

THE DISCOURSE OF SILENCE: RACIAL PREJUDICE AND RACISM IN SECOND CHILDHOOD

Carlos Eduardo de Souza Pereira

Professor - Psychology Course – Centro
Universitário Estácio Juiz de Fora
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/9622402984987084>

Flávia da Gama Nascimento Rodrigues

Student - Psychology Course – Centro
Universitário Estácio Juiz de Fora

Monica Campos de Oliveira

Student - Psychology Course – Centro
Universitário Estácio Juiz de Fora

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Abstract: This article aims to analyze articles and books published on the theme of racism, discrimination and racial prejudice in preschoolers. The hypothesis is raised that since the earliest childhood this subject is already marked by this difference that has become a stigma, but little is said about it and, mainly, little is done about it, due to the existing silencing when it comes to racism. Considered the most striking phase of human life, it is during this period that we learn the pillars necessary to support us throughout life and that will directly reflect on our future experiences.

Keywords: Racism; second childhood; black children; preconception.

This work brings as a hypothesis the understanding that from early childhood the black person is already marked by a difference that has become a stigma. But little is said about it and, mainly, little is done about it, due to the existing silencing when it comes to racism.

Childhood is the most important phase of human life. It is there that we learn the pillars necessary to support us throughout life and that will directly reflect on our future experiences. Primary socialization, which is the first socialization of the individual, occurs at this stage, and this way the child will learn attitudes, opinions, values about the wider society and, more specifically, the space of insertion of their social group (CAVALLEIRO, 2014).

Both the school and the family are part of this process of socialization of the child, making them belong to this construction on the 'other' that the child is doing throughout its development. The second childhood, which will be treated in this work, begins at three years old and ends at six, presenting as main characteristics "the construction of self-concept and the understanding of emotions

in more complex ways, global self-esteem and altruism" (PAPALIA & MARTORELL, 2022).

Assuming that we can identify the bases of the theory of mind in children at this stage, that is, the ability to understand the mental states of oneself and others, how could we understand the development of prejudice and racial discrimination in children? at this stage of the life cycle? Is there childhood racism? How does racism impact the development of black children? Little is said about childhood racism and even less about the overwhelming response that those affected by such aggression receive: silence.

In the late 1930s, psychologist Kenneth Clark and his wife, Mamie Phipps Clark, investigated the psychological effects of segregation on black students, especially in relation to self-image. Using four dolls of different colors, with the colors varying between white and dark brown, they observed the attitudes of children aged between three and seven years, in relation to the racial question. "The children demonstrated an undeniable race awareness by correctly identifying the dolls by skin tone, and they also identified themselves by indicating the dolls that most resembled them." (CAVALLEIRO, 2014; p. 282).

But when asked which dolls they would like to play with, black children chose white dolls and rejected black ones. Faced with this result, Clark wondered: "Who teaches children to hate and fear someone of another race?" (CAVALLEIRO, 2014; p. 282). When trying to understand this issue, they came to the conclusion that the social context, represented mainly by the family, school, and the actors that make up these institutions, as well as friends, exert an important influence on this attitude. Thus, for Kenneth Clark, at the age of three, the child is aware of races and already begins to form prejudices. (CAVALLEIRO, 2014; p. 283).

According to Papalia and Martorell (2022), with regard to cognitive development, the child in second childhood has a somewhat egocentric thinking, but increases understanding of the point of view of others; due to cognitive immaturity presents some illogical ideas about the world; has its language and memory improved. And, with regard to psychosocial development, self-concept and understanding of emotions become more complex; altruism, aggression and fears are common; the family is still the focus of social life, but other children become more important; the self-concept becomes more complex, affecting self-esteem; colleagues are of fundamental importance.

This way, it can be seen how much the external environment influences children in this age group and how much these children are already able to perceive the self/other differences, being able to act according to the value they attribute to these differences. In order to try to answer the questions presented, it is necessary to understand how black people have been stigmatized and silenced over time. According to the online Michaelis dictionary, racism is the “doctrine that underlies the right of one race, seen as pure and superior, to dominate others”. This supposed “right” has been taken so seriously by some that it has crossed the walls of houses and made itself present within the school environment.

A child’s color has become a problem, a type of stigma (GOFFMAN, 1988) over which he has no control, and yet he feels guilty for being who he is. According to the same author: “The Greeks, who were very knowledgeable about visual aids, created the term stigma to refer to bodily signs with which they sought to evidence something extraordinary or bad about the moral status of those who presented them.” (GOFFMAN, 1988 p. 11).

But over time, we stopped using that term to refer to physical attributes, and started to

use it in “reference to a deeply derogatory attribute, but what is really needed is a language of relationships and not of attributes.” (GOFFMAN, 1988 p. 13). We construct a theory of stigma, an ideology to explain its inferiority (of the stigmatized individual) and to account for the danger it represents, sometimes rationalizing an animosity based on other differences, such as those of social class. p. 15). And, this way, the stigmatized individual absorbs this model of identity created by society, producing a conflict with who he really is. When this person is a child, we speak here of a life being built based on a self image that is being shaped from a stigma coming from the external environment, from their colleagues, teachers, family.

The beginning of this problem coincides with the history of our country and remains until today. According to Müller (2007): “From the 16th to the 19th century, school was not thought of or offered to black children. They must be future adult slaves, for whom theoretical, academic education was expendable.” (MÜLLER, 2007, p. 116). In other words, they were placed on the margins of society from the beginning, showing that this association of black skin color with a negative image began to be cultivated a long time ago.

Therefore, it can be seen that this guilt has been built and continues to be reinforced when the child, nowadays, questions the teacher about the aggression suffered and receives only silence as an answer. The same silence practiced in relation to slavery, pain and injustice suffered by black people has been extended to the present day, where, unfortunately, in a subtle and aggressive way, it has been causing lasting psychosocial effects in the lives of these children. Orlandi (2007) states that “there is a meaning in silence.” (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 12). Which raises the following question: what meaning is there in

this silence produced about the suffering of black children when they suffer the effects of racism by other children or by the adults who must protect and teach them?

Cavalleiro (2018) in his book entitled *From the silence of the home to the school* suggests a hypothesis on this issue: “The permanent silence of teachers regarding ethnic differences in the school space, added to that of black children, seems to give white students the right to of reproducing their behavior, as they are not criticized or denounced, being able to use this strategy as an asset in any conflict situation”. (CAVALLEIRO, 2018, p. 54). In other words, this silent discourse, which here can also be called silencing, has been used to perpetuate the racism that exists in our country, since the times of colonization and slavery. Silence cuts the saying (ORLANDI, 2007), precisely marking the message that one wants to convey: the black child must be silent or, we must not talk about it, in a vain attempt to make the problem disappear.

According to Munanga (2017), “Racism is a phenomenon present in several contemporary societies, latent in culture, institutions and in the daily life of relationships between human beings. However, there are people who do not see it or prefer not to see it” (MUANGA, 2017, p.33). Under the banner of racial democracy, what is in front of our eyes is ignored and even so, we try to hide, and this way this practice has gradually become naturalized, perpetuating and marking the lives of innocent children who ended up prisoners of guilt for carried the stigma of being black on their skin.

Also in the book that portrays the research carried out by Cavalleiro (2018), excerpts from interviews with the children of a preschool are presented. In one of the interviews, the 6-year-old child says that the other children only play with her when I bring a toy. Because I’m black. We were

playing Mom. The white Catarina said: ‘I will not be her aunt (of the child who is narrating.)’. Camila, who is white, is not disgusted with me.

- And the other children are disgusted with you?

- Yes, they are disgusted. (p. 45).

Explaining how the child, in this age group, already perceives the differences, already knows that they are treated differently and manages to attribute a value to this treatment, understanding that discrimination involves the racial issue. Cavalleiro (2018) points out that “for the black child, this silence about prejudice can lead them to understand their group as something inferior, an idea that automatically conforms to white superiority.” (p. 86).

According to Silva, Almudi and Reginaldo (2008) four-year-old children already bring many experiences from their families. In fact, they already bring the prejudices that the family has. Sometimes a young child is already experiencing an internal conflict, struggling with prejudice.” Through this report, it is possible to imagine how much the black child needs to learn from a very early age to manage their feelings in order to deal with the enemy called racism. The child begins to absorb all the attacks received, which can generate deep discontent and possible revolt. The effects of racism will never be positive and can present themselves as the feelings of inferiority, discontent, low self-esteem, anxiety and an attempt to annul their racial belonging traits.

In a complementary way, Silva (2016) found that the theme of racism and childhood has been addressed by psychology publications in indexed scientific journals, as well as on websites of organizations that work in the fight against racism, however, it does not specifically deal with second childhood, giving greater emphasis to the third childhood.

Also, in this sense, Noguera and Alves (2019) investigated how children build children's theses of overcoming racism, so that the added value of life is an affirmation of childhood as a way of putting desire beyond lack and traps. of the merchandise. This article deals with racism and childhood, bringing some reports of children located in third childhood.

Nunes (2016) analyzed works previously produced on black children in Brazil, to enable the organization of other ways of looking at these children than just those anchored in exclusion, so that they are swallowed up by the racism installed not only in our social organization, but also in the model of doing science. Duarte and Roazzi (2013) reflect on the appropriation of racism among children, relating the constructs of the canonical, examined by Bruner, and the hegemonic in Gramsci, concluding with the

work that there would be the beginning of an internalization of hegemonic racism, even prior to the linguistic expression by the child, suggesting reflections on overcoming racial prejudice in childhood. This article, although not specifically aimed at second childhood, goes through it in its analysis.

Through the related works, it is possible to observe that there are still few works that propose to analyze and reflect on racism in second childhood, as well as it can be seen that actions aimed at solving this issue, or at least reducing it, are still timid. there. However, the few studies found already show that from that moment in life, racist attitudes of non-black children against black children exist and cause damage to the self-esteem, confidence, self-image and health in general of black children, as well as it is possible to perceive the attitudes response of black children as an effect of what the environment causes them.

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