



TOY AND PLAY: CHILDHOOD AND RELATIONAL CHANGES IN THE LIQUID MODERNITY

O BRINQUEDO E O BRINCAR: INFÂNCIA E MUDANÇAS RELACIONAIS NA MODERNIDADE LÍQUIDA

EL JUGUETE Y EL JUGAR: INFANCIA Y CAMBIOS RELACIONALES EN LA MODERNIDAD LÍQUIDA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to understand the influence of liquid modernity on the preference of the child for the type of toy/games as well as the repercussions of this choice in its interpersonal relationships. **Method:** exploratory and descriptive study with qualitative approach held with 12 children from September to October 2014 in two schools in a city of Paraíba. Data were produced through interviews and analyzed by Content Analysis Technique in the Thematic modality. **Results:** three categories were identified: << Preferred toys in liquid modernity >>; << The school as a facilitating space for games with interpersonal interaction >> and << Toys and games in liquid modernity: their influence on interpersonal relationships >>. **Conclusion:** children showed preference for electronic toys, which are individualist and does not require interaction with other children; as the preferred games, they chose those that happened at school, reaffirming this space as socializing and timely space for development of activities with potential for personal interaction. **Descriptors:** Child; Technology; Games and Toys.

RESUMO

Objetivo: compreender a influência da modernidade líquida sobre a preferência da criança quanto ao tipo de brinquedo/brincadeiras, assim como a repercussão dessa no seu relacionamento interpessoal. **Método:** estudo exploratório e descritivo, com abordagem qualitativa, realizado de setembro a outubro de 2014, em duas escolas de uma cidade da Paraíba, com 12 crianças. Os dados foram produzidos a partir de entrevistas e analisadas pela Técnica de Análise de Conteúdo na modalidade Temática. **Resultados:** identificaram-se três categorias: << Brinquedos preferidos na modernidade líquida >>; << A escola como espaço oportunizador das brincadeiras com interação interpessoal >> e << Brinquedos e brincadeiras na modernidade líquida: sua influência nos relacionamentos interpessoais >>. **Conclusão:** as crianças demonstraram preferências por brinquedos eletrônicos, cujo brincar é individual, não necessitando interação com outras crianças; quanto às brincadeiras preferidas, optaram por aquelas que aconteciam na escola, reafirmando este espaço como socializador e oportuno para o desenvolvimento de atividades que potencializem a interação pessoal. **Descritores:** Criança; Tecnologia; Jogos e Brinquedos.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: comprender la influencia de la modernidad líquida sobre la preferencia Del niño en el tipo de juguete/juego, así como la repercusión de esa en su relacionamiento interpersonal. **Método:** estudio exploratorio y descriptivo, con enfoque cualitativo, realizado de septiembre a octubre de 2014, en dos escuelas de una ciudad de Paraíba, con 12 niños. Los datos fueron producidos a partir de entrevistas y analizadas por la Técnica de Análisis de Contenido en la modalidad Temática. **Resultados:** se identificaron tres categorías: << Juguetes preferidos en la modernidad líquida >>; << La escuela como espacio oportunizador de los juegos con interacción interpersonal >> y << Juguetes y juegos en la modernidad líquida: su influencia en los relacionamientos interpersonales >>. **Conclusión:** los niños demostraron preferencias por juguetes electrónicos, cuyo jugar es individual, no necesitando interacción con otros niños; cuanto a los juegos preferidos, optaron por aquellos que acontecían en la escuela, reafirmando este espacio como socializador y oportuno para el desarrollo de actividades que potencializan la interacción personal. **Descriptores:** Niño; Tecnología; Juegos y Juguetes.

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INTRODUCTION

The process of individualization is a center mark in modernity, as well as the process of rationalization of personal relationships. Scholar on the theme reveals: "in liquid modernity, everything is volatile."¹ Thus, human relations are no longer tangible and the living together, in family and in couples, group of friends and so on, constantly loses consistency and stability.²

This is the context in which the childhood has been experienced today. Influenced by a globalized world, individualism and consumerism are rising among this population.³ Although the childhood may pass through constant changes at the same time that becomes a permanent structural category that all the people experience, this is still characterized as a period of vulnerabilities in face of the changes that occur according to the historical, anthropological, sociological and psychological context of each epoch.⁴

Since the twentieth century, children have become a favorite target of the cultural industry, which, in turn, aims to shape the future consumer adapted to the social structure.⁵ As a result toys and games also pass through changes in their roles and representations for those who play them.⁶

In liquid modernity⁴, children imagine and invent, but the steps of the game are dictated by the toy. The incentive to exacerbated consumption promoted by postmodernity make them disposable products. Once the child no longer search the relationship with the toy, it uses in a relation of hierarchy in before other children. Thus, the child does not enjoy playing and toys become valuable objects.⁷

The toy understood as an object of consumption serves as a means for children to join friendship groups, forming a bridge between the one who wants to participate in the play (the owner of the toy) and the one who heads the group.⁸ In such stance, it is possible to identify the centrality of consumption as a means by which operates an objectification and instrumentalization of social relationships, what is typical from liquid modernity.⁴

In this logic, the relations of friendships involve competition, negotiation and exchange of information. This reflects the relationships of the postmodern world: fast and weak. In this case, the child represents the contemporary world in its relations and games.⁸

Modern toys are mostly those in which only one person plays, leading to isolation of children. A study shows that the choice of these toys by parents is justified because of concern with security, cleanliness and health of children, and the lack of time for them to play with their children, what generates a control over the act of play.⁹

The act of play, in turn, besides contributing to the imagination also contributes to children's development and health; facilitates the communication and the child's relationship with its group; allows reflection on the self and lies between the real and the imaginary, allowing the child to play with everyday facts.¹⁰

The research is justified by the opportunity to reflect on the influence of postmodernity in the behavior of children, in their way of expressing themselves and thus relate with each other in the play. Therefore, the following questions were defined: how do children from public and private schools in the municipality of Cuité-PB relate with the toy and with each other when playing? Does the choice of the type of toy and game affect interpersonal relationships of these children?

Thus, this study aims to understand the influence of liquid modernity on the preference of the child for the type of toy/games, as well as the effects of this choice in their interpersonal relationships.

METHOD

Descriptive and exploratory study with qualitative approach developed in two schools in the urban area of the municipality of Cuité-PB, one public and the other private. The subjects were 12 children, aged between 7 and 10 years, as they already differentiate their ideas from others and can express themselves verbally. The research had the following inclusion criteria: children in school age, duly enrolled in school, attending school and able to participate in recreation at the time of data collection.

The instrument for data collection consisted in a semi-structured interview script containing open questions. The first part consisted in questions that characterized the research subjects and the second part in questions intended to meet the objectives of the study.

Production of data was proceeded after approval from the Research Ethics Committee, under opinion nº 830740. A visit to schools was made, at that time was asked the contact of parents in order to provide them information about the research. At that moment, each

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participating child, in presence of their legal guardians, were invited to perform the reading of the Consent Agreement. They were asked to sign the Agreement if they agreed to participate.

After authorization of the legal guardian and consent of children, a second visit to the school was held for the interviews. A mp4 recorder was used in the interview to ensure a more accurate record of the information collected. In addition, some materials that allow better interaction with the child such as puppets, for example, were used. At the end of the interview, children drew what they would like to win on their next birthday. After the interview, a transcription of empirical material was performed in full-length and was followed by data analysis.

Thematic or categorical content analysis technique was used for the analysis of information, with the following operational stages: 1) pre-analysis, that matched the choice of material to be studied. 2) exploration of material, which consisted in the transcription of data and grouping the material into units of record, followed by classification and aggregation thereof, and finally, 3) treatment and interpretation of results, which allowed propose inferences and us and perform interpretations of the results.

In order to assure anonymity, the children participating in the study were represented by pseudonyms chosen by them, as for example, their favorite characters from children's stories or cartoons. It is noteworthy that more than one child chose the same character cartoon or children's story as a favorite, and thus a number was added to some pseudonyms to make distinction between them in the speeches.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the 12 children participating in the study, six attended the public and other six attended the private school; six were male and six female; ages ranged from 7 to 10 years. Grades ranged between the first and fifth; one child was in the first grade, three in the second, three in the third, two in the fourth and three in the fifth year.

It is common at this stage of development boys to prefer competitive activities that require energy expenditure. On the other hand, girls prefer emotional activities and ease of communication, since the difference between the sexes is materialized nearly at the age of five or six years and this is evident in the choice of play, in the way they play and interact.¹¹

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Based on the analysis of the statements of children, three thematic categories were defined: 1) preferred toys in liquid modernity; 2) the school as a facilitating space for games with interpersonal interaction, and 3) toys and games in liquid modernity: their influence on interpersonal relationships.

♦ Category 1 - Preferred toys in liquid modernity

For the definition of this category, the following questions were used: "What is your favorite toy? Do you bring it to school? " and "What would you like to receive as gift in your next birthday?".

Answers reveal that boys preferred the motor and cognitive toys (robot, car, ball), while most of girls preferred social toys (dolls, little pans) responsible for emotional development, stimulators of make-believe and that are generally enjoyed by children playing alone and imagining their companions.¹²

Like my doll. I do not bring to school because I do not like. Because I do not want to bring. (Mônica 2)

Radio-controlled car. My mom doesn't let me bring it to school. (Kick Buttowski 1)

Play ball, because I have a doll to play ball, there is another who is the goalkeeper, then I kick to the goal. I do not bring it because I'm afraid to break it. (Spider man)

When asked about bringing the toy to school, most answered no, and as justification they informed the fear of losing, breaking or because the mother would not let them bring it, thus making the zeal and attachment to the toy evident.

When requesting them to draw what they would like to win on their next birthday, tech toys (postmodern) were emphasized:

A digital mobile with Poul, his shop to buy things ... then it's you need only to change it, that the store appears, toy, a lot of thing. (Emília)

A mobile phone, actually I wanted to win a digital phone, a Galaxy S4, for me to play on it and call my father when he is out because he will travel to São Paulo. (Kick Buttowski²)

A video game, I had two, but my mother sold them. (Ben 10¹)

What I wanted to win on my birthday? ... A cell phone, for me to play Poul. (Mônica¹).

I will want to draw a cell phone, one that has Android. (Ben 10²)

These kinds of toys are the drivers of the play, the child does not think, does not develop creativity, has no desire to make by herself, and therefore is not aware of what he/she is really capable of producing. The child skips all these phases and is directed

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straight to the play, being instructed by the toy^{7, 13}.

Study shows that on occasions when these games are priorities or unique, it is possible that the child begin to develop various disorders, such as: affective, food, personality and anxiety disorders, among other conditions.¹⁴ However, as a contradictory, such toys have an educational purpose, because through these some children learn the meaning and pronunciation of certain words in foreign languages and even how to configure them.¹⁵ Still, it is known that the preference for these toys, considered by some as disqualified and inhibitors of social relations, is a consequence of the historical moment which suffers strong economic influence in which we are inserted and are influenced by¹⁴.

♦ Category 2. The school as a facilitating space for games with interpersonal interaction

When children were asked about what is their favorite game at the break in school, all respondents preferred those more interactive such as football, "tag", to the detriment of other games. These games involve interpersonal interaction and/or energy expenditure. By choosing them as the favorite to be played at school, children ratify this space as ideal for socialization.

The games chosen by the children were presented in different ways and described as "tick", football, tag and "mother and daughter". The games "tick" and "tag" were cited both among boys and girls.

Tick. You tick the person, then if it high tick, she can not stay down, she has to stay on top, if it is "candle tick", the person ticks another person, then if she does not blow, it melts. (Mônica²)

Tick candle, if a person ticks, you have to keep your hands up. " (Ben 10¹)

High tick, if someone is the tick and if someone goes up on top, she can not tick. (Super man)

I play one thing only, football. (Kick Buttowski²)

Football. We call two people to form teams, then each one will call others to form 5, one goes to the goal and four playing, then we start. (Kick Buttowski¹)

We sometimes play to pick up others. One day I played hide and seek, the other day I played high tick. (Morceguinha)

Hide and seek, but sometimes the boys are playing ball, then no way, then I play volleyball with the girls of the fifth grade, also tick with other girls. (Draco-Laura)

Mom and daughters, a person is the mother and we are the daughters. (Emília)

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I usually play mother and daughter, we play there in flower plant. (Mônica¹)

Physical activity consists in any activity that requires physical movement and that results in energy expenditure. Besides promoting interaction with other people, it reduces the risks of alcohol and drugs use and violence^{16,17}.

Researches have shown that the school is currently the best environment enabling the development of physical activities. The school is a place where the meeting of cultures happens. Thus, it should also be concerned with the formation of citizenship, making it necessary that the game/play use space in the preparation of the teaching plan, what will promote development and learning. This will differentiate the school from other environments^{16, 18, 19}.

Another benefit that the educational institution can provide is the promotion of health education and prevention of situations that cause school dropout and exclusion. In the authors's opinion, children in school age are open to health education. Health actions can be developed both by teachers and by healthcare professionals, who can work individually or together. These actions should be undertaken as soon as possible according to the health needs of children, resulting in healthy behaviors²⁰.

♦ Category 3. Toys and games in liquid modernity: their influence in interpersonal relationships

Two questions were used to build this category: "What do you use to play when you're not in school?" and "What do you play on the weekends?"

In agreement with the literature, to answer the first question, the children said that they choose solitary activities/games. This is due to the fact that they dedicate most of their leisure time isolated at home in front of a screen¹⁷. The explanation for this waste of time in front of the screen is related to the large number of images that this contains, causing the inactivation of the imaginary, and therefore, they fail to differentiate the virtual and the real.²¹ With regard to waste time in front of a videogame screen, it is worth noting that Brazil is the 4th country with 35 million players, second only to Germany, Russia, and the United States.²²

The lack of public and safe space for recreational activities contributes to industries transform real activities that could be developed in groups into electronic games that take most of the leisure time of children or even all their leisure time, due to the

multitude of activities that do not require a much movement and time²².

I do not play, I watch TV in the afternoon. At night, I watch the soap opera, I have dinner and then I go to bed. (Mônica²)
Just Videogame. (Ben 10²)
I play ball and video games, I gained an x-box from my father in the Christmas, and my grandmother will give me a cell phone, and my uncle gave me a hundred reais, I'm going to do something "pauca" (from "poupança" in Portuguese that means "saving account), at the bank. (Kick Buttowski²)
I have the tablet and I play with it, I can also watch TV (laughs) (Draco-Laura)
On Saturday I watch TV for a while, sometimes I play on my tablet, on Sunday I wake up about ten o'clock in the morning, then sometimes I talk to my father, I brush my teeth, then I watch TV, play on my tablet, with my toys . It's my little cars, doll. (Spider man)

The historical and cultural context in which we are inserted is characterized by both the excessive and the temporary pleasure, causing people to consume more and more, because products are quickly and easily discarded because they often cause boredom.²³

Boredom is characterized by: feeling of having nothing to do, poor durability of events and experiences among others. This is noticeable in the population of the liquid society. Children are no longer entertained with simple things, no longer feel the urge to explore (perhaps because it requires more time). These signs of boredom come to be confused with some psychiatric diseases and children are unnecessarily medicated.²⁴

Television is often mentioned in the speeches of the subjects as a favorite form of leisure. In turn, this is considered indicative of boredom when used for a prolonged time.²⁴ However, for busy parents, television or other electronic equipment are allies when it comes to caring for children because children are entertained and are physically safe, at home. The need for social interaction with other children goes unnoticed and with it the chance to experience horizontal relationships in which one stands in the place of others and their opinions are taken into consideration.²⁴

Interpersonal relationship must occur beyond the school environment, but this was not what was evident throughout this research. Through speeches, it is possible to realize that the child is isolated even from their families, making interpersonal interaction to decrease every day. However, it is known that it is critical for the child development. Through interpersonal interaction children become more

communicative, control emotions, experience the world around them, build friendship ties, which in turn enable the exchange of culture, although, currently, the main reason to create this kind of laces are the benefits that these can provide the subject.^{8,25}

CONCLUSION

Children, for being inserted into a liquid society where having overlaps being, transpire in their speeches this whole system, demonstrated through their choices of toys and most enjoyed games, and these translate in their interpersonal relationships.

Most reports show the option for solitary toys and games. In times of insecurity, with the increasing hostility and violence in cities, television has become the safe entertainment and favorite option of the weekend, the cellphone has become the most desired gift for birthday. All of these are inhibitors of imagination, alienating, and drivers of actions that must be performed during the game.

By giving preference to group games when they are in school, children have the opportunity to interact with colleagues, stating that space as a facilitator of interpersonal experiences that allow personal growth and formation of bonds.

Thus, the study is important for the community because it enables reflection on the influence of liquid modernity on the behavior of children. There is a need to promote favorable environments intergroup interaction among these, favorable to their psychosocial development, like the school that encourages the practice of activities that allow them to increase their creativity, imagination and social interaction.

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