ANTHROPOLOGY AND CHILDHOOD. FROM RESEARCH TEAMS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING SPACES IN THE BUENOS AIRES AREA (ARGENTINA)

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Abstract – In the last few decades in Argentina, childhood began to emerge as a legitimate field of anthropological research. Constant work by local researchers and the growth of research teams have given rise to educational activities in this field at universities all over the country. The focus of analysis in this paper are the different courses developed as part of undergraduate and graduate training programs in Anthropology at four public universities in the city and province of Buenos Aires. The study of the seminar's syllabuses shows, on the one hand, plenty and varied subject matters concerning childhood both directly and indirectly. On the other hand, we will examine the shared stress of such courses on the potential of anthropology to deconstruct childhood through historical and ethnographical approaches.

Keywords – Anthropology and childhood, higher education, Buenos Aires

Résumé – Au cours des dernières décennies en Argentine, l'enfance est devenue un champ légitime de recherche en Anthropologie. Le travail continu des chercheurs

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locaux, ainsi que la croissance des équipes de recherche, ont rendu possible la création d'espaces pour l'enseignement de ce domaine au sein des universités nationales. Dans cet article, nous analysons ces espaces encadrés dans la formation d'études supérieures en anthropologie, au sein de quatre universités publiques de la ville et de la province de Buenos Aires. L'observation des plans d'études met en évidence, d'une part, la grande profusion des questions qui concernent directement et indirectement les enfants et l'enfance, et, d'autre part, la revendication du potentiel de l'anthropologie pour dénaturaliser l'enfance, tout en mettant en avant les approches historiques et ethnographiques.

Mots-clés – Anthropologie et enfance, formation universitaire, Buenos Aires

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

In Argentina, since the early 1900s, several academics have conducted anthropological research, resulting in the prompt emergence of institutions such as the Museo Etnográfico (Ethnographic Museum, 1905) and the Sociedad Argentina de Antropología (Argentine Association of Anthropology, 1935). The aforementioned Museum, located in the city of Buenos Aires, was "the first South American institution devoted to the study of human disciplines" (Perazzi 2003: 39, our translation), and the first one to create a course on Anthropology. In any case, the Argentine anthropological research went a long way to become a higher education program.

It was not until the 1950s and 1960s that the first curriculum for the Anthropological Science career was approved in Argentina. The higher education structure established at that time has not changed: unlike other countries, it consists of exclusive disciplinary cycles lasting for at least five years, including about 30 subjects with several foreign language levels. In many institutions, anthropology's undergraduate program requires the presentation of a thesis, which usually takes students one year of research. This means early specialization in the discipline and subject matter, as well as an introduction to research.

Until 1983 the development of university research and training activities was restrained by blows to democracy. Therefore, anthropology training at various institutions was affected by a succession of de facto governments and the resulting internal or external political exile of many Argentine professionals.

Nowadays, there are undergraduate anthropology programs at the following public institutions, listed chronologically, according to their starting date (see map in *Appendix 2*):

- Universidad Nacional de La Plata (National University of La Plata) (1958),
- Universidad de Buenos Aires (University of Buenos Aires) (1958),
- Universidad Nacional de Rosario (National University of Rosario) (1967),
- Universidad Nacional de Misiones (National University of Misiones) (1975),

- Universidad Nacional del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires (National University of Central Buenos Aires) (1993),
- Universidad Nacional de Jujuy (National University of Jujuy) (1984),
- Universidad Nacional de Salta (National University of Salta) (1985),
- Universidad Nacional de San Martín (National University of San Martín) (2007),
- Universidad Nacional de Río Negro (National University of Río Negro) (2008),
- Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (National University of Córdoba) (2009)

Education at the above-cited institutions is entirely free, and either provides various specializations, such as archeology, social anthropology, biological anthropology, ethnolinguistics, ethnohistory and management, or includes subjects and seminars on different areas of specialization. Graduate courses are also provided (Master's Degree and Doctorate).

This time our analysis is focused on anthropology and childhood training courses proposed in the last few years as part of undergraduate and graduate education, and is limited to the four public universities in the city and province of Buenos Aires which offer anthropology as an undergraduate career (Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Universidad Nacional del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, Universidad Nacional de San Martín, and Universidad de Buenos Aires). As outlined above, it is worth considering that anthropological activities were never restricted solely to the city of Buenos Aires, and that they have recently extended further to several areas in Argentina. In this sense, although a large percentage of anthropology training sites are included in this article, it shall be interesting to extend this analysis to the whole country in future investigations, considering the large number of educational institutions and graduates that may not be represented here.

FROM RESEARCH TO TRAINING

For this analysis, it is important to consider that as childhood increasingly became an item in the public agenda in the last few decades, it began to emerge as a legitimate field of anthropological research in Argentina – as well as other countries in the region – becoming visible in publications and scientific meetings (Szulc & Cohn 2012). In the past, many researchers interested in childhood used to take part in theoretical discussions in workgroups devoted to more institutionalized fields of study (education, religion, migrations, indigenous studies, legal anthropology). These researchers, who initially developed their studies individually, began to interconnect by building up specific meeting points at academic events and educational institutions. Thus, emergence of this research field received a significant contribution by a young generation of anthropologists, mostly women, who started numerous investigations on childhood as a contended social, cultural and historical construction, acknowledging and examining children's social agency ethnographically.

Consistently with this, different workgroups, symposiums and national and regional scientific meetings involving Argentine and Latin American anthropologists interested in childhood have been organized in the last decade. These events proved very important, not only for the presentation of research results, but also to legitimize a field of study and provide training through the exchange of different professional cohorts.

In addition, exchange with colleagues from Brazil, Spain and Mexico began to grow thanks to these meetings, and was then institutionalized in diverse ways (circulation of visiting lecturers, conferences, research stances, and scientific events). On the one hand, international researchers have conducted seminars in Buenos Aires (see seminars 3, 6, 10, 11, 17 and 23 in *Appendix 1*), and on the other hand, researchers from Buenos Aires usually give seminars in other provinces of the country and abroad, e.g. Venezuela and Mexico (see seminars 4, 9, 13, 14, 18 and 22 in *Appendix 1*).

In short, work by local scientists and the growth of teams made it possible to provide training on this field at universities. For this analysis we have considered the information supplied by syllabuses from different seminars and courses (see list in the *Appendix 1*). As these were collected from universities websites and contacts with colleagues, we may have committed some involuntary omissions.

We have identified a total of thirty three seminars addressing issues with a direct or indirect relation to childhood, some of which have been offered on a regular basis while others have been presented discontinuously.

Prior to making further progress into our analysis, two things need to be highlighted. Firstly, childhood-related subjects are not taught at every anthropology undergraduate program, and when this happens, they are not compulsory but part of a set of optional subjects that students choose from based on their individual interests. This shows that while this field of study has become increasingly enriched by various approaches, it is still not strong enough to be considered part of the mandatory undergraduate syllabus.

Secondly, many of these courses are framed within some of the most strongly consolidated sub-disciplines in anthropology – such as educational anthropology, legal anthropology, gender and family anthropology –, thus dealing with a wide range of issues and having a certain conceptual heterogeneity. Of note, childhood is absent from anthropological syllabuses devoted to religion, economy, or rural anthropology, social fields which are still implicitly or explicitly believed to be the exclusive realm of adult men.

Analysis of contents from the syllabuses we were able to gather shows different emphasis. On the one hand, they focus on educational processes for issues concerning social production and reproduction in varied and unequal educational environments, educational policies, and school curriculums. They also contain reflections on intercultural education, training processes both inside and outside schools for groups with diverse ethnic and national heritage, and relationships

between individuals and groups involved in such processes. The analysis of educational environments has recently included contents which are specifically linked to childhood as an issue and with children as the protagonists of their own learning experiences.

On the other hand, there is an emphasis on issues relative to modalities of childhood and family management and state intervention, punitive violence, and human rights. As regards children's rights, there is a focus on their theoretical and chronological development connected to national public policies and composition of different social subjects based on paradigms with various outlooks on childhood and adolescence.

There is also a prominence of theory-based discussions concerning gender relations, kinship, and family, accounting for their transformations in time and power relationships involved therein. These are concerned about issues relative to the public and private spheres of daily life affecting childhood experiences.

Finally, there is an emphasis on the study of different approaches to childhood according to anthropological/archaeological traditions, and the discipline's recent re-conceptualization of childhood and children is analyzed. Childhood is revised within the framework of widely varying issues (teaching and learning, playing, health, ethnicity, religion, and migration).

Despite an evident abundance of subject matters and approaches, we can see that most of them claim the potential of anthropology to deconstruct social and cultural realities. This arises mainly from the historical analysis of the addressed phenomena and the ethnographic approach that proves the diversity of human experience (Guber 2001; Rockwell 2009; Szulc et al, in the same issue). Consistently with these premises, seminars tend to focus on two approaches: history and ethnography.

As regards the former, direct or indirect training in childhood anthropology usually deals with historical dimensions and different regulations contributing to present childhood configurations. Therefore, it might be argued that in order to study an issue such as "childhood", "the essential and most compelling scientific priority (…) would be to focus our study on the social work of constructing the pre-constructed object. These are the grounds for a genuine break-off" (Bourdieu 2005: 319, our translation, underlined in the original copy).

In some cases, this historical approach is based on the institutions that deal with the specific subject matters related to childhood, e.g. family, school, the State, juvenile justice, among others. In other cases, specific questions about childhood as a historical production are suggested as a starting point. Historical construction of the concept of childhood, its acknowledgement by various fields of knowledge, and the historical changes affecting this notion are dealt with.

Apart from historical researches, the second most common approach when childhood is related to the ethnographic approach typical of anthropology. As most identified spheres of education on the topic ask students to undergo a field experience based on an ethnographic approach, though not exclusively (document and journalistic source analysis or research on social policies, etc. is also accepted), it is interesting to make a distinction between two ways in which this exercise is carried out. The first one is usually found in proposals derived from the most highly institutionalized anthropological sub-disciplines, i.e. the analysis of ethnographies on the problems or working dynamics of different institutions related to childhood. The ethnographic exercise is focused on the social and institutional spheres of childhood, such as law, school and community institutions and regulatory frameworks.

The second modality involves methodological reflection on ethnographic work with children and conduction thereof by students, when appropriate and according to the subject matter they have chosen for their individual investigation. This requires an analysis of the methodological implications of researching with children, and thinking about the most relevant methodologies for their incorporation in the study. The researching field of anthropological studies with children is fertile ground for the development of methodological proposals and combined strategies (audiovisuals, drawings, drama, etc.). While participant observation is the most promoted technique, the use of different types of interviews has been essential for an anthropological transformation of these approaches.

CONCLUDING AND REOPENING REMARKS

Finally, it is important to point out the flourishing demand of anthropological perspectives for childhood studies and investigations by other disciplines, seen both in the number of students from other careers enrolled in the above-cited seminars and the inclusion of childhood-related anthropology subjects in graduate interdisciplinary syllabuses or other disciplines. This is the case of the seminars in the appendix below, addressed to university students of various careers and not solely to anthropologists or anthropology students, with at least one of them as part of the mandatory curriculum (see seminars 7, 12, 21, 24, 27 and 29 in *Appendix 1*). Thus, anthropology has become legitimized as a fertile discipline for an understanding of childhood from a holistic perspective.

Anthropology concerned about the study of childhood is slowly but continuously consolidating as a productive branch of Argentine anthropology. Considering the growing number of researchers in the area, we can anticipate continued expansion and replication of teaching and learning spaces in the future.

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WEBSITES

Universidad Nacional de La Plata: www.unlp.edu.ar y http://www.fcnym.unlp.edu.ar/

Universidad de Buenos Aires: www.uba.ar, www.filo.uba.ar

y http://www.derecho.uba.ar/academica/posgrados/mae_infanto_juveniles_plan_estudios.php

Universidad de Nacional de Rosario: www.unr.edu.ar y www.fhumyar.unr.edu.ar

Universidad Nacional de Misiones: www.unam.edu.ar/2012/index.html

y http://www.fhycs.unam.edu.ar/

Universidad del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires: www.unicen.edu.ar

Universidad Nacional de San Martín: www.unsam.edu.ar

Universidad Nacional de Salta: www.unsa.edu.ar

Universidad Nacional de Jujuy: www.unju.edu.ar y www.fhycs.unju.edu.ar

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF ANALYZED SYLLABUSES

- 1. [Since 1987] Undergraduate seminars delivered by the Anthropology and Education Program, Anthropological Science career, School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires:
- 1.1. 2005. "Abordaje antropológico de procesos escolares: sujetos y políticas en contextos de diversidad y desigualdad" (Anthropological approach to school processes: subjects and policies in diverse and unequal environments). Lecturers: María Rosa Neufeld, Gabriela Novaro, Laura Santillán, and Liliana Sinisi.
- 1.2. 2006. "Cotidianeidad, escolarización y políticas" (Daily life, education, and policies). Lecturers: Laura Santillán, María Rosa Neufeld, Gabriela Novaro, and Liliana Sinisi.
- 1.3. 2007. "Política educativa, sujetos y experiencia formativa desde una perspectiva socioantropológica" (Educational policies, subjects, and learning experience from a social and anthropological perspective). Lecturers: Laura Santillán, María Rosa Neufeld, Gabriela Novaro, Liliana Sinisi, Laura Cerletti and María Laura Diez.
- 1.4. 2009. "Antropología y educación: sujetos, procesos políticos y cotidianeidad" (Anthropology and education: subjects, political processes, and daily life). Lecturers: Laura Santillán, Gabriela Novaro, Liliana Sinisi, María Laura Diez, Laura Cerletti, Noelia Enriz and Victoria Gessaghi.
- 1.5. 2010. "Antropología y Educación: dinámicas macrosociales y procesos psicosociológicos en las escuelas de ayer y de hoy" (Anthropology and education: macro-social dynamics and psychosociological processes at schools in the past and today). Lecturers: Ariel Thisted, María Rosa Neufeld, Laura Cerletti, Lucía Petrelli and Maximiliano Rua.
- 1.6. 2010. "Antropología y Educación: Interculturalidad, experiencias formativas y procesos de identificación" (Anthropology and education: interculturality, learning experiences, and identification processes). Lecturers: Gabriela Novaro, María Laura Diez, Noelia Enriz, Mariana García Palacios, Ana Carolina Hecht and Ana Padawer.
- 1.7. 2011. "Antropología y Educación en contextos interculturales" (Anthropology and education in intercultural contexts). Lecturers: María Laura Diez, Noelia Enriz, Mariana García Palacios, Ana Carolina Hecht, Gabriela Novaro and Ana Padawer.
- 1.8. 2012. "Problemas de investigación y debates teóricos en Antropología y educación" (Research problems and theoretical discussions on anthropology and education). Lecturers: Liliana Sinisi, María Rosa Neufeld, Ariel Thisted, Javier García, Mercedes Hirsch, Lucía Petrelli and Maximiliano Rua.
- 1.9. 2012. "Antropología y Educación: procesos políticos y socioeducativos, niñez y vida familiar" (Anthropology and education: political, social and educational processes, childhood, and family life). Lecturers: Laura Cerletti, Laura Santillán, Soledad Gallardo, Agustín Barna, Marcela Bilinkis, Victoria Gessaghi and Gabriela Novaro.
- 2. 2005. Undergraduate seminar, Anthropological Science career: "¿La familia o las familias? Discusiones en torno al parentesco" (Family or families? Discussions on kinship). Lecturer: Mónica Tarducci, School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.
- 3. 2006. Doctorate seminar on Social Anthropology: "Etnografía de las realidades escolares y de otras realidades" (Ethnography of school and other realities). Lecturer: Ángel Díaz de Rada

(National Distance Education University, Spain), School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.

- 4. 2006. Master's Degree seminar on Anthropology: "Antropología de la Niñez. Perspectivas de estudio en América Latina" (Childhood anthropology. Study perspectives in Latin America). Lecturer: Andrea Szulc (University of Buenos Aires), Zulia University, Maracaibo, Venezuela.
- 5. 2007. Undergraduate seminar, Anthropological Science career: "Aportes antropológicos para el abordaje de la niñez. Perspectivas conceptuales y metodológicas" (Anthropological contributions to an approach to childhood. Conceptual and methodological perspectives). Lecturers: Andrea Szulc and Ana Carolina Hecht, School of Philosophy and Arts, Universidad de Buenos Aires.
- 6. 2007. Doctorate seminar on Social Anthropology: "Antropología del niño" (Anthropology of childhood). Lecturer: Clarice Cohn (San Carlos Federal University), School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.
- 7. 2007 to date: Subject from the Master's Degree course, specialization in Juvenile Social Issues: "Perspectiva antropológica de la niñez y la adolescencia" (An anthropological perspective on childhood and adolescence). Lecturer: Andrea Szulc, University of Buenos Aires, Schools of Social Sciences, Law, Philosophy and Arts, Medicine, and Psychology.
- 8. 2008. Undergraduate seminar, Anthropological Science career: "Estado y burocracia: la administración de la infancia y la regulación de las relaciones familiares" (State and bureaucracy: management of childhood and regulation of family relations). Lecturer: Carla Villalta and Josefina Martínez, School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.
- 9. 2008. Graduate seminar: "Antropología, niñez y procesos educativos" (Anthropology, childhood, and educational processes). Lecturer: Diana Milstein, National University of Comahue.
- 10. 2008. Doctorate seminar on Social Anthropology: "Antropología de la familia y el parentesco" (Anthropology of the family and kinship). Lecturer: Claudia Fonseca (Rio Grande do Sul Federal University), Institute of Superior Studies, San Martin National University.
- 11. 2008. Doctorate seminar on Social Anthropology: "Identidades y espacios de educación formal y no formal. Marco conceptual y estudio de casos" (Identities and formal and non-formal spheres of education). Lecturer: María Isabel Jociles Rubio (Complutense University of Madrid), School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.
- 12. 2009. Undergraduate seminar, Psychomotricity career: "Pediatría y puericultura" (Pediatrics and childcare). Lecturers: Adelaida Colangelo and Ana Giuffré, Tres de Febrero University.
- 13. 2009: Graduate course, Master's Degree and Doctorate on Social Anthropology: "Antropología, niñez y procesos educativos" (Anthropology, childhood, and educational processes). Lecturer: Diana Milstein, National University of Misiones.
- 14. 2009-2010: Graduate course, Master's Degree in Social Sciences and Humanities: "Técnicas y trabajo de campo en la investigación educativa socioantropológica" (Techniques and fieldwork on educational, social and anthropological research). Lecturer: Diana Milstein, National University of Quilmes.
- 15. 2010. Undergraduate seminar, Anthropological Science career: "Antropología y niñez. Problemáticas y enfoques contemporáneos" (Anthropology and childhood. Current issues and approaches). Lecturers: Andrea Szulc, Ana Carolina Hecht, Celeste Hernández, Melina Varela,

Lorena Verón, Pía Leavy, and Inés Finchelstein, School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.

- 16. 2010. Undergraduate seminar, Anthropological Science career: "Los procesos de construcción social de la niñez y la adolescencia" (Childhood and adolescence social construction processes). Lecturer: Carmela Vives, School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.
- 17. 2010. Doctorate seminar, Social Anthropology: "Procesos de exclusión socio-urbana, inmigración y construcción de desigualdades en el 'campo escolar' en España. Una perspectiva antropológica" (Social and urban exclusion, immigration, and inequality construction in Spanish schools). Lecturer: Adela Franzé Mudanó (Complutense University of Madrid), School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.
- 18. 2010. Graduate seminar: "Antropología y niñez: aportes a la investigación educactiva" (Anthropology and childhood: contributions to educational research). Lecturers: Héctor Méndez and Diana Milstein, National Northeastern University.
- 19. 2011. Doctorate seminar on Social Anthropology: "La interculturalidad en debate: lenguas, saberes e identidad" (A discussion on interculturality: languages, knowledge, and identity). Lecturers: Gabriela Novaro, Ana Padawer, and Ana Carolina Hecht, School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.
- 20. 2011. Master's Degree seminar on Social Anthropology: "Interculturalidad y educación en contextos de desigualdad" (Interculturality and education in unequal contexts). Lecturers: Graciela Batallán and Silvana Campanini. School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.
- 21. 2011. Master's Degree seminar on Physical Education: "El juego Contemporáneo: prácticas, representaciones y significados" (The contemporary game: practices, representations, and meanings). Lecturers: Carolina Duek and Noelia Enriz, School of Humanities and Educational Science, National University of La Plata.
- 22. 2011. Graduate seminar: "Antropología de la niñez y la educación en contextos de diversidad/desigualdad" (Childhood anthropology and education in diverse/unequal contexts). Lecturer: Ana Carolina Hecht (University of Buenos Aires), National School of Anthropology and History, Mexico.
- 23. 2011. Graduate course: "Antropología y trabajo interdisciplinario: elementos para su construcción en el estudio de las relaciones entre poblaciones humanas y su ambiente" (Anthropology and interdisciplinary work: elements for construction in the study of relations among human populations and their environments). Lecturer: María Dolores Cervera Montejano (National Polytechnic Institute, Mérida, Mexico). School of Natural Science and Museum, National University of La Plata.
- 24. 2011 and 2012. Undergraduate seminar, Social Work career: "La niñez y los niños: campo de intervención, objeto de indagación" (Childhood and children: field of intervention, research subject). Lecturers: Adelaida Colangelo and Celeste Hernández, National University of La Plata.
- 25. 2012. Undergraduate seminar, Anthropological Science career: "La niñez, la adolescencia y las políticas públicas: un abordaje desde la antropología" (Childhood, adolescence and public policies: an anthropological approach). Lecturer: Carmela Vives, School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.
- 26. 2012. Doctorate Seminar on Social Anthropology: "Estudios sobre los modos de gobierno de la infancia y las familias. Tecnologías, subjetividades y moralidades" (Studies on modes of governance in childhood and families. Technologies, subjectivities, and morality).

Lecturers: Carla Villalta, Isabella Cosse Larguero, and Valeria Llobet, School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.

- 27. 2012. Master's Degree seminar on Children's Education: "Indagaciones teóricas sobre el juego, un abordaje interdisciplinar" (Theoretical investigations on play studies, an interdisciplinary approach). Lecturer: Noelia Enriz, School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.
- 28. 2012. Undergraduate seminar, Anthropological Science career: "Saber Cómo-Saber Hacer: Análisis lítico y evidencias de aprendizaje" (Know-how and know-how-to: a lithic analysis and learning evidence). Lecturers: Mariana Sacchi, Damián Bozzuto, and Virginia Salerno, School of Philosophy and Arts, University of Buenos Aires.
- 29. Master's Degree seminars on Family Studies, Head of career: Mónica Tarducci, National University of San Martín.





APPENDIX 2: GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF UNIVERSITIES, INCLUDING YEARS WHEN THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL SCIENCE COURSE WAS STARTED

- 1. Universidad Nacional de La Plata (1958)
- 2. Universidad de Buenos Aires (1958)
- 3. Universidad de Nacional de Rosario (1967)
- 4. Universidad Nacional de Misiones (1975)
- 5. Universidad del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires (1993)
- 6. Universidad Nacional de San Martín (2007)
- 7. Universidad Nacional de Salta (1985)
- 8. Universidad Nacional de Jujuy (1984)
- 9. Universidad Nacional de Río Negro (2008)
- 10. Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (2009)