

A Common Critical Research Agenda on Children in the Majority and Minority Worlds. The case of children in migration processes. *DISCUSSION SESSION*

In preparing this monographic issue of *Sociedad e Infancias*, the journal's editorial board convened an online discussion session on March 29, 2023. The people invited were:

- Rachel Rosen** (Associate Professor of Childhood. UCL Social Research Institute. London. UK)
Valentina Glockner (Anthropologist. Department of Educational Research – CINVESTAV. Mexico)
Maria Leticia Nascimento (Associate Professor. Department of Teaching Methodology and Comparative Education. Faculty of Education of the University of São Paulo. Brazil)
Gabriela Trevisan (ProChild CoLAB. Guimarães. Portugal)
Iskra Pavez (Independent Researcher. Chile)
Juan Eduardo Ortíz (Researcher. Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, University of the Americas)

Rachel Rosen and Valentina Glockner are co-editors of the book *Crisis for Whom? International critical perspectives on childhood, care, and migration*, recently published in English and Spanish (see review in this volume). Maria Leticia Nascimento directs a research group in the Sociology of Childhood and Early Childhood Education. Gabriela Trevisan is co-author of *Beyond the Modern "Norm" of Childhood*¹, among other articles on the critical sociology of childhood. Iskra Pavez has a long history of studying child migrations from a gender perspective. All three are members of the editorial board of the journal. **Lourdes Gaitán**, co-director of *Sociedad e Infancias*, led the debate.

As a guideline, the following discussion topics were raised:

- Children as actors in migration processes.
 - Are they people with their own migration projects?
 - Even when they are part of a family migration project?
- Influence of the Eurocentric vision of children in the policies and normative dispositions of the states.
- Migrant children, challenges in the host society: accommodation, school, emancipation, and transition to adult life.
- How to apply a critical sociology of childhood to studying children's migrations.

The session lasted one hour and thirty minutes and was recorded and transcribed. So next, we give way to its content.

Lourdes Gaitán (L.G.): Welcome everyone. It is a pleasure for me to be with you today, I am very happy. I am sure that we are doing a difficult but important task, which is to build bridges between us, people who speak and write in Spanish or Portuguese, whether on one side of the Atlantic Ocean or the other, and European people who express themselves in English, both doing research on childhood. One of the objectives of our journal is to bring us closer and facilitate the exchange between us, and so your cooperation is very important for this purpose. Thank you so much.

This will be an open conversation. You can raise your hand to intervene whenever you want, as usual, and thus establish a dialogue between us.

I invite you to address the first issue, which is **Children as actors in migration processes. Are they people with their own migration project? Even when they are part of a family migration project?** This is a central question for me. Are they actors, by themselves, in the migration processes? What do you think?

Iskra Pavez (I.P.): Migrant children participate in the migration project of their family when they travel in the company of their mother, father, siblings, and, in general, the family group. However, in the case of unaccompanied or autonomous migration, the migration project will sometimes be more personal, but it always has a family support orientation. For example, it is usual for young migrants to send remittances to their families in their country of origin.

¹ Sarmiento, M., Marchi, R. y Trevisan, G. (2018): "Beyond the Modern Norm of Childhood", en C. Baraldi y T. Cockburn, eds., *Theorizing Childhood. Citizenship, rights and participation*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 135-157.

Valentina Glockner (V.G.): I agree with what Iskra has just said; but I would like to politicize a bit this idea of children's own migration project. I believe that children build their own projects; they will build their own hopes and dreams and needs around migration. But I think it's very important to problematize how autonomy or self-migration projects are built. In my experience doing field work I've learnt that often autonomous migration projects are surrounded by very violent processes. It is very important to recognize agency and autonomy, but also to see when they are "pushed" and "forced" by serious conditions of violence, precariousness, and injustice. We have to ask ourselves, are those truly self-built projects? Having to migrate to reunite with family or because your family was crossed and separated by the border is also forced migration. Here it is important to think about agency and autonomy in an interrelational and situated way. And many, many times if not to say like always, those migration, or autonomous or independent migration projects stem from violence in the sense that children are always trying to find in the hosting society the peace, or the lack of violence or the family they have lost, or to build opportunities that they never had or they lost in their home country. Therefore, it is as important to talk about the right to migrate as to speak of the right to stay as if children have the right guaranteed in their home place, many of them would not choose to migrate. Therefore, it is very important to recognize this autonomy and these independent or child driven migration projects, as well as it is very important to recognize the structural dimensions and violence is driving their migration projects.

Gabriela Trevisan (G.T.): I do agree on both ends with what has been said. However, it would also be useful to bring up other questions besides those that complement each other. We should also draw on theory to think about these issues. One is when we talk about children's autonomy. I always go back to this idea of how active a part is given to children, given their circumstances and migration, which is more complex than other issues. So, in many cases, we know that their voices or desires, or whatever issues they would have, are interdependent with many others. I like this idea of interdependence with adults because it does not always show an equal relationship between adults and children. It shows issues of power. I would imagine that speaking on some very unsettling situations that some of these families have to go through and some tough choices, their main concern could not be to have these ideas on actively listening to children's own projects but to look at it as a collective project, but this is just like thinking out loud about this.

Another idea, I think, is that when we look at the critical theories that were also mentioned in the call that Lourdes sent us, notions of citizenship and rights are very critically approached, one of them being this idea that also speaks to the book from Rachel and Valentina, which I just had the opportunity to start reading. However, it would call for what, for instance, Sarmento calls the differential normativity thinking, which means that we would need to move away from all the usual thinking we would have on migration processes and try to look at it not just from children's perspectives as actors, but also looking at how they would rebuild their citizenship. Alongside these processes, if we looked at these critical theories, we would always consider them as actors to some extent in their involved processes, even if it were a more collective approach.

Maria Leticia Nascimento (L.N.): I also agree with Gabriela. I think it is very important to understand the dreams and the migratory project of children. However, I wonder if young children can do that because they come to Brazil, for example, with their families and at any moment they do not know what is happening, except that it is so different, it is a different language, a different way; the cultural habits are so different. I do not know, but I think they do not have space to build a collective idea about migration. It is just a question for us to discuss: if seven, eight, nine-year-old children might be able to do this in an easier way, I do not know. How can we think about children participation? I work with this subject. How to think about the participation of young children in this migration project? That is my question.

Rachel Rosen (R.R.): I think it is an interesting question and one that has preoccupied childhood studies scholars. More broadly, this question around autonomy or children's agency has been a focus of much of the childhood studies literature since the field developed in the 80s. One of the things that we explored in the *Reimagining Childhood Studies*² book, and in the introduction to that volume, is that with this intense focus on finding the agentic child we lose the sense that everyone is embedded in relational networks and we start individualizing questions – for example, is this or that child agentic? Therefore, with Gabriella, I wonder if there are also other questions to think with and about.

I do think it is important to keep in mind the protagonism of children and to pay attention to questions around power relations within families or communities. But I'm also really driven to think about migration projects within the context of historical and contemporary state violence. A lot of my research focuses on Canada and the UK, and they are both are deeply (neo) colonial. This shapes migration trajectories, dreams and desires. It forces particular kinds of dislocations while forcing others to remain in place. I think whenever we are asking these sorts of questions about children as actors, we need to always ask another set of questions around the entanglements with these historical and contemporary regimes of violence.

L.G.: I realize that the situation, the context, is very different in your realities, the realities that you are studying, and the realities that we have here in Spain, which is very similar to the situation in South Italy. For example, in

² Spyrou, S., Rosen, R. Cook, D.T. (2018): *Reimagining Childhood Studies*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Spain, we have children from Morocco. Morocco is 15 km away from the Spanish Coast in Andalusia. The place allows you to see the other side; you can see Africa. And children from Africa and Morocco can see us as well. They watch our television channels and begin planning their Projects of migration. They are children from twelve, even ten years old, who go alone from home to the cities close to Spain, and they hide in the bottom of the trucks, which travel by ships to Spain. When arriving in Spain, children know they may claim to be minors because they know we must protect them. So claiming to be “a minor” is also some erasing. Besides, we have migration projects that bond to their families, as you have said before. Nevertheless, we have this kind of migrant children in Spain who are actors, but not actors because we state from the sociology of childhood that all children are actors. Therefore, they may have a family migration project, but this migration family project includes that the child is the one who goes to Spain.

Juan Eduardo Ortiz (J.O.): I wonder if I am interpreting well, Lourdes. Are you referring to the children arriving in Spain who can eventually solicit family reunification when they are already in the territory?

L.G.: No. I am visualizing two situations. One situation is children who migrate alone with their own projects shared with the family. The family agrees that the child must go to Spain and then from Spain to the rest of Europe for a better life. But they come alone. In addition, another kind of immigrant children are children from, by the way, Ecuador. Many women from Ecuador came to Spain in the early 2000s and then these women claimed the children with them. And this is another kind of migration. So therefore, for me, in the case of Morocco or Saharan children, they are actors as such because they initiate the process of migration.

J.O.: And it is certainly different – the role of the children that come to reunify with their family. I also wanted to say something about ethics because one of the issues we discussed with Iskra last year because of our project was ethical issues, I would say. In light of the same questions you brought to us today, Lourdes, I wonder to what extent autonomy plays a role when a child travels alone, decides on their own migratory project, and finally comes alone to the country. We have been treating them as if they were a matter of protection without considering that autonomy. Why? In what sense? It is because our jurisdiction, our legal framework, establishes that we have to protect them according to the principle of autonomous or progressive autonomy. However, we know these children have already been through different processes of violence their way, especially in Chile. They come from Venezuela through Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia to get to Chile, walking through an extreme desert and its *bofedales*, a sort of swamp and autochthonous vegetation that grows in the desert. And people get stuck there when they are trying to cross the border. And that’s the scenario that the children also face and confront daily.

Now, the issue that arose in our conversations was to what extent, if we consider that children are actors in the migratory processes, they are also autonomous and independent, even though they are under the legal age. In other words, how can we distinguish autonomy in such a fuzzy limit? In a quicksand. How can we finally decide about our research mainly based on social processes? So what do we do regarding autonomy in the ethical considerations of our research? It was a challenging year because we had to consult different lawyers and our own international legal frameworks. So it was a very tough task to determine to what extent autonomy also plays a role in this decision. We are still trying to imagine how, in terms of epistemology, theory, and research, we are going to solve this problem because it is a tension that we cannot answer so quickly.

G.T. Just to add a little bit to this idea. I agree, I think we need to look at the progressive ways into which children build their own autonomies or competencies or capacities or whatever things we are talking about when we are talking about children as actors. But also, I find it very interesting that in recent years this whole change on the idea of children’s agency, for instance, which is a big part of the claim of children as competent social actors has also stressed out, not just the competencies, but the vulnerability context. There is very interesting work done by British researchers in African countries that bring together this idea of being competent but also vulnerable at the same time when becoming a social actor. So that seems like an interesting perspective for me.

I could share some papers with the group from some of these people that have been working in this perspective; especially with childism. One of my colleagues that has been working on this. So, I find this perspective really interesting. And the other thing is that coming towards Rachel said, of course, this matters quite when you are looking at the structures or social structures where things happen. But this I think would be a very helpful way, also of looking into what Juan was saying. When it comes to this idea of understanding the social and historical processes on talking on different parts of the world, we are not speaking of the same thing when we talk about, for instance, Europe. At least in Portugal, one of the most recent phenomena we have had was with Ukrainian children, fleeing from the war, of course with their families. A few unaccompanied minors, but most of them would be here with women, of course, because men were not allowed to leave. But looking at these social and historical processes is actually one of the big claims from this whole new critical paradigm in child studies. It is not just Manuel Sarmento, but Rita Marchi and other authors, in different parts of the world talking about this idea of having a very specific conscience on what processes are these that happen in different parts of the globe. And how they are differently affected by these kinds of inequalities that don’t really show themselves in the same way to different groups of children. So, this idea of deconstructing it does not really answer the question that Juan said, which would be how would we take this into also the studies we do. Nevertheless, it would at least help, I think, to look at it into a more critical and political way or a more engaged way on pointing out these different biographies and processes, because as you

have all been saying, we can look at some maybe major equal things that present themselves to migrant children and their families. Then if we look at the context, we might see different realities shaping up differently. So I think that would be kind of the big challenge to look at both of these things at the same time.

I.P.: I think the sociology of childhood approach provides a friendly look. Usually, the theory is not friendly to children and adolescents – for example, psychology. Or the proper perspective is not employed. And I think now about the need of complementary approaches such as feminism, critical theory and cultural and rights-oriented methodologies. The studies carried out from those perspectives provide the specificities of the world of children and bring us closer to the child's life experience as a protagonist. I think when the migrant children migrate with their families versus when they migrate alone, there is a difference because, on the route, many children unite to the migrant caravans; that is, they meet more people in this situation. Also, children have problems with the Coyotes, experiencing, for example, violence. But there is not much more critical difference regarding protagonism when the children travel alone versus with family because when children travel with their family, they participate in the migration decision, for example, the decision to study in the school. They have a more responsibility with their family project. That is the central point about children as protagonists in migration processes: their responsibility in the protagonist experience from my vision.

R.R.: Can I just come in here and say a little something about how categories function. So, who is the migrant child that we are talking about? Are we talking about cosmopolitan children who travel the globe with their billionaire parents? I don't think we are, but couldn't they be understood as migrants as well? Nicholas de Genova³, the anthropologist, makes the point that if there weren't border regimes, there wouldn't be migrants only mobility. His point is that thinking about certain mobile people as 'migrants' is a social production, a production of the nation state, border regimes and so on. Moreover, one of the things I think we might want to be careful about in our discussions that we do not just view one group of mobile people as migrants. Because, and I am thinking here about Chile, Brazil, Canada... Through colonialism, there was a lot of mobility. But European colonization, European colonizers, they are not usually called migrants. Right? This matters because of the pejorative way that the term 'migrant' gets used. So, when we're talking about migrant children and migrant children's projects, I think we want to keep in mind who we're excluding who we're including, and then what that does in relation to class and racism and so forth.

L.G.: Then the question would be how to consider different groups with different problems and different solutions for them. Moreover, different ways to approach the knowledge of these groups, I think. We are almost reaching a conclusion on this point and we can go over the next one. Nevertheless, perhaps Leticia wanted to say something before.

L.N.: Yeah. I think here in Brazil we have a few research about migrant children. For us migration is something we know for a long time. We have Italians, and Spanish and Portuguese people and Korean and Japanese and Chinese, migrants of various countries, but we have no studies about children, because they came with their families. And it is really recent meeting migrant children and seeing them as migrants, not the families, but the children. And some of them are coming here alone, from Venezuela, for example, maybe because the border is so close to Brazil, and they enter by the border. However, how can we study children who came from Afghanistan, or Syria? Would they enter by themselves? It is so distant for children to come alone. I am remembering that Lourdes said: You can see Spain from Morocco, you can see the land, you can see. Here no, there are many kilometers by sea, because children from these countries come here by sea. Anyway, it is very new for us to study migrant or refugee children coming alone to Brazil... Talking to Rachel, for us, it is so important to discuss about decolonization because we were colonized.. We have for instance a recent book that is about children on the move, "Childhood migration and refuge". The launch was from 2022, last year. We have really few studies about refugee and migrant children and their participation is a challenge.

J.O.: Just to feed our discussion I wanted to add something to what Maria Leticia was saying about Latin America and our forms of colonialism. I think it is even much more difficult to understand here because our forms of colonialism come from Europe on the firsthand. And sometimes our own migratory legislation, at least in Chile, privileged different sorts of migratory groups, such as Europeans, during the 19th century. Therefore, we have a long history of migration and colonialism that has been hidden, but also, at the same time, we have this so called "chilean" culture that also, colonizes those groups of people which have already been colonized.

So I think that the matrix of domination and the matrix of colonialism is much more difficult to unveil in Latin American countries because it is difficult to determine which actors have more predominance over the legal frameworks, over the treatment, over the everyday lives, etc. Because we have, just thinking about Chile, in terms of racism, for example, and of course, in terms of the migratory groups, our legislation has been blamed for being whitening, even though we are not white. There are still, I think, more historical roots to how people finally conceived the legislation, even though we have had some changes in the legislation since the 19th century. But histori-

³ N. De Genova. 'We are of the connections': migration, methodological nationalism, and 'militant research'. *Postcolonial Studies* 2013 Vol. 16 Issue 3 Pages 250-258. <https://doi/10.1080/13688790.2013.850043>

cally rooted are some of the prejudices we still have. So I think that trying to unveil the colonialism present in Latin American societies is quite difficult. I think it's not so easy to determine.

L.G.: Okay. I think we can move to the second topic. Perhaps starting from the words you said before. I took note about a good point that you consider in your book, the question of the culture, the cultural origin of the children who come from a foreign country. For example, African children are autonomous, more autonomous and more emancipated at twelve years of age than children of the same age in Spain (I only want to talk about two cases that I know more closely about).

The question of the differences of the culture and the differences of the consideration of the children and of the childhood place in the society is important for the second question that I want to address now that is the influence of the Eurocentric vision of children in the policies and normative dispositions of the States. In Spain, the image of the child as a dependent person who must be with their family leads to decisions like “we have to return the children to Africa, to Morocco, because the best place for the children is their family”. But perhaps you are not considering that these children, or this child, is autonomous long time ago and independent of their family. Well, by this way, **how do you consider that the Eurocentric vision of children influence the politics of each state?**

I.P.: I think the Convention on the Rights of the Child has a vision of childhood that could be classified as Eurocentric. And this is the model that provides the policies for the protection of migrant children in Chile and other countries in Latin America. Sometimes, this model does not fit with the reality of migrant children which is much more diverse, for example, the family, the age, when the children arrive in Chile. They do not have clear education trajectories because many of them work for money temporarily, for instance.

R.R.: I have been doing some co-research, participatory research, with a group of young people with migration experiences, mostly unaccompanied young people. And we were chatting about one day, and they started laughing and laughing about how different childhood in England is to the countries they come from. So, these are young people from sub-Saharan Africa and from the Middle East, they just find it hilarious. It is a completely different idea of childhood to the experiences that they have had and expectations about who a child is, what a child can do, and so on. We've talked and laughed about this. But it's also not funny at all because of the effects that these ideas of childhood have in the British migration and care regimes.

Young people are being age contested, which is quite an invasive process of questioning whether somebody who claims to be a child 'is' a child, it is often done with suspicion and Eurocentric ideas of childhood. So young people are, for example, told, “Well, you can't be a child because you know how to cook” or “You made your bed. Children don't make their own bed” or “You wear black, so therefore, you're not a child because children wear colorful clothing”. And all of these assumptions about who children are in terms of their attitudes and behaviors, and even what a child's body looks like, are problematic. Not just because there is a difference like: “Oh, you think about childhood like this, I think about childhood like that.” But if somebody is denied the status of childhood, it means they lose their entitlements and their rights as a child to care, support, accommodation, education. And often they end up in conditions where they might be detained and then deported. So, it has serious and significant consequences. And it is also experienced by many of the young people that we have talked to as a form of existential theft. One young person said: “First they took my country, and now they're taking my age. They're taking part of me from me”. So, I think there's a real violence that lies behind what we jokingly laughed about – these differences in childhood. It ends up being used in punitive ways.

G.T.: I agree with Rachel. I do not do directly research with these kinds of groups, but when it comes to the cultural influences, I absolutely agree, but I would also like to go back to the idea of this Eurocentric perspective because it is very interesting. We can also find it inside European countries and cultures, very clear differences when it comes to the values of raising children on what children are supposed to do or not, even though I would find it, of course, more homogeneous than you would in different parts of the world. But when I was reading the introduction of the book *Crisis for whom* I pointed out three ideas on this discussion that I think goes to also what Rachel was saying.

One would be this classic normative, we called it normativity. It is the idea that we tend to build a general concept of what childhood should be. And deconstructing those ideas is very important, not just to what Rachel was saying, but also to childhood in general, not just as to migrant children, which, by the way, you also say there's a need to reconceptualize this category, which I think is also a very interesting challenge.

And the other one that I really, really liked was the challenge to create a counter narrative. But I do think this counter narrative you talked about the US authors. On the narrative especially on mobility. But we could talk maybe on accounts narrative on childhood if we want to be very ambitious. But I also think this really relates well to this idea that was first worked with Manuel Sarmiento and Rita Marchi, *Children in the Margins* and also on how the ones that go in the margins end up a lot of times being classified as the *non-child*. Because in a sense, they are not doing whatever things we believe children are supposed to be doing, like going to school, not working, not having, not being care givers of smaller children or even adults, etc., etc. And the very different examples that come to be because Rita Marchi is Brazilian. So, she also has a very deep understanding on colonial issues, etc., goes not just to this idea of migration, but on children living in poverty: indigenous children, on Roma children, on street children, which is a very complex category. But there's always this idea that in the end when we talk from a European centered perspective, we look at all these realities as realities that don't really fit.

Therefore, this idea of deconstructing these normative ideas for me still seems like a very central issue. Now thinking about this in migration, it makes a lot of sense because if we are tempted to look at these processes with our own unique lenses then we would end up just not really understanding how these processes happen, but also on the implications that these normative conceptions have. Because it is not just on legal aspects, like Juan was talking about it earlier. It is not just on how laws are built, but also on how general perceptions on children's institutions, on schools, on whatever things we do thinking about how children are affected in the end.

If we start with Europe, let us say which is also diverse. We also tend to talk about Europe centered, but if you look at Europe, we have so many different realities that I also think we need to rethink the concept of being Europe centered. At least to a certain extent when it comes to childhood and to childcare. But yeah, in the end I did make these points from the introduction of your book because it did seem that these three folded ideas really married well with this one of children in the margins.

V.G.: I actually want to jump on Gabriella's last idea. I am not sure that speaking about Eurocentric idea does justice to the current contemporary phenomenon. I am not sure we should still use that idea anymore or just rely so much on it. It has become so much more than that. Or maybe it is me thinking about something very specific, maybe very essentialistic when we say "European". I always associate it with positivistic modern ideas of childhood, and maybe I am thinking in a very orthodox way about it. But what I want to say is that we should expand that concept to include other concepts that define the contemporary world. We have to problematize and expand this Eurocentric critique with the new neoliberal phenomenon, with the contemporary nation state driven ways to think about childhood and to enforce contemporary governmentality upon children, especially if we are talking about migrant children. And here it is very relevant on what Rachel has said about dispossessing children from their own subjectivity their own lives, their own definitions on what it is to be a child or what childhood means.

This Eurocentric vision is so much complex, or has to be complexed a by late capitalism, like the violence and change of subjectification in late capitalism, in contemporary nation state, within extractivism, militarization, and of course border policies, etcetera. But it must also be made more complex in terms of the multiple resistances that occur on the margins of the state and capital and in peripheral places. I'm not sure that talking about the term "Eurocentric" makes much sense today. We are facing something much more complex than that reductionism. We are facing imperialism in so many new ways. It's much. It is no longer a question of imperialism and hegemony of a single center of power, but of a rhizomatic structure of domination, control and production of structural inequality, subjection and death. Migrant children are most of the time subjected to these structures, just like their historical communities. Their migration is produced by these structures, but also by migrating they try to challenge them.

I was listening to Rachel and exactly the same thing happened with *mixteco* children, indigenous children in Mexico laughing and expressing so much compassion and tenderness. And shame, they feel the shame by normal, urban, urban *mestizo* ways of childhood, and they were pitying mestizo children because they were not free, they were not able to walk to the school alone, they were not able to work in the fields, to harvest corn, to make tortillas, to play in the river, because they were so cared for. Nevertheless, at the same time they were being forced to assume responsibilities that define indigenous childhood that are also produced and the straightforward result of structural inequalities and dispossession, marginalization, exploitation, and neo colonialism.

It is precisely that neo colonialism what pushes them to migrate to the industrialized agricultural fields and having to work from 05:00 a.m. to 05:00 p.m. and then try to go to school. So when these children are perceived as agents and autonomous children, we have to take into account that this is the result of an indigenous culture and community who has had to survive in neocolonial and neoliberal subjection and exploitation. Which has had to teach their children how to survive through economic solidarity and responsibility. This is were I say that this idea of Eurocentrism falls quite short. The world has become a place much more complex, more violent. This concept doesn't even do justice to contemporary mechanisms of exploitation and domination.

L.G.: Nice, thanks Valentina, perhaps Leticia would like to add something before moving on to the next topic.

L.N.: I agree with Valentina, I understand everything she said because, regardless of the historical moment in which they arrived, in Brazil, we have different groups of children, living in very unequal situations. As Gabriela said, we have Marchi's investigation, about the "no child". Black children are seen as marginal, considered as dangerous, and they are the most murdered children. Imagine. I mean it is not a sociological imagination, but it is a prejudice. We have middle class children, we have now Venezuelan children, and we have Indigenous children. Most of children are minorized as you put here, even if they are not migrant children, but every child that do not have the competences of middle class or high-class children are minorized. I think Valentina is right, in Brazil it is not a European but is a capitalist idea. And it's a racial idea, a gendered idea because boys and girls are seen in different ways. It is so complex I think when you write in the book: *Crisis, Care and Childhood mobility*, for me it is a new vision on mobility and immobility children. I think it is a way to understand better this kind of childhood, or different kinds of childhood we have, mainly in our countries here in Latin America. I do not know what Iskra and Juan think about, but I think this is a way to understand this complex situation.

I.P.: Right, talking about the difference between children even within the group of an unaccompanied adolescents, in our research with Juan, we have encountered different realities within the group of unaccompanied youth itself. For example, Venezuelan youth walk to the Northern border of Chile in a situation of hard poverty. On the other

hand, Haitian children combine their routes by plane and walking. Many were born here, then afterwards, they migrate to the United States, and some of them return to Chile under the circular migration. In addition, the girls, women, are victims of traffic for sexual exploitation. This situation occurs in the same group and in different categories. These are preliminary results of our project.

The migratory profiles are difficult to determine within this same big group of children. For instance, some of them are very poor like Haitian children. Also, they are colored and speak another language: creole. The girls, women in general, are victims from trafficking. It is interesting because in the same group of unaccompanied adolescents there are many different situations. For example, some children migrate for gender reasons. Talking about the different class, the Venezuelan people, the young people are very poor and their mother is migrating around the world. Many have walked kilometers to cross the border. The coyotes from guerrillas as well in Colombia are a menace for women.

J.O.: And women and the language as well, because at least the Venezuelan children are stratified by the Chilean community in a different, more prestigious, let us say, level, because they speak the language. However, when you do not speak the language, you definitely go below the social ladder, we could say. And in case you have a different phenotype as well. So that is why I was thinking about everything you were saying here and I agree with what Valentina said about what happens in Mexico. I think we coincide a little bit with those ideas of violence, especially with women. And as in Mexico, especially girls, but I think that we can solve some theoretical issues if we interpret the phenomena through intersectionality, it could be a good starting point in terms of the theoretical analysis that we can do. Because in that way we can see how those matrixes of domination in terms of power, colonialization, etc., can operate in different groups, in Latin America especially, and how they can be more discriminated, more excluded, more in the margins, as we were discussing.

For example, in our case, we have lost a number of unaccompanied children that came to the country who were judicialized, they were under the trials too, that actually protect them but they escaped from the residences. So now, with Iskra, we are looking for those children. So of course, there must be a new treatment or maybe at least the legislation should be a little bit more intersectional in that way, opening to different childhoods as well. And not only the control, which is also limited. Because this idea of controlling and controlling mechanisms don't finally control, because those children finally escape from those residences. So this illusion of control is dissolved in reality.

L.G.: We can go now to the next question that I proposed: How the migrant children challenges the host society. I have observed in the articles that we have received for our next volume of *Sociedad e Infancias* that the articles focusing the situation in Spain or in Italy, are talking about how the children who arrived in the country unaccompanied are going to leave the protecting services and go out to the society and how they do it. Meanwhile, in Chile, we received some articles from Chile; the question focus on the school, that is to say, how to integrate the migrant children in the school. I think that in Spain this seemed to be the problem ten years ago. Now our challenge is to prepare those unaccompanied children to an autonomous and self-sufficient way of life upon reaching the majority of age. This is the sense of my question: **How the migrant children challenges the host society, with reference to accommodation, school, emancipation, and transition to adult life.**

I.P.: Migrant children have a significant experience in school insertion. Schools are not always prepared to receive children coming from countries with different educational systems; in the same Latin American countries have different systems. Sometimes the migration process itself delays schooling and children skip grade or are placed below the corresponding grade. That is, older children are incorporated in lower grades. That is a negative experience for children, it's not comfortable.

Emancipation is a complex issue in the case of unaccompanied adolescent migrants, for those who come with their own migration project and for those whose projects are linked to the family and want to work and earn money. But sometimes the country does not respect or do not understand this reality. And the children run away from their residence, as Juan was talking about, being excluded from the protection system. Many of them experience rights' violation, etcetera.

G.T.: Could I just maybe add something even though I do not directly work with those groups as I said? Well, first of the issue, that you were talking about trafficking, for instance, that was a big discussion in Europe over the past year when the war started and people were kind of feeling I need to do something. So, you had people, it happened in Portugal, but I believe in a lot of countries in Europe, so people just picking up vans and cars and going to border countries to pick up families and children to take them out of a worst scenario. But actually, then you had a lot of international institutions saying, "Please don't, because we really don't have enough people to screen all the processes and we know that some children could be kidnapped, they could be separated from their families, trafficking, etc., especially girls", as you mentioned. But of course, in a different setting than the one you were describing.

In Portugal, we do not have a large number of unaccompanied minors. For instance, we would have, like in 2021, 197 processes so an accumulated total of 197 children that is a very small number. I would say they would mostly arrive here with their families and, from what I know usually the main concerns are that for adults, to find them a job. The other priority is to have children and adults learn the language because it is still seen as a big factor of integration. Then I would say the priorities would go to finding accommodation and having people settled, children in school and adults in the work market and of course, providing health care, so these basic things.

What we know from school realities, when a lot of schools receive children from different countries, not just Ukraine, is that there is a big difficulty into integrating these children, whether it is for cultural reasons, depending on the countries they are arriving from or even if they are Portuguese speaking children, like coming from Brazil. As you are aware, it is the same language, so we do understand each other sometimes with different words, but we do understand each other. Nevertheless, you can see sometimes teachers like speaking to Brazilian students, asking them to have their accent a little bit more Portuguese.

With children who do not speak Portuguese the challenges are even bigger because also teachers are widely not prepared to deal with children that would speak different languages and how to introduce Portuguese as a new language. So, I think they mostly depend a lot, and this is very interesting, on the other children. In our case from Portuguese children to start engaging with other children through play in the playground and they will start these relationships much closer with their peers than they would a lot of times with their teachers who also don't really have enough training neither time to learn how to do these processes in a correct way perhaps.

L.G.: Well. Perhaps Rachel can say us something about the new regulations for foreign people in United Kingdom. Is that menacing the possibilities to migrate to the United Kingdom? In addition, what will be the consequences for children?

R.R.: I can say something about the new legislation, but I wanted to come in Iskra's point as to start. One of the things that we are seeing in the UK is around language. Unaccompanied young people, or migrant children more generally, often don't speak English as a primary or mother tongue. But there is a slippage that happens among professionals: the slippage is an assumption of a general lack of knowledge, simply because somebody does not speak English. So English serves as a proxy for intelligence, capability, and so on. And so, and we get a discourse from so-called caring professionals that these children 'don't know' simply because they may not speak a lot of English. But this is an erasure of these young people's entire body of knowledge!

There is something else that happens in the UK around how the UK handles the contradictions of a Liberal democracy. This will change with the new Bill, so I'll come on to that. But for now, the contradictions are between a commitment to universality of rights and equality, and a commitment to Children's rights specifically. At the same time, as we were talking about before, there is an intense and deeply embedded idea of controlling and managing migration. There is an idea that there is a crisis caused by supposedly out of control migration, and it must be controlled through securitizing and fortifying borders – that kind of a discourse. There is a contradiction there: what happens to child migrants? On the one hand, there is this duty to protect because of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. On the other hand, there is the idea that 'we' have to fortify the border against these 'infiltrators', or whatever dehumanizing language is used. In navigating this contradiction, one of the things we are seeing in our research is that the state fulfills its obligations to unaccompanied children, but quite often to the bare minimum only. For example, unaccompanied children tend to be disproportionately placed in a particular kind of accommodation that is an unregulated, privatized, and for-profit accommodation. These accommodation may be in quite dire conditions. In contrast, 'local children' are more likely to be placed in foster care or children's homes, which have some form of state regulation. My point is that the state fulfills their rights duties, but to the bare minimum only and this is encroached on, or further pressured, by the border regime.

The new 'Illegal Migration Act' will make this much worse. It will make it impossible to claim asylum in the UK if you have not come through a government sanctioned route and there are no government-sanctioned routes. So they are effectively denying the right to claim asylum. This is a real threat to international conventions on refugees and the right to asylum. The state is also refusing to say that they will not put children in immigration detention and deport them.

L.N.: It is very important to listen to Raquel to think about our countries and the language and the position that the State occupies in this matter. Here in Brazil, Sao Paulo is a migrant city because we have neighborhoods of Koreans and Italians and Jews and now people from Africa. However, until last year we did not have teachers' training to work with migrant children. It is so impressive, because in Sao Paulo we have migration studies made by a State University (UNICAMP) by a study group that publish a lot. They say that Sao Paulo is a city where everyone comes to live.

Despite so many migrants and refugees arriving every day, and some research on migrant children, only last year the municipality published a manual for teachers to receive and welcome these children. Therefore, we need more research on migrant children, particularly in early childhood education institutions. We can find elements of the migratory policies planned for children, but we do not have procedures or social projects to work with these children. It is complicated because, except for the children who came from another Portuguese-speaking country, our teachers cannot speak French or Spanish, or English because here in Brazil, we speak Portuguese, our official language.

If you come here and ask anything in another language but Portuguese, most people will look at you and say: "I don't understand", in Portuguese. This is a problem when we have so many foreign people, so many immigrant people. I just want to say this how are our people are not prepared from immigration and to receive immigrant children yet.

L.G.: Great. Thank you very much to all. We only have a last question, but I think we have talked about it before because the question was how to apply a critical sociology childhood to the study of children in migration. I think

that this has been dealt with throughout our conversation. Therefore, if you want, each one of us take the floor to summarize and thus we will finish our meeting for today. Valentina, please, do you want to intervene in the first place? Just for summarizing.

V.G.: Well it is very hard to summarize such an amazing conversation. I would only want to remind ourselves about what is happening right now in Mexico⁴. I would like to very clearly state the responsibility of nation States in the production of the so called “humanitarian migration crisis”. Like Rachel would say, this is the legacy of colonialism, neocolonialism and late capitalistic border regimes. I think it is really important to stress out and pay attention on the ways the contemporary border regime is constantly producing and reproducing “migrant children” as specific subjects, as a burden and as a population that needs to be policed and controlled. As both subjects of care and protection, as well as proxies for the exacerbation of the borderization regime seeking to reinforce control, security, deportation, incarceration, and punishment for people on the move. Therefore, we have to pay attention of how the idea of “migrant children” is being used to portray ideas of “victimhood”, but are also being used as a pretext to radicalize immigration policies, increase the violence detention and deterrence policies, and the blocking of asylum as well. I think that would be it. Thank you very much.

R.R.: I think a lot about Bridget Anderson’s⁵ points about framing of mobility in terms of “us and them”. So, taking Valentina’s point about the nation state, which imagines itself as an “us” and migrants as a “them”, this is made possible because of border regimes. But Bridget Anderson’s point is that whatever we think about “them” has more to say about “us”. Part of the point she is making is that taking about mobility brings up questions about the sorts of worlds that we want to live in, and the kinds of people that we want to be, and the kinds of communities that we want to be in. I think of this as a set of sociological questions, but also an ethical and political call for anybody thinking, researching, and talking about mobility. So, as a response, my last word here is about the importance of turning the gaze back on structures of power/injustice. It is also about turning the gaze on ourselves, as researchers, to understand how we may be complicit in the practices of naming, marginalizing, and dispossessing ‘migrant’ children. But, to end on a more positive note, it is also the about the ethical and political obligations we have to advance understandings and practices of solidarity, conviviality, and so forth – these might offer us other ways of imagining are responses to questions about the worlds we want to live in.

G.T.: Well, just maybe two or three ideas of us. Thank you because I think this session was really interesting for me. One of the things that I also keep going to and adding to what already was mentioned is this: rethinking how we could balance this very clean, very neat discourses on children’s rights, which are often very romantic, when it comes to the idea of thinking of again a very normative, very boxed childhood to rethink various realities, amongst them this reality of migrant children. On one hand and on the other, this needs to have a very stated idea that whether we like it or not, we have a very strong political commitment. Also, to the field we are studying, you cannot really unplug. In a sense, and coming to what Valentina was saying, but relating it to children and again taking on what Rachel was saying it also takes a bit of maybe more. In addition, I think the critical perspective also calls for that, at least from what I know for this clearer, political imagination when it comes to the consequences of what we also research and study.

It is not about accountability in itself, but it is about this idea that we do need to take these discussions to a more engaged practice on changing all these things. I mean, we were just reading about what happens in this process is from people who are studying them and there are so many things that would require us to be more critical. On policies that are being built on the people who are enforcing them, which is also a big part of the process so I’m just thinking on this political engagement that maybe we need to be a little bit more assertive when speaking about it. Thank you.

L.N.: Very short. I will read something. The visibility of young children as social subjects is true a challenge. This becomes more important when it has young immigrant children as focus. They are in a context different from the one they know because language, cultural habits have ways of doing things different and often they are ignorant and put away by the adults. It seems to be a great challenge to make them visible because they are immigrants but mainly because they are young children. I agree with Gabriela and Rachel, but I think that about young children we have to think double more than, because they are not being see as a subject of rights or social subjects. And this is the main challenge. Thank you. Thank you all of you.

I.P.: Thank you very much for letting me participate in this debate with all of you who are a reference in this subject. I think it has been much enriching to learn about the reality of migrant children in other parts of the world. Here in Chile, we are carrying out our research project, with Juan, on unaccompanied adolescents and we will tell you when we have publications with the results.

⁴ El País, México – 29 Marzo 2023 – Un incendio en una instalación del Gobierno en Ciudad Juárez deja 39 muertos y 27 heridos. Las autoridades dicen que los migrantes lo provocaron. (online). <https://elpais.com/mexico/2023-03-29/encerrados-y-calcinados-la-muerte-de-decenas-de-migrantes-en-mexico-revela-la-crudeza-de-la-crisis-migratoria-con-estados-unidos.html>

⁵ B. Anderson. *Us and Them?: The Dangerous Politics of Immigration Control*. Publisher: Oxford University Press 2013

J.O.: I think that it has been quite enriching as well, I agree with all of you. Thinking of a more global vision of what happens with migrant children, I think that we are not so different. Sometimes we tend to separate, as we discussed here, but now we notice that even though we have particularities in those migratory flows, we share most of the problems in terms of how our nation States have built, how they have created their own legislations and all the control they exert in one way or another over the borders.

I am quite worried that we are not taking into account intercultural elements for integration or for inclusion in the schools, not only for migrant children, I thought it was only Chile. In Latin America, we have many problems with our own native populations; they have suffered historically from rejection and discrimination. So, we have lots of issues going on and I think that we have a lot of similarities in that sense. For example, in terms of managing the language and being considered as non-capable of producing language or intelligence or knowledge. So I agree with what Rachel was saying, pointing out the contradiction of the Liberal democracy. Chile, in our case, has been trying to become a more Liberal democracy and trying to get rid of the dictatorship that we had, but we have deeply rooted wounds that we are still healing. In this context, how to construct a Liberal Democracy is also a challenge, especially for teacher education. I think that today the decision makers, at least in the Region, are trying to advance towards an intercultural or a more inclusive paradigm in education. However, the programs do not work that well. For that reason, I think that we have many things to do yet.

L.G.: Thank you. Thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss these issues today. I think we have been doing a very important thing. It is to put together all our ideas, or our difficulties, or our doubts about the role we have as researchers of childhood and especially as researchers of migrant children and adolescents, in order to contribute to the knowledge of the challenges and risks they face, and to move to better answers to their needs. It has been a privilege for me to listen to you. I have learned a lot today. I hope that the followers of *Sociedad e Infancias* will also appreciate it and I am very grateful to you for your collaboration.