



Bulletin 2: Decoloniality November 2025

This research bulletin is part of a series of three issues that will present an overview of three core thematic areas of CIESPI/PUC-Rio: participation, decoloniality, and intergenerationally. The analysis is based on the articles that comprise the bibliographic database Child and Youth Participation - Academic Production in Latin America (2005-2023) and includes different aspects of citizen participation and empowerment of children, adolescents, and young people in Brazil.

The database was developed within the scope of the project Citizen Participation: Child and Youth Population in Focus coordinated by Professor Irene Rizzini (PUC-Rio/DSS/CIESPI), with the support of FAPERJ (CNE - Process E-26/201.113/2022).

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1.0 - Introduction

This research bulletin aims to present an overview of Latin American academic literature on decoloniality in the context of child and youth participation (up to 18 years of age), published between 2005 and 2024. The aim is to understand how decoloniality interacts with protagonism and participation of children, adolescents, and young people in Latin American studies written in Portuguese and Spanish. It identifies main lines of inquiry as well as lacunae which need further developments.

Decoloniality in Latin America refers to a critical framework that challenges the enduring power structures and knowledge systems rooted in colonialism, aiming to dismantle their legacies and promote alternative, non-Eurocentric perspectives. It involves recognizing the colonality of power, where colonial structures of domination persist even after political independence, particularly in knowledge production, identity formation, and governance. Decolonial practices encompass multifaceted processes for the recognition of marginalized ontologies and epistemologies (Mignolo, 2021).

Approaches based on decoloniality provide in-depth understanding of the power relations subjacent to social participation of children and youth in Latin America. These perspectives remain underex-

plored in academia, attesting the need for further developments.

2.0 - Methodology

The literature review on decoloniality supplements the bibliographic database Child and Youth Participation - Academic Production in Latin America (2005-2023). The survey was based on data collection from the following sources: SciELO, CAPES, WorldCat, and Google Scholar. Searches were also conducted in Latindex (Regional Online Information System for Scientific Journals in Latin America), Clase (Latin American Citations in Social Sciences and Humanities), Redyla (Latin American and Caribbean Network for the Defense of the Rights of Children, Girls, and Adolescents), and IIDN (Inter-American Institute for Children, Girls, and Adolescents), due to their relevance for accessing articles in Spanish. The descriptors used in the searches included the following terms in Portuguese and Spanish: decoloniality, decolonize, decolonialism, decoloniality, decolonization, coloniality, and colonialism, always associated with "children," "teenagers," "young people," "childhood," "adolescence," and "youth."

Initially, 67 articles were identified in Portuguese and 53 in Spanish. After a thorough reading

of the texts, 19 articles in Portuguese and 16 in Spanish were selected given their relevance to the topic of child and youth participation. Among the 35 articles analysed we identified approaches that introduced the theme of decoloniality related to adult-centrism and youth protagonism; the emergence of participatory and decolonizing methodologies; and the participation of children and youth in social and indigenous movements.

3.0 - Key findings from the literature review

3.1 - Adult-centrism and youth protagonism

Several authors address the need to adopt a decolonial perspective on childhood and adolescence, deconstructing adult-centric views that positions young generations as submissive and dependent. For example, Sousa (2022) argue that historically outdated perceptions of childhood seen as a dependent and incomplete, a "blank page" to be filled by adults, reflect expressions of the coloniality of power and knowledge. In this perspective, inherited from the colonial project, children are denied the possibility of producing their own meanings about their existence. In addition, Oliveira (2021) describes how adult-centrism restricts children's and youth's participation in political and rights-related spaces. Ruiz-Muñoz (2022) expands on the analysis emphasizing that public authorities must problematize the normative and protective frameworks that silence children's participation, so that children and adolescents can exercise their rights without being manipulated and standardized by a conservative conception of childhood.

In essence, authors examining adult-centrism describe it as a model that subordinates children and adolescents, silences their voices, and perpetuates inequalities. Therefore, they advocate for practices that recognize these groups as protagonists, capable of resisting and reconfiguring power relations (Rizzini, 2024). A decolonial perspective on childhood encourages and safeguards children's protagonism and social-political participation.

3.2 - The emergence of participatory and decolonizing methodologies

In general, participatory, and decolonizing methodologies are approaches that aim to shift power dynamics in research and knowledge production, particularly in contexts impacted by the legacy of colonialism. It emphasizes collaboration and community involvement based on local ontologies and epistemologies. Decolonizing methodologies specifically seek to dismantle colonial structures and ideologies that have marginalized certain groups and their knowledge systems (Walsh, 2010).

Silva (2021) calls attention to the need for sensitive listening to children's perspectives, proposing an emancipatory education that recognizes children as active subjects, rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Uribe and Dietz (2018) recall a relevant experience at the Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural (UVI) where Nahua and mestizo children and youth were encouraged to share their points of view and ideas, based on their lived community and family experiences, through participatory methodologies including games, puppets, storytelling, theatrical plays, and drawing. This example relates to Bruniczak and Rosa (2024), who emphasize that attentive listening to children's narratives reconfigures power relations and promotes emancipation. Therefore, by respecting the voices of young people and legitimizing their contributions, an emancipatory education can be promoted, aligned with the principles of autonomy and protagonism.

Several authors also underscore the emergence of scientific methodologies that prioritize the participation and protagonism of children and adolescents. One example is Clemente and Milstein (2019), who conducted ethnographic research in which children and adolescents were co-authors of the study. In sum, these examples advocate for an education that places children, adolescents, and young people as protagonists, with methodologies that integrate their voices and experiences, in favor of a decolonial pedagogical practice.

3.3 - Participation of children and youth in social movements

The literature brings together diverse perspectives on protagonism of children, adolescents, and young people, including political, social, and cultural participation in social movements. Urbano et al. (2020), for example, analyse the engagement of K-pop fans including BTS's Army, whose use of digital platforms is adopted to support socio-political movements such as #BlackLivesMatter. Corsino and Zan (2017) explore school environments by students in São Paulo, highlighting the autonomy of young people in creating a democratic school environment.

Another relevant decolonial perspective focuses on Indigenous children in Latin America who actively participate in social struggles alongside their families, serving as agents of memory, culture, and resistance (Rico-Montoya, 2018; Sánchez, 2019); in Chile, young Mapuche co-create methodologies to value their culture (Arce, 2015), and in Peru, young people confront neocolonial contexts, demanding policies that respect their singularities (Mendoza-Zapata, 2022). Fraticola (2023), in turn, analyses the conflict between Indigenous knowledge and Western schools, emphasizing the urgency of an educational system that respects children's worldviews. These discussions are mostly found in publications in Spanish.

These works collectively convey how youth participation, whether in cultural, political, or educational settings challenges hierarchies, colonialities, and forms of exclusion, proposing new meanings and practices.

4.0 - Differences and gaps – Prospects for further studies

Most articles discuss the participation of children, adolescents, and young people in social movements. However, the articles in Spanish, which account for the greater number, emphasizes engagement in indigenous movements as observed in Arce (2015), Sánchez (2019), Rico-Montoya (2018), Mendoza-Zapata (2022), Fraticola (2023), and Oliveira (2024). The texts in Portuguese address social

movements in a more generic approach, with less emphasis on indigenous populations, as observed in Urbano et al. (2020) and Corsino and Zan (2017). Brazilian authors, such as Guimarães (2023) and Dourado and Bernardes (2023), focus on adult-centrism as a structurally oppressive force, often linked to issues of violence and necropolitics, as in the case of the "youth genocide" accentuated by Pereira and Maesso (2023). The term necropolitics was conceived by Achille Mbembe (2020) to describe the relationship between power and death, where political power is exercised not only by controlling life, but a determination of fate and the judgment of life and death.

Texts in Spanish, however, do not address this structural violence of adult-centrism. Instead, they focus on the need to value the voice and knowledge of younger populations, whether in education or science, using participatory methodologies seeking to consider children and youth as non-subalternized citizens (Ruiz-Muñoz, 2022; Gascón, 2015).

Environmental issues, among other subtopics considered relevant, appear peripherally. We identified only one article directly addressing this topic (Menezes & Rizzini, 2023). It is also worth underlining the scarcity of studies focused on early childhood education, identified in the articles by Robayo-Noreña and Arroyo Ortega (2024), and Bruniczak and Rosa (2024). The use of digital platforms, in turn, was only discussed by Quijano (2018) and, in parallel, by Urbano et. al. (2020), when analysing the political and social participation of K-pop fans. A crucial aspect to emphasize is the gap in studies related to gender and sexuality.

Finally, we understand that decoloniality involves amplifying the voices of children, adolescents, and young people, questioning adult-centrism, and recognizing young generations as political actors and holders of rights and knowledge.

5.0 - References

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