

Playing experiences of children from a rural school: what do they say?

Experiências brincantes de crianças de uma escola do campo: o que dizem?

Experiencias lúdicas de niños de una escuela en el campo: ¿qué nos dicen?

[Fernanda Leal](#)  [Fernanda Santos da Cruz](#)  [Ana Paula Soares da Silva](#) 

Highlights

Playing experiences tend to disappear from school practice in the early years of elementary school.

This disappearance is not uncommon in rural schools.

Children challenge the notion of disappearance, and listening to them is a crucial step in acknowledging them as individuals.

Abstract

This article problematizes children's listening and participation in rural schools, and its object of study is children's playing experiences in the early years of elementary school in a rural school. Data were collected through fieldwork with children from the school and interviews with teachers. The research was guided by the New Studies of Childhood and Children and the perspective of Rural Education. Playing experiences, which are often neglected to the detriment of the content, and the curricular proposals, which don't take into account the children's contexts, were shown to be present as a subversive act on their part.

[Resumo](#) | [Resumen](#)

Keywords

Rural Education. Children's games. Children's participation. Childhood experience. Listening to children.

Received: 09.10.2023

Accepted: 12.15.2023

Published: 12.31.2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26512/lc29202350762>

| Introduction

The Brazilian countryside – understood as rural space – has been the object of attention in recent decades by different social projects that can be understood from two perspectives: the Paradigm of Agrarian Capitalism (PCA) (Abramovay, 2007) and the Paradigm of the Agrarian Issue (PQA) (Fernandes, 2013). These paradigms defend opposing theses concerning "the historical process of the transformation of the peasantry" (Almeida, 2019, p. 04, translated by us): the first considers that the countryside tends to be – or has already been – subsumed by capitalism (PCA); the second argues that the countryside has never ceased to exist and is constantly reconstructed in the midst of contemporary capitalist society, becoming family peasant agriculture, and therefore the family farmer is also a peasant (PQA).

Despite the fact that capitalism is constantly expanding and deepening, taking the PQA as a reading of the Brazilian countryside recognizes that there is an ongoing peasantry in Brazil, materialized by individuals who have (re)produced resistance and diverse ways of life. All this leads to the defense that these subjects not only can but must be visible in their struggles and ways of re-existing. Wanderley (2010, p. 21) states that:

As long as there are individuals and social groups in our societies who live, or wish to live, according to the social forms resulting from small group life in these spaces, we remain indebted to society for social thinking about the "rural world". Without this reality, part of our societies would be amputated [...].
(translated by us)

The rural world, seen from the dynamics that involve children, childhoods, their childhood cultures, school, and ways of life, is visible in this article, considering education as a struggle and dispute that is waged in this world, which involves not only the school but also, among other aspects, the policies, conceptions, and practices that take place within it.

These issues find a place and are mobilized by social and trade union movements in the countryside, which, at the end of the 20th century, gave rise to the concept of the Rural Education movement (Leal, 2012). This concept-movement, as an expression of the voice of the peasant population, seeks to influence the public education policies offered to its subjects. Among the social and trade union movements in the countryside that have been most prominent in this direction is the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), for which the struggle for land and the struggle for education are central, since, as important as the occupation of the latifundia themselves, it is fundamental to occupy the latifundia of knowledge (Rolo, 2012).

On the other hand, social movements linked to the struggle for the rights of children and their childhoods are also building a paradigm that sees children as subjects and with rights, recognizing them as participants in social life based on their specificities and potentials. When we think about children and their relationship with

education, we can say that it takes place within two stages of Basic Education: Early Childhood Education and the first years of Elementary Education.

In this regard, two movements in the field of Early Childhood Education can be mentioned in the defense of the right to daycare and preschool in the country: The women's movement, which in the 1980s was fundamental in guaranteeing and constitutionalizing rights for themselves and their children, especially the right to daycare (Rosemberg, 2008); and the Interforum Movement for Early Childhood Education in Brazil (Mieib), which since the late 1990s has acted as a reference for the social and political visibility of children, from babies onwards, with a greater focus on guaranteeing the right of all Brazilian children to Early Childhood Education.

As far as children in the first years of Elementary School are concerned, the agendas and struggles take different paths, and it can be said that, in general, the child – whether in the city or in the countryside – is seen and treated as a student, with schooling processes based on an emphasis on cognitive processes of knowledge acquisition especially related to Portuguese and Mathematics.

When we think about these children in rural areas, we see that, in addition to the frequent repetition of the above-mentioned trend, there are specificities related to the context, such as the grouping of children of different ages and years in the same class, traditionally called multigrade classes. Among the possible distortions that this practice can generate, it is not uncommon to find, for example, children aged 0 to 5 years and 11 months in multigrade elementary school classes (Barbosa et al., 2012).

The debate surrounding the early years of rural elementary school has garnered attention from rural social movements and researchers in the field of rural education. They raise concerns about issues such as the inadequate provision of resources due to the lack of infrastructure investment, the potential benefits of the multigroup model, and teacher formation, among others (Antunes-Rocha & Hage, 2010).

All of these issues are present at the intersection of the agendas of rural social movements and social movements in defense of children and childhood and have generated, in different ways, possibilities for dialogues in which rural children have gained prominence and visibility. Not only these movements have generated agendas about them. The production of knowledge focused on peasant children has also gained relevance and is taking place in different fields of knowledge: Sociology, Pedagogy, Psychology, Anthropology, among others (Pires et al., 2014; Silva, 2019; Barros, 2020; Souza, 2020).

This means that children have also become an object of research interest and are configured as ways of listening to children, ensuring their indirect participation – when research is conducted on or for them – and their direct participation – when research is conducted with them.

This text explores the place of children's listening and participation in rural schools. The research that made possible the issues highlighted here was based on the play experiences of children in the first years of primary school in a rural school in a city in the state of Paraíba. The rural universe of the children is the sociocultural and economic organization known by the autochthonous term "small farm". The use of the term "playing experiences" is a reference to free and organized play, invented and/or reinvented by the children themselves concerning their peers and the school institution (Cruz, 2022).

| Peasant childhoods and childhoods on small farms

Looking at childhood, giving it specificity, is recent and not universal. There are childhood experiences that receive little or no attention. Cultural, racial, gender, social class issues, among others, permeate the way we look at children and their childhoods, often resulting in invisibility, indifference, and exclusion.

For the Sociology of Childhood, childhood is a social category of the generational type, with elements of homogeneity – that is, transversal to class position and gender – and heterogeneity – that speaks of the social conditions in which children live and with them produce different possibilities of childhood (Sarmiento & Pinto, 1997).

As far as peasant children are concerned, they also have similarities and differences among them. As a diverse category, they have peculiarities and intersections derived from the different ways of existing, as well as from the economic, socio-environmental, identity, and cultural affiliations of the groups to which they belong. This unity of diversity appears, from a legislative point of view, in Decree 7.352/2010 (Brasil, 2010, n.p.), which defines the rural population as follows:

family farmers, extractive workers, handcraft fishermen, river dwellers, agrarian reform settlers and encampments, rural wage workers, quilombolas, caiçaras, forest peoples, caboclos, and others who produce their material conditions of existence through work in rural areas. (translated by us)

In the specific case of this article, we are highlighting the characteristics of childhood in places that characterize the lives and experiences of children who are part of a local and particular reality that is still little known and explored in research and literature itself. The subjects of the places, spaces that are thus (re)known by those who live in these rural communities, can be characterized by their relationship with their places and the possibilities that environment offers them. They are generally communities of a few hectares of land, small farmers whose main economic activities are poultry, cattle, sheep, and subsistence agriculture.

From a cultural point of view, these places are characterized by religious traditions linked to Catholicism or Christianity in a broader sense, which also includes the presence of evangelical denominations. Most of these communities have chapels and patron saints, traditions such as Marian rosaries, and June festivities, among

others. They also have a rich heritage of different experiences and knowledge, including their relationship with the elements of nature.

From a political point of view, the populations of the small farms are not linked to or as active in social movements as some other rural populations, but they do organize themselves through residents' associations that meet to discuss agendas related to their specific interests and needs.

In this way, childhood on small farms, as evidenced in the research that supports this article, is experienced by children through their relationship to the various cultural, economic, traditional, religious, work, and leisure aspects that characterize their communities. These children have a vast playing repertoire of traditional, re-signified, and invented games. Their stories include celebrations and masses in chapels, games on community soccer fields, adventures on bicycles, the "carreiras" (chasing) of wasps, and customs such as hunting tanajuras and eating green mangoes with salt (Cruz, 2022).

Another striking feature of childhood on the small farms are the terraces, spaces that surround the houses and are symbolic of life in the countryside. Mainly tended by women, they are an extension of the home, a place where people's daily lives are recorded. For these children, the terraces are an extension for playing, imagining, and inventing.

All these aspects that characterize the populations and childhoods of the smallholdings refer to a set of educational experiences that make up rural education since it is a "[...] pedagogical reflection that arises from the various educational practices developed in the countryside and/or by rural people" (Caldart, 2008, p. 22, translated by us). And, present in the territories, these knowledge and educational practices are also present in the school space, through the playing experiences and narratives of the children, which are often disregarded to the detriment of content and curricular proposals that do not provide a comprehensive education contextualized with the educational practices they experience in their communities.

| Research methodology

The records and data that constitute this article are the result of a previous research carried out as part of an Academic Master's Degree in Education, studying the playing experiences of children in the first years of elementary school in a rural school. From a theoretical point of view, the research was guided by the New Studies of Childhood and Children (Barbosa et al., 2016), in dialogue with the paradigm of Rural Education (Caldart, 2008).

Initially, the research proposal was to conduct ethnographic research in a rural school. Unfortunately, the pandemic caused by the coronavirus that affected the entire world also interfered with the methodological choices made before this phenomenon occurred. Because of this situation, the solution was to review the data from the monographic research carried out in 2017 by the main researcher of the thesis, with children and adolescents who attended a rural school located in the

city of Arara-PB. For this purpose, the project was reformulated, and the research with a qualitative approach (Minayo, 1994) took on an explanatory nature (Severino, 2013) and divided into two phases: exploratory and field research. In this article, only a part of the first stage of the research will be explored, referring to the records made in 2017 with children and adolescents.

The research conducted in 2017, which produced the data analyzed, took a qualitative approach based on discussions in the field of the New Sociology of Childhood about children's cultures. Given this theoretical-methodological approach, and taking into account the specificities of research with children, it was decided to carry out an ethnographic investigation. The instruments used to construct the data were participant observation and focus groups, as well as videotaping, photography, and a field diary in which descriptions were recorded.

The school, the field of research, is located in the rural territory of Arara-PB, a city in the mesoregion of Agreste of Paraíba. According to the latest census of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), Arara has 12,212 inhabitants (IBGE, 2022). The town is divided into 32 small farms (rural communities). There are currently seven schools that offer early childhood education and the first years of elementary school. One of these institutions was the research context problematized in the current article.

In 2017, the school had 48 students. The school space consisted of three classrooms, a secretary's office, a kitchen, two bathrooms, and two large courtyards. There were no walls – the school was surrounded by a large yard. The school was only open in the afternoon. Classes were multi-year/multi-grade, divided into three grades: Preschool I, II, and 1st grade (which is also multi-grade in this case); 2nd and 3rd grade; 4th and 5th grade (multi-grade). The school had three teachers (one of whom was also the principal), a lunch lady, two general service assistants, and a janitor. In 2022, the school had 32 students.

The research process took place between November and December 2017, 15 days of continuous immersion in the context under investigation. During this period, the researcher followed the subjects' school routine from the moment they arrived at school until they left at the end of the afternoon, assuming the role/position of researcher-playmaker, playing with the children, and actively participating in data collection.

The subjects studied were 45 children and 3 adolescents who had an age/grade distortion and were therefore still in school (5th grade). The age range was 4 to 14 years old. They were full of stories to tell. Stories about adventures on their bikes, meeting wasps, and playing with ball in the fields. Everyday stories about the Internet, the "preá" (cavy), and other animals they knew. Funny stories about school, teachers, and classmates who no longer attended. Some of the children lived near the institution and came and went together, taking care of each other. Others were dropped off and picked up by their parents. Some came on the bus that takes students to the city (Cruz, 2018).

The individuals who were heard and visible in the research were considered competent, active, and able to speak about themselves and their relationships through free and spontaneous play in a rural school. Free because it was not followed by proposals beyond the control of the subjects, and spontaneous because it was related to the desires and interests of those playing (Cruz, 2018; Eckschmidt, 2016). From an ethical point of view, the authorization to carry out the research is given through the terms of consent and assent, as well as through a conversation with the research subject in which the reasons and characteristics of the research work are explained.

A pre-analysis of the records was carried out to select those that met the specific requirements of the subject of the dissertation (the playing experiences of children in the first years of elementary school in a school in the countryside), as well as to identify the subjects that made up the selected records. To use these data following the ethical requirements, the children – currently all adolescents and teenagers – gave their informed consent and their parents or guardians gave their informed consent authorizing the use of the selected records, thus making an ethical commitment under the institutional guidelines of the Ethics Committee, to the subjects who participated at the time and who were of paramount importance for the conduct of the research, as well as to the theoretical-methodological framework that guided the dissertation proposal.

In both 2017 and 2022, we chose to hide the name and location of the school and to protect the identity of the participants by using fictitious names and images that did not reveal their faces. It is worth noting that the research proposal was approved by the university's ethics committee and received a positive opinion when the project was first submitted for evaluation.

Among the various data recorded in 2017, the following were selected for the dissertation: a chart with information about the games identified in the context under investigation, 17 photographs depicting scenes of playing, and 12 descriptions from the field diary. Since these descriptions are the result of ethnographically inspired research, they are characterized as dense and detailed written records of each day observed/experienced with the subjects in the school.

In this article, two photographs and records that make up three descriptions are used for analysis and discussion: "Tu anotou meu nome" ("Did you write down my name?") (November 14, 2017), "Tia I. não deixa" ("Aunt I. does not allow me") (November 16, 2017) and "Olha, a tarefa de Fernanda" ("Look, Fernanda's homework") (November 21, 2017).

In order to comply with the research proposal, only those photographic and descriptive records were selected for analysis in which 22 children and 3 adolescents from the first years of elementary school, their games and play, and the relationship they established with the school under study appeared in greater evidence during the pre-analytical reading. Since the research was mostly conducted with children, we will refer to them as research individuals in this article.

Given the methodological path presented, the discussion in this article focuses on listening, participation, and children's experiences of playing from two perspectives. First, these aspects are discussed from the perspective of the role of the researcher-player, considering ethical and methodological issues, emphasizing full-body observation, and researching while playing with the subjects. Secondly, by discussing how children in rural schools listen to, participate in, and experience plays, highlighting their playing and the relationships they establish with the space and the school institution.

"Ela já viu, num briga não": listening, participation and playing experiences with children in the role of researcher

I looked over and saw L.A. taking a bullet out of his pocket. I'd seen him do it before. M. noticed that I was watching and said to him: 'Go on, look, she's watching! And he replied, 'She's already seen it, don't fight. It's more risky for her to come and suck with us'. (Field Diary, November 14, 2017, translation adapted from Portuguese by us)

The dialog shows a (de)construction of the idea of the adult by the children, beyond the one who observes and controls their attitudes, determines their behavior and ways of acting, or "fights" with them when they don't meet his expectations. At the same time, it expresses a re-signification of the asymmetrical relationship between adult and child, which does not cease to exist but can take other paths and possibilities when the adult researcher is willing to "take a risk" with the subjects (Cruz, 2022). In this sense, conducting research with children suggests a theoretical-methodological and ethical stance that seeks to understand and meet the specific needs of children.

The first aspect to consider is the construction of an ethical relationship that is not limited to the necessary conditions and permissions, which, although extremely important, do not address the most sensitive issues in research with children. Friedmann (2015) states that respect and reverence are necessary to enter the world of children, which indicates the need for sensitivity on the part of the researcher in constructing a careful research process that does not intimidate children but leaves them free to express their interest in participating.

It is also important to consider the specific characteristics of children, rural populations, and their ways of life. For example, in an institutional context, the concepts of assent and consent are necessary ethical requirements for conducting research. However, each person, each place, and each group of children may have different social dynamics, and their ways of decision-making, which also constitute this ethical dimension and must be taken into account by the researcher during the research process.

That was evident during the research. The arrival of an unknown adult in the school generated strangeness, curiosity, attentive glances, and much whispering. This initial contact was deconstructed through dialogue with the subjects, explaining the

reasons and purposes for the researcher's presence in the school. From then on, her research became "her job", and the university became her "school". The children's authorization to carry out this "task" came not only through the conditions or explanations of their teachers but also through an essential opportunity for the study: the authorization/invitation to play with them. Here are some record:

Figure 1
Police and Thieves



Source: Author's collection (2017).

[...]the 4th and 5th graders organized themselves and decided to play police and thieves. I took some pictures and asked for permission to play too [...]; they explained to me that it would be like this, for one hour the boys would be policemen and when they arrested all the girls in the jail (which was the school sidewalk), the girls would be policemen and they would be thieves. And what did we have to do? Run! I ran out in desperation and M. ran after me. I could hear the children saying, "She runs too much!" I thought to myself! After a short time, I was almost begging to be arrested because I was so tired. When I tried to get away, I was surrounded by M., J. A. and L. A. I couldn't get away, they grabbed me roughly by the arm and took me to the jail. Soon we [the girls] were cops. I was still tired of the bandit life, but I also had to run, and I confess that I only caught one thief because he was more tired than I was. [...] (Field Diary, 11/17/2017, translation adapted from Portugues by us).

The records show a characteristic of childhood on small farms, which is the relationship that children establish with the farmyard as a cozy space where they can fully experience their games. The yard expands possibilities. Outside the physical structure and away from the institutional limitations of the role of the student, the children can run, shout, sit on the ground, roll in the sand, swing from the branches of the trees, in contact with the elements of nature and with aspects that characterize their communities and their daily experiences.

The children and teenagers welcomed the adult into their play times and spaces, allowing her to fully experience the characteristics of this game. Getting closer to the subjects, to this universe of escapes and chases, characterizes the investigative experiences of a play-researcher. Being a play-researcher suggests a whole theoretical-methodological complexity, made up of a constant process of construction/deconstruction of being a researcher, involving everything from her playful memories to the ethical relationships established with the individuals.

First, listening to children and adolescents in play research suggests fully experiencing play with them. To do this, the researcher must strip away any opinions or preconceived notions that might influence their view of play.

It is important to emphasize that sometimes "the spatiotemporality of childhood is not pretty in the eyes of adults, it is dirty with clay, it swears, [...] it steals Jambos and eats them without washing" (Silva, 2018, p. 64, translated by us). To understand this is to understand that sometimes children's experiences are subversive, they sneak around and escape the constraints and different limitations of the adult world in search of freedom.

Allowing oneself to play with children also means surrendering to the experience, because childhood time is time that expands, a place of eternity that is not based on the notion/certainty of the finiteness of life, on the speed of information that makes us feel like losers in relation to time (Lameirão, 2016). And it is in this space-time that children's games are experienced, because when playing, faced with the limits and possibilities of the environment in which they are inserted, children create their play times and spaces, according to their desires and the needs that characterize each game, as happened in "Police and Thieves", for example.

Leite (2015, p. 67, translated by us) states that "when playing, the child is immersed and surrendered to the experience. Their body, feelings, and intelligence are connected to their action. Their play lasts for the duration of their experience, their connection to what they are doing". To connect with and understand children's experiences, it is necessary to surrender to the experience, without losing sight of the research objectives, but be willing to listen to the children, to fully observe them, to experience their games, which are sacred and important spaces for them beyond any intentionality on the part of others.

A final point to consider in relation to listening, participating and researching with children, especially when they talk about their toys and games, is to carry out a "full-body observation", which refers to handing over and playing with the children, as well as the researcher's recording of their playful experiences.

This full-body observation allows the researcher to gain a better understanding of the context being studied and the subjects of the research, especially when it comes to childhood and rural children. It is through this immersion and active participation in the construction of the research with the children that aspects common to rural childhood come to light, such as playing with elements of nature. In this relationship/immersion, the peculiarities of each place, of each group also come to light, revealing aspects of the subjects' way of life, their relationship with the places where they live, their customs and traditions, their preferences, their toys, and characteristic games, making it possible, in the specificity of the research approached, to (re)know the childhood of the small farms.

Talking about listening, participation, playing, the body and childhood leads us to reflect on the school environment and these aspects in this context. While research with children seeks an adequate framework for investigation and moves towards a

constant search for recognition of children as subjects, in school there is a whole organizational framework that can disregard all this to the detriment of deadlines, a rigid routine, or curricular content and results, especially in the early years of elementary school.

**| "*Hoje eu num vou comer não, vou jogar bola*":
listening, participation and playing experiences inside
the school**

The children's playing experiences at the rural school revealed: a preference for games with rules, the collective nature of games, the existence of a play vocabulary that included everything from spoken expressions to gestures and ways of positioning the body according to needs and games, and the invention of games. In terms of toys, there was a lack of industrialized toys, and the children's bodies took on a playful meaning, such as jumping and staring, and thus assumed the role of body-toy in the games.

These characteristics do not point to specificities. In the context of educational practices developed in schools, they show that play can be perceived and interpreted in different ways. According to Eckschmidt (2016), there are three main ways: as a pedagogical resource, of an instructive nature, used in the teaching-learning of specific content; as a means by which children's playful actions are used by teachers to address specific themes or subjects; and finally, concerning recess, the time set aside for play, which, despite its freedom, is subject to different constraints.

Thus, despite the fact that children have a little more freedom to organize and experience their play during recess, it was noticed that, of the three possibilities identified by Eckschmidt (2016), it is the interests of adults that predominate in the school institution, either conceiving play as a didactic-pedagogical tool to be used in teaching and learning content or as an action aimed at leisure, the interval between activities being considered important. The intention is not to question these possibilities but to reflect on the fact that children's play experiences do not take on such importance in the first years of elementary school, where the main concern is the schooling process.

Thus, the antagonism between free and spontaneous play, that is, play experienced by children without interference or intentions beyond their control, and school tasks seems to ignore the fact that those in the early years of elementary school are also children, which reveals a "[...] position of abandoning the use of childlike practices for children at this stage. That impoverishes the learning process since the child does not leave the category of childhood just because the school term has changed" (Guimarães, 2017, p. 62, translated by us).

This distancing reveals an invisibility of the experiences of children attending the first years of school, in different aspects. For example, within the scope of the main curriculum guidelines that guide this stage, such as the National Common Curricular Base (Brasil, 2017) and the Paraíba Curricular Proposal (Paraíba, 2018),

it can be seen that the central concern is the schooling of students, with an emphasis on literacy and the acquisition of certain skills and abilities. This indicates a lack of recognition of the importance of play in the curricular guidelines and, consequently, the silencing of the playful experiences of the subjects who attend the first years of elementary school, which is also evident in the difficulty of finding bibliographical references that address this specific issue (Cruz, 2022).

These issues also have repercussions on the implementation of the assumptions of Rural Education in schools, which include the importance of valuing the subjects' knowledge, the way they relate to their communities, contextualized educational practices that enable and promote listening, participation and autonomy.

The lack of visibility of playing experiences in the early years of schooling was also evident in the survey of academic productions conducted in the first exploratory phase of the research. Although I won't go into that survey in this discussion, it is pertinent to point out that in most of the school contexts studied and represented in academic productions on play in the early years, whether in rural or urban schools, children's play experiences are on the margins of the routine and pedagogical practices developed in school spaces (Cruz, 2022).

It is clear from the statement of the boy G., who announces this subtopic: "I'm not going to eat today, I'm going to play ball!" (free translation). The children and adolescents had only 15 minutes of recess. Previously, this time was 30 minutes, but due to a decision made by the school office in agreement with the school administration, in order to prevent children who lived far from the school from returning home after dark, which was dangerous, the recess time was halved. The reduction was based on the children's commute and transportation time between school and home. That meant that children and teenagers sometimes had to try to split up or even choose between snacks and playtime, as shown in the following record.

Figure 2
Between playing and eating



Source: Author's collection (2017).

In light of this report and the reduction in play time, it is possible to reflect again on listening to children and involving them in situations and decisions that directly

affect them. Firstly, there was a lack of dialogue with children and young people to decide without listening to their interests, opinions, and suggestions. Secondly, the decision-making process may have been guided by "adulthood" (Silva, 2018), which may have seen recess as a less important moment in the overall school routine, and therefore one that could be reduced. In this way, schooling is seen as a priority, in which play and many other childhood experiences are relegated to a less important place.

Despite all the problems that prevent them from playing freely at school, children subvert the routine, acting individually or collectively with their peers, creating and experiencing their play times and spaces. As Piorski (2016, p. 87, translated by us) states, "Children are like that: they are used to walking around the edges, taking in the sights, teaching themselves with their eyes squinting from afar, seeing through a spyglass when they are not allowed to get close."

In addition to the limitation of time and the logic of schooling itself in the early years, the children and adolescents faced problems such as the small and limited physical space of the school, the lack of opportunity to explore the school grounds, a complicated relationship with the children in the kindergarten guided by the argument/fear that the "bigger" ones would hurt the "smaller" ones, the impossibility/imposition for them not to play certain games during play time. As noted in the dissertation (Cruz, 2022):

[...]we noticed and showed how the children were still able to play, subverting the limitations and creating their spaces and times to play, much more welcoming, challenging and comfortable, where they could live their experiences more autonomously, dribbling, as in the ball game, the difficulties that prevented them from playing. (translated by us)

Listening to and involving children in the school environment is basically done through subversion, in which play takes an extremely important role. Through play, children can act together with their peers and disrupt various aspects of the school organization.

That is reflected in the very physicality of children's play. While the school defines or expects that it is ideal for students to remain seated for virtually the entire lesson without much expression, movement, or conversation, children play by running, jumping, turning, making rhythmic gestures, singing, getting tired, and regaining their strength to play again. At the same time that children are learning to be students, they are also discovering ways to resist (Motta, 2013).

During the 15 days of field research, considering all the limitations imposed on the children, a rich repertoire of toys and games was identified in the school space. Among this repertoire, 12 games were identified.

We identified games that are (re)known throughout the country, such as "playing ball" and "wheel games"; games that vary greatly from region to region, such as "marbles". But the specific game of this group of children emerged, called by the children and adolescents "afogando o ganso" (drowning the goose), a game in

which the children create an atmosphere of attention and competition, trying to push down the heads of their classmates and, when they succeed, shouting: "Drowning the goose!".

In these playful relationships, the multiplicity of childhood is demonstrated and experienced, because through the repertoire of games, similarities and specificities are noted; diversity is perceived through the games present in different childhoods in the country, which take on more specific, regional, and later local and unique contours.

The games identified thus constitute not only the play culture of the group studied, but also the cultural heritage of the sites. It is this heritage that is renewed by children's actions, through the reproduction of toys and games, the creation of forms, rules, and meanings that modify play, and the (re)invention of new ways of playing (Autor, suppression). In this sense, Carvalho and Silva (2018, p. 128) point out that:

Games condense life into micro-universes. They tell us stories, they are a way of recording past times and eras. This memory of past experiences lived by other generations is recorded, for example, in the lyrics and songs of circle and verse games, in the harmony of their movements, in their expressive gestures. In this sense, play is memory and language, because when we play, we come into contact with this history and produce it. (translated by us)

If we consider playing as memory and language, we can see the importance of playful experiences not only in the school environment but also for Rural Education, as they (re)connect past and present, preserve memories, knowledge, and characteristics of peoples and places, while enabling children to produce their cultures and stories.

| Final considerations

Discussing children's listening and participation means addressing the historical invisibility of childhood, which is exacerbated by inequalities that cut across the diversity of the country's formation. This movement may become increasingly evident and complex, requiring efforts that include different dimensions to overcome this situation, such as the political dimension, practices, knowledge production, and changes in thinking or mentality regarding children and their childhood.

Despite this complex situation, there has been a collective debate that has influenced and contributed, for example, to (re)thinking the way research is done with these subjects, allowing the space where knowledge is produced to be a statement of the researcher's position that children can and should talk about themselves and the world as subjects with a voice, knowledge, and opinions. This perspective has an impact on the theoretical-methodological debate and requires a sensitive, ethical, and respectful attitude on the part of the researcher, attentive to the characteristics and complexity of the subjects and the research context.

In the research conducted and discussed here through the lens of the children's play experiences, it was found that despite the restraints that exist in the school

environment concerning play and the very experience of their bodies in the rural school context, they expressed their preferences at different times, and found an ally in the researcher who acted as a playful adult who made an effort to be accepted by the group, to play with them, and to extract from their words, gestures, movements, and choices the words and meanings they gave to their time at school.

The rural context was often indistinguishable from the urban context, where play and children "disappear" in the first years of elementary school, giving way to school practices and the emergence of the pupil-subject. On the other hand, by listening to the researcher, the children could be seen as active, participating in decisions related to play, which were raised by the researcher and analyzed as having characteristics common to play carried out in urban contexts, but also as typical of the peasant universe.

Finally, in relation to the school space in the countryside, it should be pointed out that when we think about listening to children and their participation, we reflect that they occur, but through the path of their subversion, in which play has emerged as the main form. In this sense, as a possibility for future studies, it is suggested that we move forward and delve deeper into the strategies created by rural children to make their specificities exist as children situated in the different rural contexts in Brazil.

| References

- Abramovay, R. (2007). *Paradigmas do capitalismo agrário em questão* (3ª ed.). Edusp.
- Almeida, J. S. de. (2019). Sobre o debate paradigmático: capitalismo agrário e questão agrária em questão. *Boletim DATALUTA*, (140).
https://www2.fct.unesp.br/nera/artigodomes/8artigodomes_2019.pdf
- Antunes-Rocha, M. I., & Hage, S. M. (Orgs.). (2010). *Escola de direito: reiventando a escola multisseriada*. Autêntica.
- Barbosa, M. C. S., Delgado, A. C. C., & Tomás, C. A. (2016). Estudos da infância, estudos da criança: Quais campos? Quais teorias? Quais questões? Quais métodos? *Revista Inter-Ação*, 41 (1), 103-122.
<https://doi.org/10.5216/ia.v41i1.36055>
- Barbosa, M. C. S., Silva, A. P. S., Pasuch, J., Leal, F. L. A., Silva, I. O., Freitas, M. N., & Albuquerque, S. S. (Coords.). (2012). *Oferta e demanda de educação infantil no campo*. Evangraf.
- Barros, R. A. de Q. (2020). *A gestão e a organização das escolas/turmas multisseriadas nos municípios de Barra de Santana e Boqueirão – Paraíba* [Dissertação de mestrado, Universidade Federal de Campina Grande]. Sistema de Bibliotecas UFCG.
<http://dspace.sti.ufcg.edu.br:8080/xmlui/handle/riufcg/16786>
- Brasil. (2010). *Decreto nº 7.352, de 4 de novembro de 2010* (Dispõe sobre a política de educação do campo e o Programa Nacional de Educação na Reforma Agrária – PRONERA). Presidência da República.
https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2007-2010/2010/decreto/d7352.htm
- Brasil. (2017). *Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC)*. Ministério da Educação.
http://basenacionalcomum.mec.gov.br/images/BNCC_EI_EF_110518-versaofinal_site.pdf
- Caldart, R. S. (2008). Sobre educação do campo. Em C. A. dos Santos (Org.). *Por uma educação do campo: campo, políticas públicas, educação* (pp. 67-86). Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário.
- Carvalho, L. D., & Silva, R. C. (2018). Infâncias no campo: brinquedo, brincadeira e cultura. *Childhood & Philosophy*, 14(29), 189-212.
<https://doi.org/10.12957/childphilo.2018.30364>
- Cruz, F. S. (2018). *Os brincares das crianças e os tempos e espaços do brincar na escola*. [Monografia não publicada]. Universidade Federal da Paraíba.
- Cruz, F. S. (2022). *Crianças e experiências brincantes nos anos iniciais do ensino fundamental em uma escola no campo*. [Dissertação de mestrado, Universidade Federal de Campina Grande].
http://www.ppged.ufcg.edu.br/images/8/87/DISSERTACAO_Fernanda.pdf
- Eckschmidt, S. (2016). *Diálogos do brincar #5: o brincar na escola* [Vídeo]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usab3jhCwuU>
- Fernandes, B. M. (2013). *Construindo um estilo de pensamento na questão agrária: o debate paradigmático e o conhecimento geográfico*. [Tese Livre-docência, Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho].
<http://hdl.handle.net/11449/106708>
- Friedmann, A. (2015). O olhar antropológico por dentro da infância: adentrando nas casinhas das crianças. Em R. Meirelles (Org.). *Território do brincar: diálogo com escolas* (pp. 37-45). Instituto Alana.
- Guimarães, M. (2017). *O brincar e a criança: pistas para uma escola democrática na infância*. [Dissertação de mestrado, Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei]. Repositório UFSJ.
<https://www.ufsj.edu.br/portal2-repositorio/File/mestradoeducacao/DissertacaoMarianaGuimaraes.pdf>

- Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE). (2022). *Cidades*.
<https://cidades.ibge.gov.br/brasil/pb/arara/panorama>
- Lameirão, L. (2016). *Diálogos do brincar #4: o tempo da criança* [Vídeo]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFVBA7MCG-0>
- Leal, F. L. A. (2012). Na mão e na contramão da política: a realização da Política Nacional de Educação do Campo em municípios do Cariri paraibano. [Tese de Doutorado, Universidade Federal de Campina Grande].
<http://dspace.sti.ufcg.edu.br:8080/jspui/handle/riufcg/2039>
- Leite, A. C. A. (2015). Diálogos e experiências: pontes que conectam pessoas e territórios. Em R. Meirelles (Org.). *Território do brincar: diálogo com escolas* (pp. 61-69). Instituto Alana.
- Minayo, M. C. S. (Org.). (1994). *Pesquisa Social: teorias, métodos e criatividade*. Vozes.
- Motta, F. M. N. (2013). *De crianças a alunos: a transição da educação infantil para o ensino fundamental*. Cortez.
- Paraíba. (2018). *Proposta Curricular do Estado da Paraíba*. Governo do Estado da Paraíba. <https://sites.google.com/see.pb.gov.br/probnccpb/proposta-curricular-ei-e-ef>
- Piorski, G. (2016). *Brinquedos do chão: a natureza, o imaginário e o brincar*. Peirópolis.
- Pires, F. F., Falcão, C. R., & Silva, A. L. (2014). O Bolsa Família é direito das crianças: participação social infantil no semiárido nordestino. *Teoria e Sociedade*, 22(1), 141-167.
<https://teoriaesociedade.fafich.ufmg.br/index.php/rts/article/view/142>
- Rolo, M. (2012). *Ocupando os latifúndios do saber: subsídios para o ensino da ciência na perspectiva politécnica da educação* [Tese de doutorado, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro]. Biblioteca Digital de Teses e Dissertações Uerj. <https://www.bdttd.uerj.br:8443/handle/1/14742>
- Rosemberg, F. (2008). Crianças e adolescentes na sociedade brasileira e a Constituição de 1988. Em R. G. Oliven, M. Ridenti, & G. M. Brandão (Orgs.). *A Constituição de 1988 na vida brasileira* (pp. 296-333). Aderaldo & Rithschild; Anpocs.
- Sarmiento, M. J., & Pinto M. (1997). As crianças e a infância: definindo conceitos, delimitando o campo. Em M. J. Sarmiento, & M. Pinto (Orgs.). *As crianças contextos e identidades* (pp. 7-30). Universidade do Minho, Centro de Estudos da Criança.
- Severino, A. J. (2013). *Metodologia do trabalho científico*. Cortez.
- Silva, J. P. A. (2018). *Peraltices, meninices e outras anedotas: o que o corpo brincante da criança tem a ensinar ao professor?* [Monografia não publicada]. Universidade Federal da Paraíba.
- Silva, W. M. F. da. (2019). *A demanda por Educação Infantil do/no Campo: a perspectiva das famílias do assentamento Zé Marcolino, no Cariri Paraibano* [Dissertação de Mestrado, Universidade Federal de Campina Grande]. Sistema de Bibliotecas UFCG.
http://www.ppged.ufcg.edu.br/images/1/18/DISSERTA%C3%87%C3%83O_VERS%C3%83O_FINAL_WANESSA_MACIEL_OK.pdf
- Souza, R. G. P. de. (2020). *Educação Infantil do/no campo: como a pré-escola vê e vive as culturas infantis?* [Dissertação de Mestrado, Universidade Federal de Campina Grande]. Sistema de Bibliotecas UFCG.
http://www.ppged.ufcg.edu.br/images/f/fe/DISSERTA%C3%87%C3%83O_27_02_20_Rayffif_Gumercido.pdf
- Wanderley, M. N. B. (2010). *A sociologia rural na América Latina: produção de conhecimento e compromisso com a sociedade* (Vol. 5). ALASRU Nueva Época.

About the authors

Fernanda Leal

Federal University of Campina Grande, Campina Grande, Brazil

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1005-3141>

Doctorate in Social Sciences from the Federal University of Campina Grande (2012). Associate Professor II at the Education Academic Unit of the Humanities Center at the Federal University of Campina Grande. Leader of the Studies and Research Group on Childhood, Early Childhood Education and Plural Contexts (GRÃO/DGP/CNPq/UFCG). Email: fernandalealufcg@gmail.com

Fernanda Santos da Cruz


Municipal Department of Education, Jacaraú, Brazil

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0096-1616>

Master's Degree in Education from the Federal University of Campina Grande (2023). School supervisor at the Jacaraú/PB Municipal Department of Education. Email: fernandacruz@hotmail.com

Ana Paula Soares da Silva

University of São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto, Brazil

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0212-2402>

Full Professor in Psychology at the University of São Paulo (2016). Associate Professor II at the Ribeirão Preto School of Philosophy, Sciences and Letras-University of São Paulo. Leader of the Socio-environmental Psychology and Educational Practices Laboratory (LAPSAPE/FFCLRP-USP). Email: apsoares.silva@usp.br

Contribution to the preparation of the text: author 1 – writing the sections "Introduction", "Peasant childhoods and childhoods on the small farms" and "Final considerations"; author 2 – writing the sections "Methodological path of the research", "Listening and children's participation", "'She's seen it, she won't fight': listening, participation and playing experiences with the children in the role of researcher"; "'Today I'm not going to eat, I'm going to play ball': listening, participation and playing experiences inside the school" and "Final considerations"; author 3 – revision and consolidation, articulation of the text.

Resumo

O artigo problematiza a escuta e a participação de crianças em escolas do campo e tem como objeto de estudo as experiências brincantes de crianças dos anos iniciais do Ensino Fundamental de uma escola do campo. Recuperou-se dados da pesquisa de campo realizada com crianças da escola e entrevistas com professoras foram realizadas. A investigação norteou-se pelos Novos Estudos da Infância e da Criança e pela perspectiva da Educação do Campo. As experiências brincantes, muitas vezes desconsideradas em detrimento de conteúdos e

propostas curriculares que não consideram os contextos das crianças, mostraram-se presentes com ato subversivo delas.

Palavras-chave: Educação do campo. Brincadeiras de crianças. Participação infantil. Experiência infantil. Escuta de crianças.

Resumen

El artículo problematiza la escucha y la participación de niños en escuelas campesinas y presenta como objeto de estudio las experiencias recreativas de niños de los años iniciales de la Enseñanza Fundamental de una escuela de campo. Fueron recuperados datos de una investigación de campo desarrollada con niños en una escuela, y se realizaron entrevistas con profesores. La investigación fue nortada por los Nuevos Estudios de la Infancia y del Niño y por la perspectiva de la Educación del Campo. Las experiencias recreativas muchas veces no son consideradas en detrimento de contenidos y propuestas curriculares que no valoran los contextos de los niños, se mostraron presentes como sus actos subversivos.

Palabras clave: Educación del Campo. Juegos de niños. Participación infantil. Experiencia infantil. Escucha de niños.

Linhas Críticas | Journal edited by the Faculty of Education at the University of Brasília, Brazil
e-ISSN: 1981-0431 | ISSN: 1516-4896
<http://periodicos.unb.br/index.php/linhascriticas>

Full reference (APA): Leal, F., Cruz, F. S. da, & Silva, A. P. S. da. (2023). Playing experiences of children from a rural school: what do they say? *Linhas Críticas*, 29, e50762.
<https://doi.org/10.26512/lc29202350762>

Full reference (ABNT): LEAL, F.; CRUZ, F. S. da; SILVA, A. P. S. da. Playing experiences of children from a rural school: what do they say? *Linhas Críticas*, 29, e50762, 2023. DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.26512/lc29202350762>

Alternative link: <https://periodicos.unb.br/index.php/linhascriticas/article/view/50762>

All information and opinions in this manuscript are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the journal *Linhas Críticas*, its editors, or the University of Brasília.

The authors hold the copyright of this manuscript, with the first publication rights reserved to the journal *Linhas Críticas*, which distributes it in open access under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (CC BY 4.0): <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

