

Childhood, Culture and Education.

How we become what we are



We are pleased to introduce this special issue of the Iberoamerican Journal of Psychology on “Childhood, Culture and Education”. When Alejandro Bejarano Gómez, Editor in Chief, asked us to take the role of Guest Editors we did not hesitate to accept this prestigious commitment. For us it was a real honor to accept this invitation that originally came from the Developmental Psychology Node, which stems from the Colombian Association of Psychology Faculties (ASCOFAPSI).

Since the very beginning we had the feeling that to explore the interconnection between, childhood, culture and education is still very needed, and it is the key point to understand how we become what we are.

This was one of the central issues in the work of Jerome Bruner along his entire life (Marsico, 2015; 2017). More specifically, it was the core of the so called MACOS project which is the acronym for “Man: a course of study”, an American teaching programme implemented during the 1970s. This program is based on the theories of Jerome Bruner who greatly contributed to design it. In the 1960s Bruner was director of the Center for Cognitive Studies and professor of psychology at Harvard University. In 1965 he became one of the co-directors of the Social Studies Program at ESI (Educational Services Incorporated), together with professors Elting E. Morison of MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and Franklin K. Patterson of Tufts University. In the document “Man: A Course of Study. Occasional Paper No.3” published in the Spring of 1965, Bruner describes the initial stages of the development of the primary school curriculum “Man: A Course of Study”, he defines the structure of the course, its form and some educational strategies.

The object of this particular course is the man, his nature as a species, the forces that shape and continue to shape humanity. Three questions are constantly present:

- - What is human about being human?
- - How did men become like this?
- - How can they be more so?

Bruner and his collaborators (anthropologists, zoologists, linguists, theoretical engineers, artists, designers, film crews, teachers and psychologists) looked for exercises and materials with which students could learn from what point of view man distinguishes himself from other animals in his adaptation to the world, and from what other point of view is it possible to find continuity between him and his animal ancestors. In fact, man, says Bruner, represents that crucial point of evolution in which adaptation is carried out by an external instrument, namely culture, and only in a modest part through further morphological changes.

Bruner's intent is to clarify the difficult problem of the relationship between education and intellectual development. The specific object of his investigation is the way in which culture is transmitted and the way in which through this transmission it allows us to form more capable and active human beings. The relation between culture and education is the locus where to look at if we want to understand how we become what we are and how we might be better. This special issue will provide the reader with different intellectual stimuli to unpack the always fascinating and generative enigma of the human development.

In the following pages we will give some synopsis of the papers.

In the article Theory of Mind in children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Family Structure Verónica Peña, Merlis Nuñez, Heidy Borja, Katty Lambraño and Wilmar Pineda-Alhucema, analyzes the association between family structure and Theory of Mind functioning in children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The relationship between family structure and Theory of Mind functioning has been studied since approximately the 1990s, when Jenkins and Astington

(1996) concluded that “children from extended families tend to perform better on false belief tasks”.

Peña et al., offers two explanatory scenarios. The first focuses on the characteristics of family behavior and communication that shape the way each of the family members act and how this may affect ToM skills (possibly due to the dispersion of parental attention and the number of siblings). The second scenario is located in the neurosciences and the authors indicates that the results can also be explained according to the neurodevelopment of children, where various genetic, neurological, neuropsychological and environmental factors interact (this scenario opens the door to future research). In conclusion, the research results suggest that family structure is related to mental state attributions in children with ADHD, especially in emotional aspects. However, this relationship is weak, and it is concluded that difficulties in Theory of Mind may be even more related to neurodevelopmental aspects.

In the article entitled “Verbal symbolic function in childhood. Evidence from a sample of children in urban areas of Argentina”, Guadalupe Germano, Luciana Maly, Lola Rodríguez-Ares and Hernán Gerardo Fernández-Cid., analyze the impact of quarantine measures on the development of children who have experienced their early childhood during the Covid-19 pandemic. To address this question, they conducted an empirical study investigating the level of acquisition of verbal symbolic function in children from urban areas of Buenos Aires, Argentina. The main objective was to describe this function in detail and to analyze possible variations according to gender and age.

In the article “Recognition of the Other's Perspective: a view from the Vygotskian sociocultural approach”, Mónica Reyes Rojas, Hernán Sanchez-Ríos and Diana Bejarano Novoa, propose a renewed perspective to understand this Higher Psychological Process. This approach implies the affective and social semiotic construction of complex inferences and anticipations, focusing on the recognition of the circumstances and the diverse perspectives present in relationships with others. This marks a break with traditional perspectives that give priority to the

attribution of individual psychological states, such as Theory of Mind, or that conceptualize the Zone of Proximal Development through static structures. Consequently, the authors have chosen to approach the Recognition of the Other's Perspective from sociocultural approaches, particularly from a Vygotskian viewpoint.

In the article "Affiliation of university students: An analysis from Semiotic Cultural Psychology", the authors Klessyo do Espírito Santo Freire, Beatriz Ribeiro Cortez Cardozo Barata de Almeida Hessel, Maria Virginia Machado Dazzani y Giuseppina Marsico present a study aimed at understanding the process of affiliation to university life from the Semiotic Cultural Psychology perspective, which focuses on the analysis of developmental trajectories and the production of meanings in the relationship between the person and her environment. From this perspective, higher education is viewed as a context of developmental transition. Throughout the academic trajectory, the student experiences cognitive, affective and social changes that reconfigure his or her identity. Transitions are presented as moments in which new opportunities for development emerge, generating changes in various psychological aspects of the individual. This phenomenon occurs due to the rupture in the developmental trajectory of the person, implying the discontinuity of certain aspects of the relationship that the person had built with the world.

In the article "Parenting patterns and their relationship with child behavior problems" Rosario Huertas Vargas, Edgar Grimaldo Salazar and Blanca Ivet Chávez Soto, explored the relationship between discipline style (supportive, coercive or indifferent) and externalizing behaviors (disruptive, aggressive and self-aggressive) and internalizing behaviors (depression, anxiety and adaptive). Huertas Vargas et al., offers a rich explanation of each one of his results, which are truly surprising and usefulness, both for professionals and psychologists in training. Although this study is not properly inscribed in a methodological line of development, it yields interesting results that may lead us to think about how parenting patterns may affect the developmental trajectories of our children.

The article "Tensions between the School and Mapuche Indigenous Families" proposes a reflection on the tensions between the school and indigenous families based on the narratives of 14 Mapuche mothers and fathers with school-age children. In their results, Camila Pérez Huenteo and Daniela Nahuelpán Vidal point out that schools promote the appreciation of the Mapuche people but at the same time children "are targets of discrimination and devaluation discourses towards the Mapuche people persist". This interesting reflection shows a reality of the Chilean educational system and highlights a phenomenon that occurs in this context. This phenomenon is a tense space where boys and girls are included and excluded.

The authors conclude that the school is a very important factor for indigenous mothers and fathers, who expressed their particular way of managing the influence of this institution on their daily life and the development of their children. In this sense, they identified the following categories as turning points: family dynamics related to school life, dedicating most of the day to the school environment, avoiding imposing extracurricular activities on children, communication and discernment in the educational environment, and experiences of discrimination in the school environment.

In the article "Prematurity and parental stress: an analysis of suggestions for future studies", the authors Layanne Cordeiro do Espírito Santo, Luísa Sousa Monteiro Oliveira and Simone Souza da Costa Silva highlights prematurity as a global challenge in the field of public health. This condition, characterized by births before 37 weeks of gestation, constitutes an important cause of neonatal mortality and has long-term impacts on children's health and development. The literature highlights the association between preterm birth and parental stress, manifested through symptoms such as anxiety, distress and depression. In addition, the authors point out that:

The experience of having a premature infant is linked to increased parental stress, defined as an imbalance between perceived parental resources and the demands of parenting.

Hospitalization of an infant in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit intensifies this stress related to altered parenting roles and separation from the infant.

To address stress and prematurity, the authors highlights the importance of exploring various dimensions of the phenomenon. She proposes to investigate interventions aimed at facing the adversities generated by prematurity, evaluating the impact of these interventions on each parental figure and how they contribute to the health of this population.

Finally, the article “Detection of neurodevelopmental difficulties in preschoolers through screening tests” proposes to identify developmental difficulties in preschoolers in an urban community. For this purpose, two screening evaluations are provided: Evaluation of Infant Development (EDI) and Screening for Language Problems (TPL). In addition, an analysis of the medical history of each of the 44 participants was performed in order to characterize their pre-, peri- and postnatal history with the purpose of documenting the developmental characteristics from gestation to the age of evaluation. Dora Elizabeth Granados, Tania Ivonne Hernández, Laura Carrasco Hernández and María Magdalena Álvarez indicates that they detected difficulties in the areas of motor, language, social and cognitive development (in at least 50% of the cases), but it is not possible to speak of a relationship

between these difficulties and those perinatal risk factors that were identified in the clinical histories.

The authors call attention to the high percentage of cases identified by difficulties and points out, firstly, the need to carry out the evaluation of larger samples. Secondly, she wonders to what extent the surveillance of child development is being implemented according to the National Strategy for Early Childhood Care (ENAPI, 2020).

As can be seen, this is an issue with a series of very interesting articles that contribute to the development of psychology from different fields and with different theoretical perspectives. We invite readers to enjoy its contents and to send us comments or questions about the articles published.

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