this division were made from the spontaneous manifestations of children and without influence of these sexist discourses chanted by adults in school. Thus, they are taken as inherent desires to the incursions subjects influenced by discourses culturally constructed and reproduced without problematization by the institution.

> The child is already born in a pink or blue world, according to their sex. The family itself begins this process of normalizing children. Girls start to get dolls and boys start to get strollers. All this aiming at standardized behaviors, which are guaranteed by the punishment of deviant behavior. From the norm, a mechanism of coercion is created: what is not part of the homogeneity, the different, is labeled as abnormal, in a process of exclusion that functions as a discipline (SILVA, 2015, p. 523, Our translation).

In this way, we can attest that children are deprived of freely experimenting with their real desires, wishes, exploring their curiosity, knowing different roles and possible

places, since positions are already presumed and determined in advance, elucidating the expected behaviors for boys and for girls based on their sex. The way in which the materials are organized themselves is already conducive to sexism, so that children often organize themselves into distinct groups of boys and girls, without explicit instructions. It is then seen in this conjuncture the materialization of male/female antagonisms, boys/girls. What can generate substantial modifications in this functioning is the introduction of the concept of gender for the discussion on the deconstruction of these dichotomies.

The following excerpt is a cut from the field diary in which there is an account whose subject denounces the teacher's lack of reflection on the issue of gender division, demonstrating how this reproduction is uncritical, assimilated and perpetuated without questioning. The gaze on toys and interactions is important in understanding them as cultural elements that carry meanings and a social entanglement through which children are able to recurrently create and recreate new/other meanings:

> Teacher G. puts the two toy boxes on the floor while cutting out activities to stick on students' notebooks, they are homework activities. Then I see the boys on the corner at the back of the room and the girls next to the teacher's table. In the girls box there were dolls, sound toys, house play toys. In the boys, there were cars, male dolls, other means of transportation, animals. At one point, one of the girls approached the boys to pick up the car, which generated conflict between the children. So the teacher intervened and ordered the girl to return to the girls' side, claiming that in her box she had many more cool toys for her, that those were his. The upset girl says that at home she plays more with her brothers and the teacher asks if her mother sees this in a clear tone of disapproval (DAILY FIELD RECORDS, 2018).

Many questions arise from the observation of these moments. Such questions seem to be implicit in school everyday, although they permeate pedagogical practices. However, these discussions are far from being addressed in teachers' initial and continuing training courses. In the context of pedagogical meetings, there is little discussion in this regard, especially in early childhood education, where it seems that there is still authorization to exempt from this responsibility. At this intersection, we see children self-regulating from these norms, through mechanisms of control and normalization. It seems that the school consensually signs a "pact of silence". What senses can be attributed to this silence and consequent silencing of children's voices?

Regarding children, it can be said that the transgressions of gender roles were little recorded, they appeared punctually, by the same children, who in their speeches

showed that they had greater freedom in the displacement between these places within the family. Thus, one of the great notes, understanding that school institutions, through their curricula, organization of time and spaces, constitute important spaces for the education of children, especially in early childhood, is that the school urgently needs to commit with the rupture with the determinations of feminine and masculine roles, with the hierarchies through the school system that have been imposed.

Converging with results of other researches in this scope, it is affirmed that the school has subtle mechanisms that constitute and produce the maintenance of the differences between the sexes. Although in the free moments, as in the playground, it was observed boys and girls playing together, it was noticeable that in these encounters, the games commonly related to the considered masculine universe, such as motor activities: running, hiding, fighting.

Boys were rarely seen playing in activities considered feminine, commonly linked to activities of symbolic games, circle games or songs, which could denote the supremacy of the domination of the "masculine" infant universe on the "feminine", as a reflection of what is seen socially in our day: it is more permissible for women to adhere to historically considered male practices than men to succumb to "feminine" activities, which would test their virility, assuming behaviors pejoratively seen even in childhood by homo/transphobic looks. In the game of dichotomies, an asymmetry of superiority is demarcated.

In this sense, Louro (1997) claims that the educational institutions in their practices teach certain concepts, which implies that certain acts and behaviors be legitimate and others suffer retaliation, differentiated by sex, and in this way be learned and internalized, rhythmically winning connotation of "natural" in the social bulge. This naturalness is rooted and engendered, preventing it from being noticed, on the floor of these schools, where there is the massive conviviality of boys and girls, that they move, circulate and group in very different ways and that the bonds and shares are beyond of dual social determinations of gender.

Understanding that children's relationships in early childhood education are presented as a way of introducing these boys and girls into social life, it is understood

that it is when they begin to learn about systems of rules, values, and can interact and participate in social constructions.

In this way, by carefully observing the relationships between these children, it was possible to analyze that stereotypes of sexual roles, predetermined behaviors and prejudices and judgments are cultural constructs that permeate relations among adults and that, although they do not completely contaminate the culture of the children, influence on in, with effects on their ideological formation. Getting children to feel charged for a predetermined sex role is overwhelming and deviates from living and trying to relate freely.

Thus, teacher education needs to contemplate the awareness of practices that may be more inclusive, that value difference, that are placed in the countercurrent of sexism. Small everyday actions that go unnoticed, automated reactions, whose core and whose effects elude us, repeated without questioning their meaning, as if they were irrelevant in the wider educational process.

They are embedded behaviors and mentalities that can no longer withstand the new times and new conceptions about human formation, respect and freedom of gender. This inflexibility and the taking of untouchable truths are not reasonable to the construction of a democratic school, open to diversity , in a moment of increasing and effervescent change of values towards the equality of the sexes, with the rise and pulverization of the feminist movement in the society, bringing with it widespread concerns among social, cultural and political fields.

Toys are symbolic objects of representation and the way they are treated has an incisive role in the reproduction of representations of gender. Thus, rules of conduct are being slyly imposed on children in the play space, inciting a relationship of control, power and discipline of bodies.

> Through gender it is possible to observe ways of distributing and signifying power, such as the common sense of attributing qualities of strong and superior to that which is masculine, while the feminine has attributes of fragility. It is within the networks of power that differences and inequalities are instituted and named. According to Foucault, the body is inserted in a web of powers that determine prohibitions and obligations, coercing gestures and attitudes. These are mechanisms that place the body in a political field of normalization, aiming at usefulness and docility (SILVA, 2015, p. 512, Our translation).

The author also draws attention to the fact that the discursive practices present in the space of play in the school regulate the sexed body and construct the ideas of the feminine and the masculine, opening space for the firmament of the hierarchies. Micro-powers submit the body to what is socially acceptable, and must correspond to the expectations created for each gender "in a process of subjectivation of the children to self-discipline and still monitor the behavior of the next" (SILVA, 2015, P. 512. *Our translation*).

On the coercion of the behavior of the pairs, a passage for illustration follows. It is observed that the children begin to understand that there are different social and gender roles, which is intensified in group play, when the representations built on the sign universe that involves masculinities and femininities come to light. The child's semiotic framework is being cut short by such gender representations. They are being sectioned according to the ones that have and those that do not have desirable behaviors, subject to derogatory and disqualifying comments. However, in an arena of contradictions, there are also some points of resistance, some distance from conformity with social norms. During a play in the playground where some girls insisted on joining the boys, I saw that between the races there were some disputes. Uneasy, the teacher tried to call E. to warn her:

> Be calm, my dear. You are running barefoot, all wild, you don't even look like a young lady. Go put on your shoes and wash that face, look at the girls, they are sitting together ... E., clearly annoyed, goes to the bathroom and puts her shoes on, but waits for the teacher to get distant to join the group of boys again, talking to them in a tone of complaint about the teacher having told her off [...] (DAILY FIELD RECORDS, 2018).

Still in this same episode, in front of the resistance of the classmate, another girl went to the teacher to tell that she had come back to play with the boys, disrespecting her orientation, and reiterated: Student A: "Miss, I've never seen a girl who does not come and play with us, she just wants to stay with the boys, she looks like a macho girl".

The child practices vigilance and often starts to repel what does not resemble his behavior. It begins to reproduce the ducts of the adult, acting as controllers, in order to guarantee normalization. This look of the other functions like the panopticon described by Foucault (1987) in "Watch and Punish". It acts as a coercive mechanism

of power. In a space of control, children feel to be guarded by "invisible eyes," that is, power is exercised independently of a physical presence. The micro-powers present in the whole social body and, therefore, circulate in the school sphere. And common, according to Foucault, there is no power without resistance, we see as in the above mentioned both coexist, where there is a movement against the devices that delimit and control the subjectivity.

Conclusion

The school can be configured as a potential reproducer of categorized constructions, the cultural norm of which there are specific toys and games dichotomically aimed at boys and girls. Imbued with circulating discourses in the school space, there is concern that there are reverberations about sexual choice from these experiences.

This concern about the sexual orientation of the child that crosses the school institution consists of what Louro (1998) calls "obsession with normalizing sexuality". This obsession would be related to a permanent vigilance exercised from the beginnings of the infancy not only by the family but also by the school, forming an invisible network that underlies the maintenance guarantee of masculinity taken as hegemonic, considering that to break these boundaries of gender in a limited way traced while possibility generates a pathological classification, gains connotation of abnormality.

The choices and ways in which children used toys and put themselves in play pointed to issues concerning educational practices in early childhood education. Quite notorious that they highlight the forms of organization and functioning, processes and dynamics that are establishing the norms of polarity in school everyday.

In the last years of the so-called early childhood, the children demonstrate that they have already notably incorporated into their discursive framework, through the interrelationships through language, dual and dichotomous representations concerning the places they are allowed to occupy according to the gendered frameworks imposed, by the said and by the unsaid ones in the chain of statements that delimit the connections in the educational space.

It is therefore imperative that the deconstruction of dichotomies, products of modern thought, permeate the infantile universe by diluting the category of toys/plays, separating them from the polarized genders on which thought is still based, in a binary opposition that clearly tends to delineate sealed places for boys and girls, within an invariable logic of domination-submission. Thus, it is necessary to problematize the construction of these poles, highlighting their plurality for the formation of the subjects.

The dismantling of the polarity and hierarchy contained in this thinking can lead to more prospective forms of subjectivation of these children, since the dualistic view prevents us from reflecting and incorporating into the formative practices the idea that there is a "natural" place for each gender, endowed with fixity, impossible of the irremediable displacements.

Finally, the school must recognize that it is not in a position of neutrality regarding gender relations, because it undeniably acts on the constitution of gender identities, even in a discrepant and unequal way, since the collective environment in which child is immersed allows the first relationships to be formed. We need to discuss gender in school. The curriculum must embrace such problematization. Meanings need to be deconstructed and re-signified.

The determinations derived from preconceived and rigid conceptions about gender are rooted subtly in the statements that circumscribe educational practices. In times of conservatism and religious fundamentalism that even affects public institutions and the consequent demonization of gender discussions in schools under the garb of the pervasive dissemination of a "gender ideology", it is more than necessary that we commit ourselves with the articulation between gender and childhood , so that we can glimpse the plurality of ways of conceiving to be a boy and to be a girl, beyond which the frames and categorizations allow us to still see.

More than maintaining and reproducing old prejudices and ways of conceiving the human, the school must establish itself as an agent of discussions that values and problematizes the difference, assuming itself for its political implication with the human formation as a land of transformations, new engenderings and possibilities of life.

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Desde já coloco-me à disposição para esclarecer dúvidas quanto ao disposto acima. Grata!
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