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Tensions in childhood, development projects and neoliberalism in Latin America.

Readings for a disputed field.

The Latin American Journal of Social Sciences, Childhood and Youth ¹ invites you to participate in the edition titled: *Tensions in childhood, development projects and neoliberalism in Latin America. Readings for a field in dispute*. This is a call for the submission of articles that problematize the place of childhood in social, political and economic development projects in Latin America. Through this, the Journal aims to provide new tools to understand actions that, combined with the rhetoric around protection and/or restitution of children's rights, operate selectively on subjects and/or social groups that are created as specific intervention categories. As detailed below, this rhetoric is understood as a surface of the debate that disputes some of the fundamental foundations of public and social policy in Latin American states. The compilation of these articles will lead to a deeper understanding of the structures of inequality in the regional context, as well as its production and reproduction mechanisms.

Presentation of the proposal

From the post-colonial period to the present day, childhood has been at the heart of the design of public and social policy in Latin America. These include the diverse efforts focused on the social control of proletarian children exercised by the alliance between the emerging national States and

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philanthropy, and the most recent mechanisms for investing in human capital and specialized bio-psycho-social development. Beyond their versatility, these efforts have a range of common elements, such as their inclusion in the secularization and professionalization processes that have historically taken place in the region and respond to one of the States' greatest challenges: achieve the ideals of progress and development. Belief in these ideals has been decisive in the region because it has justified, in different ways, the illusion of building a uniform and unidirectional path guided by a modernity that demands perpetual renewal and improvement.

The truth is that these processes have not always been the result of natural and harmonious consensus but also depend on a complex web of negotiations between different forces and philosophies, as well as on variable historical, social and material conditions. These conditions have determined the emergence and durability of certain categories and practices over others. Specifically in the case of children, this is the configuration of a disputed field that covers different rationalizations, classifications and treatments and is specific to the region. The invitation to participate in this edition of the Journal is designed to address the porosities and invisible structures that form this field. Our proposal is to generate tools that allow us to distance ourselves from "unique" or "true" meanings through an analysis of socio-political and economic aspects in the construction of the category of childhood as part of the configuration of development projects in Latin America.

From multiple and situated readings, we invite you to engage with the processes of constructing these disputed fields at the center of the efforts to make children a part of the engine of development. This implies focusing on the situation of structural exclusion that children in Latin America face in terms of inequalities and multidimensional poverty in order to restore the centrality of social, economic and political processes that are geographically and temporally situated in the problematization of in the region. In short, we are seeking multiple frameworks that allow us to reflect on the complexity deployed in the management of childhood in contexts of inequality. This is an exercise that will allow us to recognize different moments in the emergence of social concern for children in the region, as well as the different configurations of practices and categories associated with this field of study.

Within this framework, we propose three areas of reflection for this work:

1. Childhood in inter-American projects.
2. Childhood and the role of maternity hospitals in development projects.
3. Childhood in the neoliberal project.

1. Children in inter-American projects

The ideals of progress in Latin America have historically been sustained by a war of metaphors built on a binary logic: North-South, East-West, First World-Third World, development/underdevelopment, center-periphery. Based on these dichotomies, the idea of "development" was transformed into a universal, homogeneous value that was established as an object of desire for Latin American states considered "underdeveloped". The supposedly *pure* qualities attributed to childhood have had utilitarian characteristics during this war. The phrase "Children are America's future" has been the slogan of the American child protection movement since the beginning of the 20th century. This slogan has represented a promise to boost efforts and project the future as a perfect shape in the face of the stubborn "failures of the present". The hypothesis of this section is that the processes of building a "Latin American childhood" are based on a logic of reciprocity using the principles of binarity and homogenization to give life to developmentalist ideology.

In this sense, the articles included in this area will contribute to the analysis of the different forms taken by child protection projects at a regional level, the strategies that were put in place to articulate them, the practices and representations that sustained them, and the various discourses, opposing or not, that have established the pace of their development within a given space-time.

2. Children and the role of maternity hospitals in development projects

The various systems devised to protect children cannot be understood in isolation from the regulation of family relations, and specifically from the possibilities that the family group has to ensure the social and material reproduction of its youngest members. Latin American child protection projects have generally tended to endorse family projects, i.e., ensure the hegemony of the nuclear family, reserving the role of provider for men so that they are excluded from child-rearing tasks, leaving women as the primary carers of their children. For this reason, the targets for interventions aimed at guaranteeing specific patterns of care and upbringing have historically been the mothers, and more broadly, women. We understand that the tension in the childhood-family-State triad determines the scientific, intellectual and political debates in this field and establishes particular parameters regarding the idea of child welfare, but at the same time, this tension determines the responsibilities of women. These reflections emerge strongly in the light of the current increase in neoliberal policies and their effects on cuts in public spending for basic services, education, health, food and the dimensions that form the reproduction of life and significantly affect women.

On this basis, we propose three sub-areas for the submission of papers: first, the naturalization of the domestic and child-rearing role of women, taking into account the social and economic devaluation of these roles; second, the pedagogical and psychological practices included in the processes of building moral education for motherhood, taking into account the forms of social disqualification for those who raise children outside of the conventional parameters; third, the various trajectories of women in the labor market, which are generally determined by the roles assigned to them in daily life - activation and incentive policies, for example - and the reconciliation between private and working life in social policies.

3. Childhood in the neoliberal project

The priority that policies aimed at child development and social protection have achieved in recent years, in accordance with the social consequences of the measures implemented following the Washington Consensus, questions the design of neoliberal mechanisms to mobilize populations living in conditions of structural inequality. For example, the emergence of activation policies

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designed for families that place a significant priority on children's academic performance, as well as the configuration of biopsychosocial protection models that provide a normative dimension in relation to the role of the family and moral education by parents, both illustrate the need to analyze the market-focused logic that emerge behind protection policies and the legitimization of inequalities as the result of differential integration dynamics and natural competition.

Child protection policies are gradually being configured as a central component for the installation of social relationships based on the logic of generalized competition and consolidate neo-liberalization processes of Latin American societies. This area seeks to incorporate various analyses of the diachronic movements that emerge from the configuration of public and social policies aimed at addressing inequalities in childhood within a framework of the development strategies for neoliberal processes in Latin America.

Dates for this process

- Opening of the call for submissions: June 26, 2020.
- Submission of full articles through the magazine's OJS platform (<http://revistaumanizales.cinde.org.co/rllcsnj/index.php/Revista-Latinoamericana/login>): ends on November 16.
- Publication of the edition: April 30, 2021.

For this publication, the *publication guidelines* for the Latin American Journal of Social Sciences, Children and Youth should be followed and proposals for all its *sections* will be accepted. For more information, please click on the following link:

<http://revistaumanizales.cinde.org.co/index.php/conocen/guia-para-los-autores-y-autoras>

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